The wrong Caesars

Professor Mary Beard turned detective when she saw that Roman emperors paired with Renaissance silver-gilt dishes depicting their lives did not match.

Hero of the hieroglyphs

How Champollion unlocked the language of Ancient Egypt

The timeless face of the Sun Queen

A look at the life of Nefertiti, beautiful consort of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten
IMPORTANT ROMAN MARBLE STATUE OF A KORE
The head of giallo antico, wearing a diadem and framed by curls; the body of pavonacetto, carved in archaistic style.
1st Century AD
H. 27 1/2 in. (69 cm.)
Ex Lord Rochdale, Langholm, England, presumably first acquired in 1721;
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Emperors & endgames

From a well recorded natural disaster in Roman times to the tale of a cataclysm further back in the misty realms of mythology, we leave no stone unturned.

When Professor Mary Beard was in the V&A examining a silver-gilt Renaissance dish, or tazza, (one of a set of 12) to which a figure of Emperor Domitian was attached, she expected to find matching scenes from his life depicted on it. So she was very surprised to find the exploits of Emperor Tiberius shown in great detail instead. Then, she noticed how easily the little figure of the emperor could be unscrewed by the curator. Could it be, she thought that in the past, during the course of cleaning, they had been mixed up and the ‘wrong Caesar’ had been attached to the wrong tazza? Professor Beard set out to solve this mystery and you can read about what she found out on pages 16 to 21. You can also see a close-up of one of these wonderful figures – the Emperor Vespasian – on our cover. If you would like to see the rest (all correctly assigned for the duration of the exhibition), you must pay a visit to Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire where all 12 of the Aldobrandini Tazze (or ‘The Silver Caesars’ as they are known) are on show until 22 July.

Moving on from the ‘wrong Caesar’ to a very right kind of emperor, on pages 10 to 15 we take a look at the life of Trajan, whose reputation has managed to remain untarnished over the centuries. Wise, stable and successful – he is not what we have come to think of as a typical Roman ruler and he clearly deserved his title of optimus princeps (‘the best of emperors’).

A more dramatic view of the Roman Empire can be seen in the cities of Pompeii and Herculanum, which were famously buried by volcanic ash in AD 79 when Mount Vesuvius erupted. It was not until the 18th century that they were rediscovered and the story of this natural disaster and the toll it took on the cities’ inhabitants was revealed. This has haunted the imagination of successive generations and inspired works of literature, films and even video games. Last October I revisited Pompeii and Herculanum. I also walked up Vesuvius for the first time; this made a Mark Kershaw is a Classics Tutor for Oxford University Department for Continuing Education and Professor of History of Art for the European Studies Program of Rhodes College and the University of the South. His books include: The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology, A Brief Guide to the Greek Myths and A Brief History of Atlantis: Plato’s Ideal State.

Joyce Tyldesley is a senior lecturer in Egyptology at the University of Manchester, where she teaches a suite of online Egyptology courses to students worldwide. She has written on Cleopatra, Hatshepsut and Ramses; her latest book, Nefertiti’s Face: The Creation of an Icon explores the impact of the Berlin Nefertiti bust on our understanding of Egypt’s Amarna Age.

Andrew Robinson is the author of more than 25 books on both arts and science subjects, from Satyajit Ray to Earthquake: Nature and Culture, and biographies including Jean-François Champollion (Cracking the Egyptian Code), Thomas Young (The Last Man Who Knew Everything) and Michael Ventris (The Man Who Deciphered Linear B).

Contributors

Mary Beard is Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge. Her research includes: Roman history, social, religious and cultural history; Classics in Victorian and contemporary culture, and public engagement with Classics. Because of her many media appearances and controversial public statements she is dubbed ‘Britain’s best-known Classicist’.}

Steve Kershaw is a Classics Tutor for Oxford University Department for Continuing Education and Professor of History of Art for the European Studies Program of Rhodes College and the University of the South. His books include: The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology, A Brief Guide to the Greek Myths and A Brief History of Atlantis: Plato’s Ideal State.

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The hippest of the hipsters

Classical sculpture is not generally seen as very hip but the French artist Léo Caillard is determined to bring it firmly and fashionably into the 21st century. Born in Paris in 1985, Caillard has updated ancient Greek and Roman statues from the extensive collection of the Louvre by dressing them up in baseball caps, T-shirts and jeans, set off by trendy shades and head-phones. His witty and provocative Hipsters in Stone series has been viewed in many international art fairs, now 14 pieces of his work are on show in an exhibition entitled Past is Present at Mougins Museum of Classical Art (MACM) in the South of France.

As Caillard explains: ‘The exhibition Past is Present was born from an exciting and inspiring meeting around the issue of the imprint of the past on contemporary art. ‘Firstly, through King’s College London… as part of their ongoing project Modern Classicisms… and then the exhibition entitled The Classical Now! which brought together many works of contemporary art in dialogue with artefacts from Antiquity, now… with Mr Christian Levett and the great team of MACM… [which] creates a permanent dialogue between eras, societies and artistic techniques… I have always had a great interest in the question of time. Whether we look at it from a scientific or a philosophical point of view, this question continues to elude us because it is the foundation of our existence. The way we define the past, the present and the future, is nothing else but the experience of our own life. ‘It is difficult to detach from this personal relationship to time. However, seen from another angle, on the scale of terrestrial time for example, antiquity is extremely close to our era. ‘Civilisations and social habits change but the individuals that make up humanity remain the same, inhabited by the same questions and the same search for meaning. It seems obvious to me that our past is our present, Antiquity is at the origin of our era. My work therefore seeks to open a dialogue between these two periods in order to extract a new meaning. ‘More than ever before, our relationship with time is accelerating, the world is changing rapidly and we are actively thinking about ourselves in order to better apprehend tomorrow. The challenges ahead, exciting and disturbing at the same time, give artists an incredible field of expression. ‘With each important change, society knew to look at its past to better create its future. It is up to artists to give this reflection a visual space.’ Past is Present is on show at the Mougins Museum of Classical Art (MACM) until 27 May 2018. (www.mouginsmusee.com)

Lindsay Fulcher
Europe’s lost frontiers

Half way through a five-year programme, Europe’s Lost Frontiers has had a major success. The project, which is researching Doggerland (the submerged lands of the North Sea that connected Britain to the Continent) has been gathering evidence of human settlements from dredging and trawling around the Brown Bank, a 30km-long sand ridge, 100km east of Great Yarmouth.

‘The concentration of archaeological material, including bone, stone and human remains, suggests that these may derive from, or cluster around, a prehistoric settlement close by,’ says the project’s Principal Investigator, Professor Vincent Gaffney of Bradford University. ‘However, this remains a hypothesis, as no settlement has ever been located in this area.’

Mapping is an extensive part of the pioneering project, but looking for evidence of prehistoric communities in an area the size of many European countries is like looking for a needle in a haystack, says Professor Gaffney, who has narrowed down the search: ‘Sedimentary cores have been collected down major valleys; as you go down the valley, it goes back in time. Fish, water, reeds — rivers and lakesides provided the right conditions for the prime areas of settlement. We don’t know exactly where settlements were, but they can’t not be there.’

Funded by a European Research Council Advance Grant and running until 2020, part of the project has been a two-year marine expedition to identify the possible location of prehistoric, submerged settlements around the Brown Bank within the southern North Sea, and is run in conjunction with Ghent University and Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ).

Core samples penetrating up to six metres provide clues about topography, plants and animals that existed from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic. These are now being processed: sedimentary DNA at Warwick; pollen count in Cork; imaging and modelling in Bradford and at the University of Nottingham in Ningbo, China.

Leading the world in this kind of research, the next stage of the project will be to explore an area to the north, which Professor Gaffney believes may be a submerged lake. ‘If it is possible to undertake fieldwork that can locate prehistoric settlement on the Brown Bank, this would be a major event,’ says Professor Gaffney. ‘Until now the majority of Doggerland has been terra incognita in archaeological terms. If we can begin to locate settlement across the currently empty map of the Doggerland, we would open a new chapter in archaeological exploration.’

Europe’s Lost Frontiers has also been providing accurate maps for the submerged land between Britain and Ireland. In February sediment from cores taken from 20 sites around Liverpool Bay and Cardigan Bay by the Irish Research Vessel RV Celtic Voyager under the direction of the Centre for Environmental Research Innovation and Sustainability (CERIS) in the Irish Sea.

1. Where core samples were taken on the submerged Brown Bank off the Norfolk coast are shown: 2016 (green dots) and 2017 (pink dots).

Department of Environmental Science at IT Sligo. Outcomes of the research will also allow reconstruction and simulation of the palaeo-environments of the Irish Sea.

‘We will be able to reconstruct through sedaDNA both sides of the story of the rising tides in the Mesolithic around the UK and gain a more complete insight into those early stages of Neolithisation during which Britain became an island nation,’ says Professor Robin Allaby of the University of Warwick.

Professor Gaffney adds: ‘These samples are suspected to hold crucial information regarding the first settlers of Ireland and adjacent lands along the Atlantic corridor.’

Meanwhile, in the USA, archaeologists have located a 7000-year-old Native American ancestral burial site off the coast of Florida. With advances in DNA analysis, further finds from inundated palaeo-landscapes can be expected to reveal more. (www.lostfrontiers.teampapp.com)

Rogei Williams

A highway to history

An extraordinarily rich archaeological trail has been found along a 21-mile stretch of the A14, between Cambridge and Huntingdon, during a £1.3billion upgrade of the road. Some 40 sites have revealed 25 settlements and thousands of artefacts from Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age and the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods.

‘We now have the evidence to rewrite both the prehistoric and historic records of the area for the last 6000 years,’ says Dr Steve Sherlock, Archaeology Lead for the project, which is one of the largest and most complex undertaken in Britain. Around 250 archaeologists led by MOLA Headland Infrastructure have been working with road builders Highways England to explore and protect the sites. ‘We are committed to conserving and where possible enhancing the historic environment,’ says Dr Sherlock.

Within an area of 1.35sqm of largely flat farmland, seven tons of pottery, 6.5 tons of animal bone, a ton of building material and more than 7000 small finds have been excavated. These include an Iron Age timber ladder, a Roman Medusa jet pendant and an Anglo-Saxon bone flute. Three prehistoric henge monuments, measuring up to 50m in diameter, have also been uncovered, as have a Roman pottery industry and trade distribution centre, and an Anglo-Saxon gated and moated tribal boundary site on a hill overlooking the area and marked with a beacon.

Most dramatically, a six-hectare medieval village of 40 timber buildings

1. The tunes are lost but this broken bone flute shows that Anglo-Saxons made music.

Roger Williams

Minerva May/June 2018
The only good Romans...

‘In my long archaeological career in London I have excavated many hundreds of burials, but this is the first Roman sarcophagus I have ever discovered, still surviving in its original place of deposition,’ says Gillian King, Senior Planner Archaeology in Southwark, the only London borough outside the City with an in-house archaeologist.

The sarcophagus, which can now be seen in Roman Dead, an exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands, came to light in Harper Road, SE1, at the end of 2017 after nearly a year’s excavation, prior to a new housing development.

The work revealed part of a Roman road, which re-drew the known alignment of the highway over the River Thames from the City of London heading south to Chichester and south-east to Dover.

‘Our excavations had already proved better than anticipated when we found the sarcophagus at the 11th hour,’ says King. ‘It was the cherry on the cake.’

Dating from the 4th century and weighing more than two tons, the sarcophagus is only the third of its kind to have been found in situ in London. The others were at St Martin-in-the-Fields and Spitalfields.

‘We didn’t know how badly it was cracked underneath,’ explains King. ‘Watching it being lifted up by crane, we held our breaths.’

Burials were not allowed inside Roman cities, so the islands and marshlands on the south bank, opposite Londinium, became one of the main cemeteries, prompting a comparison of the Thames with the River Styx.

Excavations in this area of Southwark carried out between 2003–4 revealed decorated Romano-Celtic temples as well as signs of burials and cremations in a ‘complex ritual landscape’ of religious monuments. The sarcophagus was clearly made for someone of importance, but it was looted long ago.

‘We are incredibly excited to display the Harper Road sarcophagus for the first time,’ says Meriel Jeater, a curator at the Museum of London. ‘Discoveries of this kind are rare and reveal new stories and alter perspectives of our great city.’

Other items on display include one of the richest interments in Southwark, a chalk-burial of a 14-year-old girl, found with a bone inlay knife depicting a leopard. Then there is the tombstone of 10-year-old Marciana found during excavations of the City wall in 1979. Other objects include a multi-coloured glass dish, which held cremated remains, and a jet pendant in the form of a Medusa’s head that might have offered protection on the journey through the Underworld.

Several skulls of victims of violence, found by London Wall, are also on display in this show that examines the rituals of death, burial and cremation in Roman Londinium. Roman Dead will be on show at the Museum of London Docklands from 25 May to 28 October 2018.

(www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands)
Roger Williams

1. The skull of a Roman victim of violence found by London Wall.

2. Gillian King with Michael Tsoukaris (Head of Design and Conservation, Southwark Council), Peter John (Leader of Southwark Council) and the newly discovered sarcophagus.

3. Jet Medusa-head pendant, one of many items from around the Empire.

Minerva May/June 2018

has been discovered. The inhabitants are thought to have deserted the village in the 14th century when the surrounding forest, on which they depended, was designated a royal hunting ground. This curtailed their living which depended on grazing, foresting and tanning (for which tree bark was used).

The discoveries suggest this was once a well-inhabited area, with some sites near what was a Roman road under the A1, while others are near barrows and henges, which continued to be important for centuries after they were no longer used for their original purposes.

‘The A14’s Archaeology Programme has exposed an astonishing array of remarkable new sites that reveal the previously unknown character of ancient settlement across the western Cambridgeshire clay plain,’ says Kaiser Gdaniec, Cambridgeshire County Council’s senior archaeologist. As he explains: ‘The fast-paced archaeological excavations have been extremely challenging, especially during this relentlessly cold and wet winter, but a very large, hardy team of British and international archaeologists successfully completed sites in advance of the road crews taking over to build the road structures.’

Work will shortly come to an end and a planned tour of the deserted village, which Dr Sherlock describes as ‘an absolute bobby-dazzler’, is already fully booked.

(www.molaheadland.com)

Roger Williams
Rodin in London

The French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), one of the greatest and most innovative artists of the modern era, took great inspiration from the work of the 5th-century BC sculptor Phidias, who conceived the Parthenon sculptures.

Now, Rodin’s work is shown alongside these ancient Greek sculptures in an exhibition at the British Museum, which he visited regularly in order to sketch. When he first arrived in London in 1881, he was hugely impressed by the museum’s collection, particularly the sculptures of the Parthenon.

He often returned to the city in later life; in 1902 he declared ‘... in my spare time I simply haunt the British Museum’. Rodin continued to visit the museum until shortly before his death in 1917.

Thanks to a collaboration with the Musée Rodin in Paris, more than 80 works in marble, bronze and plaster, as well as some sketches, are displayed beside ancient Greek sculpture. The show’s design takes its inspiration from Rodin’s other home and studio in Meudon, a hilltop mansion in the southern suburbs of Paris. In both houses the artist displayed Classical antiquities among his own works, on crates, stands or plaster columns.

On loan from the Musée Rodin are a number of Rodin’s sketches, including 13 of the Parthenon Sculptures. Some of them are on headed notepaper from the Thackeray Hotel opposite the British Museum where Rodin stayed when he was in London.

Rodin’s famous work The Kiss, 1882, was inspired by a sculpture of two intertwined goddesses, originally on the Parthenon’s East Pediment, one of which reclines luxuriously in the lap of her companion. The kiss was in Rodin’s mind when he created a new genre of contemporary art – the headless, limbless torso.

Rodin and the art of ancient Greece is on show in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery of the British Museum until 29 July 2018.

(www.britishmuseum.org)

Lindsay Fulcher

Washington in New York

In 1816, the North Carolina Senate decided to install a full-length statue of George Washington in the State House at Raleigh and asked Thomas Jefferson who should get the commission.

‘There can be but one answer to this,’ replied Jefferson, a connoisseur of all things Neoclassical: ‘Old Canoe of Rome’. Jefferson also had some suggestions for how America’s first president should be represented. Washington, the Cincinnatus of the American Revolution, should be said, be shown in the garb of a Roman, drafting his farewell address to the States. Five years later, in 1821, Antonio Canova’s Monument to George Washington was installed in the State House. The statue, acclaimed at the time as ‘the boast and pride of North America’, was destroyed in a fire 10 years later but, in 1979, a replica was installed in the new State House.

Curated by Xavier F Salomon of the Frick Collection and Mario Guderzo of the Museo Antonio Canova in Italy, Canova’s George Washington, which opens in May at the Frick Collection in New York City, tells the story of this lost masterpiece. For the first time, it brings together Canova’s full-size preparatory plaster model, which has never left Italy; four preparatory models, and related drawings, engravings, and Thomas Lawrence’s 1816 portrait of Canova.

One of the plaster preparatory models is a 30-inch tall study of a nude Washington. ‘Did anybody ever see Washington naked?’ asked Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1858. ‘It is inconceivable. He had no nakedness, but, I imagine, was born with clothes on and his hair powdered, and made a stately bow on his first appearance in the world. His costume, at all events, was a part of his character.’ Hawthorne was referring to the unveiling of Horatio Greenough’s statue in the Capitol at Washington, DC in 1832. That statue, modelled after Phidias’ ivory and gold Zeus in the Temple at Olympia, showed the Founding Father naked from the waist up.

Canova’s small nude was not intended for display. It was a sketch in gesso, a way of working out the arrangement of bone and muscle under Washington’s Roman outfit.

Canova could not work from life, for Washington had died 17 years earlier, so the Americans had sent him a bust of Washington’s head, and he knew that his subject had been a sturdy man who stood six feet, two inches tall – six inches more than the average 19th-century man – who had big hands and feet. Posterity does not record the name of Washington’s body double.

Canova’s George Washington will be on show at the Frick Collection from 23 May to 23 September 2018; it will then move to the Museo Antonio Canova in Possagno, Italy later this year.

(www.frick.org/exhibitions/canova0
(www.museocanova.it)

Dominic Green

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From Ur to eternity...

The Penn Museum, founded in 1887, was the first to send a US archaeological expedition to the Near East – to the ancient Mesopotamian site of Nippur in what was then the Ottoman Empire, and now in modern-day Iraq. More than 130 years and hundreds of international expeditions later, the museum remains a world leader in Near Eastern archaeology, with a collection of more than 100,000 artefacts; a leading collection of cuneiform tablets bearing early literary, historical and economic texts; strong Islamic-period literary and ethnographic collections; and a rich archive of historic documents, photographs and field notes (as well as ongoing research projects in the region).

The Penn Museum has just opened its new Middle East Galleries that take the visitor on a remarkable 10,000-year human journey, from life in the earliest villages and towns to increasingly complex cities. More than 1200 objects from the museum’s own collections, including such world-renowned treasures as the jewellery of a Sumerian queen, from 4500 years ago, are on show. Large-scale video projections, made-to-scale models, illustrated scenes from the reconstructed past, smaller interactive stations and touchable reproductions provide different ways of exploring the collections. The new galleries display treasures from the Penn Museum’s own collections – from the broad region between the Mediterranean Sea and the highlands of Afghanistan, from the Black Sea to the Arabian Peninsula, emphasising the diverse settlement sites now found in Iraq and Iran. Beginning with a more than 4000-year-old human footprint found on an ancient mud brick (top right) used in construction at the royal city of Ur, the displays follows the human journey through millennia – from village life in early settlements, to larger towns, to complex cities, emerging empires, and trade regions around the world.

The key themes include: how landscape and environment affect settlement; trade and exchange; organisation and diversification; technologies; and shared systems of religion and belief. The Penn Museum/British Museum joint excavations to the Mesopotamian city of Ur, led by Leonard Woolley from 1922 to 1934, unearthed spectacular royal graves – including the tomb of Queen Puabi, circa 2450 BC. By the Third Dynasty of Ur 350 years later, kings were building the first monumental ziggurats. Bustling with more than 20,000 inhabitants, Ur had all the features of a city – a central administration, legal codes, monumental buildings, districts, suburbs, industry, a global trade network, art and music – and literature. Visitors will be able to ‘meet’ some of Ur’s citizens – including a merchant, a priest and a stone-cutter – at an interactive station.

The dramatic tomb excavations at Ur form the visual centrepiece of the Middle East Galleries. On display from the tomb of Queen Puabi is an elaborate headdress of gold, silver, carnelian and lapis lazuli, as well as silver and gold bowls, cups and jars. Other star finds from the excavation include the exquisite Bull-Headed lyre (left)– one of the earliest musical instruments in the world and the ‘Ram-in-the-Thicket’ sculpture, once part of a piece of royal furniture.

(Above) The dramatic tomb excavations at Ur form the visual centrepiece of the Middle East Galleries. On display from the tomb of Queen Puabi is an elaborate headdress of gold, silver, carnelian and lapis lazuli, as well as silver and gold bowls, cups and jars. Other star finds from the excavation include the exquisite Bull-Headed lyre (left)– one of the earliest musical instruments in the world and the ‘Ram-in-the-Thicket’ sculpture, once part of a piece of royal furniture.

A visible friend of Iraq

Standing defiantly on the Fourth Plinth in London’s Trafalgar Square is Michael Rakowitz’s new work The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist which the artist began in 2006. In it, Rakowitz (right) attempts to recreate one of more than 7000 objects looted from the Iraq Museum in 2003, or destroyed at sites across the country after the Iraq War.

The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist takes the form of a Lamassu, a winged bull and protective deity that stood at the entrance to the Nergal Gate of Nineveh (near modern-day Mosul) from circa 700 BC, until it was destroyed by so-called Islamic State in 2015. This is the 12th work to appear on the Fourth Plinth since the commissioning programme began (the first was Marc Quinn’s Alison Lapper Pregnant) and it will remain there until March 2020.

The Lamassu is made from recycled metal, which echoes the reliefs at the base of Nelson’s Column made from canons salvaged from the wreck of HMS Royal George. It is built from 10,300 empty Iraqi date syrup cans, representing a once-renowned industry that was destroyed by the Iraq Wars. ‘This work is unveiled in Trafalgar Square at a time when we are witnessing a massive migration of people fleeing Iraq and Syria,’ said Michael Rakowitz. ‘I see this work as a ghost of the original... a placeholder for those human lives that cannot be reconstructed, that are still searching for sanctuary.’

Rakowitz is also creating a limited-edition artwork using date syrup tins sourced from Karbala in Iraq. Each one is accompanied by a book of date syrup recipes, with contributions from Claudia Roden, Middle Eastern restaurant Honey & Co and the artist’s mother, Yvonne Rakowitz. There is also range of related products (tote bags, wooden spoons and aprons, all the items featuring the Arabic proverb A House With A Date Palm Will Never Starve) from the design company Plinth (www.plinth.uk.com).

Born in New York in 1973, Michael Rakowitz lives and works in Chicago, where he is a professor at Northwestern University. His first museum survey, Backstroke of the West was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 2017/18. His work explores global issues and invites conversations in public projects, installations and events. Lindsay Fulcher
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The reign of Emperor Trajan (1), from AD 98 until his death in AD 117, marks the high point of Roman imperial power, a time of wise administration, widespread prosperity and overall stability. Now, an exhibition marking the anniversary of the emperor’s death is on show inside Trajan’s Markets.

Exhibition

As an exhibition in Rome marks the 1900th anniversary of Trajan’s death, Dalu Jones looks back over the life of a wise ruler who brought stability and prosperity to his empire.

and Trajan’s Forum (13), the structures he built in the capital to honour himself. Trajan died of a stroke at Selinus in Cilicia (Turkey) in August, while making his way back to Rome after a successful campaign on the eastern borders of the empire against the Parthians, Rome’s traditional rival in Mesopotamia. He was deified by the Senate and his ashes were deposited inside the base of his celebratory column that stands in his forum complex.

So, it is not so much the objects on view that define this show but rather its extraordinary venue, one of the most fascinating and well-preserved architectural ensembles in Rome. These buildings are the real stars of the exhibition and the best evidence of the outstanding competence of a remarkable statesman.

Trajan’s Markets have now been collectively renamed the Museum of the Imperial Fora after being refurbished to house finds unearthed in all the Roman fora. But they have retained most of their original brick structures, and the museum and the...
exhibition fill the spaces once used as shops, offices, dwellings and passageways distributed over three floors overlooking Trajan’s Forum and Column. The Markets were built to shore up the side of the Quirinal hill, which was cut away to accommodate the forum.

To walk around Rome’s ancient commercial and bureaucratic centre, to stroll along its basalt-paved streets, is to enter into the past like a time traveller.

Trajan’s Column (2) is an imposing landmark and a major feat of architectural engineering. Completed in AD 113, it is almost 40 metres high and is made up of 18 blocks of white marble each weighing 40 tons and measuring almost four metres in diameter. The blocks were hollowed to make room for an internal staircase. Spiralling sculpted bas-reliefs (3) run for 200m around the outside shaft presenting 114 separate scenes, including a lively depiction of Trajan’s two victorious campaigns in Dacia (Romania) in the years AD 101–3 and AD 105–6. They also record the daily life of the soldiers and the rituals of war and peace, the fighting and the resilience of the legions, as they marched relentlessly onwards, constructing roads and bridges and founding garrison towns on the way.

We see the famous bridge, which was more than one kilometre long, spanning the River Danube near today’s Serbian-Romanian border, built to secure a supply route for the legions. This was one of numerous engineering feats achieved by Trajan’s favourite architect Apollodorus of Damascus (AD 50–130).

Construction of the bridge over the Danube was part of a wider project, which included digging canals to skirt around rapids and make the river safer for navigation. This meant a powerful river fleet and also defence posts could be established. Eventually the bridge was destroyed but some of the bricks used for the piers, (which were 50 metres high, 18 metres wide and set 50.5 metres apart), run for 200m around the outside shaft presenting 114 separate scenes, including a lively depiction of Trajan’s two victorious campaigns in Dacia (Romania) in the years AD 101–3 and AD 105–6. They also record the daily life of the soldiers and the rituals of war and peace, the fighting and the resilience of the legions, as they marched relentlessly onwards, constructing roads and bridges and founding garrison towns on the way.

Trajan clearly deserved the title of optimus princeps (‘the best of the emperors’).
can still occasionally be found on the riverbanks nearby. Significantly, the soldiers of the cohorts and the legions that built the bridge carved the names of their units on these bricks.

The desperate resistance of the Dacian warriors, the fall of their capital Sarmizegetusa and the final capitulation of their king Decebalus (r AD 87–106) who slit his own throat in order to avoid capture in AD 106, are also recorded on the column, like a film sequence.

Dacian gold made it possible for Trajan to undertake an ambitious programme of public works of unprecedented lavishness and scale, both in Rome and around the empire. Apollodorus oversaw the building of an aqueduct bringing water more than 40km from Lake Bracciano to Rome, the enlargement and construction of the harbours of Portus (near Ostia), of Centumcellae (Civitavecchia) and of Ancona, as well as the bridge of Alcantara in Spain, to encourage trade and improve the welfare of the population.

The Greek historian Ammianus Marcellinus (AD 330–400) described Trajan’s Forum as ‘a construction unique under the heavens’, in his Rerum Gestarum (Book XVI, Chapter 10). Inaugurated in AD 112, this was to be the last and largest of the Roman fora and was devoted to Trajan’s career and, specifically, to his military successes in his conquest of Dacia.

Trajan’s Forum was vast yet elegant, majestic yet subtle in its proportions. It was made up of a large main square, measuring around 200m by 120m, flanked by elevated porticoes leading to the great Basilica Ulpia, of which only huge grey granite broken columns survive. Trajan’s Column was flanked by two large libraries and a temple to the emperor and his wife, with elegant exedrae, semicircular, recessed spaces, on its eastern and western sides. The forum, clad in precious, exotic coloured marbles, especially Numidian yellow and Phrygian purple, was filled with over-life-size statues both in marble and gilded bronze.

Besides Trajan’s Column there was another glorifying monument, the Equus Trajan, a stupendous bronze statue of the soldier-emperor on horseback, that stood in the forum’s larger square. This statue has long since disappeared but its likeness has been recorded on contemporary coins. Thanks to recent excavations undertaken here some 10 years ago by a team of Italian archaeologists, led by Dr Roberto Meneghini, the huge plinth on which the statue stood is still visible. This work has contributed to ongoing debates among scholars as to the exact location of a lost shrine to the deified Trajan, known to have been built by Emperor Hadrian. Meneghini has ‘shifted’ its presumed location from behind the libraries and Trajan’s Column, where it was believed to have been, to the southern end of the forum abutting the retaining wall of the neighbouring Forum of Augustus.

The architectural achievements of Trajan’s imperial administration are underlined in the exhibition through a series of separate sections filling the airy spaces of the former covered market. Here statues and architectural elements are displayed next to models of many of the buildings erected by order of the emperor in various parts of the empire. Casts of the bas-reliefs (6) of Trajan’s Column made in 1861, around the same time that a full-size copy of the column was made for the Cast Courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, allow visitors to see more closely the episodes of the conquest of Dacia. These casts are usually housed in the Museo della Civiltà Romana (the Museum of Roman Civilisation), a neglected, but fascinating, didactic museum created for propaganda purposes by Mussolini in the 1930s to illustrate...
the technical achievements of the Romans through casts, reconstructions and scale models (7), which evoke in a precise and tangible way the material culture of Rome more vividly than any digital rendering.

Marcus Ulpius Traianus (5) was not a Roman-born emperor. His was a provincial family, the Ulpia, that settled in the province of Hispania (Spain) where he was born at Italica, near Seville. The future emperor was serving in the army in AD 89 when he supported Emperor Domitian (r AD 81–96) against a revolt on the Rhine.

Domitian, who was murdered, was succeeded for two tumultuous years by the unpopular Marcus Cocceius Nerva (AD 30–98). But before he died, of natural causes, Nerva was compelled by the Praetorian Guard to adopt as his heir and successor the more popular Trajan, who became emperor without incident. Under Roman law, an adoption established a bond legally as strong as that of kinship, and emperors were now chosen for their suitability for rule, not on bloodlines.

Before his accession, Trajan had married Pompeia Plotina (9), a demure Hispano-Roman, born during the reign of Emperor Nero (r 54–68). They both belonged to a colonial elite with influential political and economic connections and, although they had no children, their marriage was a happy one. A reserved and cultured woman, probably a practised follower of Epicurean philosophy, Plotina was a close and wise advisor both to her husband and to his successor, Emperor Hadrian (r AD 117–38).

Before Trajan died at the age of 63 in the heat of Selinus, she had encouraged him to adopt Hadrian, a fellow Hispano-Roman from Italica and a maternal cousin of Trajan with whom she had been close. She was the first of a number of related, formidable and clever women who steered Roman politics and imperial successions for the greater good of the empire. Besides Plotina, Trajan’s closely knit group of female relatives included his elder sister Marciana (AD 48–112) and her only daughter Salonia Matidia (AD 68–119), who lived with the imperial couple as a daughter (12), Trajan dedicated two cities to his sister: Marcianopolis, near present-day Devnja in Bulgaria, and Colonia Marciana Ulpia Traiana Thaumagadi (now Timgad) in Algeria. Matidia (8) had two daughters: Matidia Minor (AD 80–161), who, uncharacteristically for the time, remained unmarried, and Vibia Sabina (AD 83–136), who became the somewhat tetchy wife of Hadrian. Trajan’s lineage
continued with emperors Antoninus Pius (r AD 138–61) and Marcus Aurelius (r AD 161–80), both of whom were descendants from his gifted female relatives.

Trajan’s first lady, first sister and first niece, all bearing the rare and prestigious title of Augusta, became models for women throughout the empire not only in fashion but, unusually, also as entrepreneurs and benefactors. They owned properties of all kinds in Italy and in Africa, even brick factories.

In the exhibition there is a brick marked with the manufacturer’s stamp: ‘Plotina Augusta’. Their private wealth enabled them to operate independently, to give moneys to charitable causes and to fund building projects, setting an example for other upper-class matrons. Each of the imperial ladies imposed their own official image, recognisable by their different hairstyles. Variations in formal fashion were always crowned by a new hairstyle, which included hairpieces and concealed framework that formed high diadem-like structures that surrounded the face. These trendy new looks were invented by professional ornatrices who devised ever-changing braided crowns (9, 10 and 11).

Trajan’s reputation has survived un tarnished over the centuries. Ancient sources describing both his personality and accomplishments are unanimously positive. Pliny the Younger (AD 61/62–circa AD 113) celebrated Trajan in a panegyric as a wise and just emperor and a moral man. The historian Cassius Dio (AD 155–235) stated that he always remained dignified and fair.

At the inauguration of later emperors, the Roman senate would utter the phrase ‘Felicior Augusto, melior Traiano’ (‘Be more fortunate than Augustus [and] better than Trajan’). Trajan clearly deserved the title of optimus princeps (‘the best of the emperors’), for he succeeded in the almost impossible task of getting the approval and support of the army, the senate and, above all, of the ethnically diverse people who lived in the Roman empire – perhaps a model for a united Europe.

Trajan – building an Empire, creating Europe is at the Trajan Markets (www.mercatiditraiano.it) and Museum of the Imperial Fora (www.museiincomune.it) until 16 September 2018. The catalogue, Traiano. Costruire l’Impero, creare l’Europa, edited by C Parisi Presicce, M Milella, S Pastor and L Ungaro, is published (in Italian only) by De Luca Editori at €54.
I t was in the autumn of 2010 that I first came face-to-face with one of the so-called Aldobrandini Tazze. I was a few months into a new research project on images of the Twelve Caesars in Renaissance and later art, and I already had a sense of the importance of this extraordinary set of 16th-century silverware.

Here was a Renaissance re-creation of those first 12 Roman rulers, from Julius Caesar (100–44 BC) (1) to Domitian (AD 51–96) (2), a portrait gallery of dynasts in miniature, their names clearly inscribed at their feet. But even more interesting for me, each dynast was attached to a dish decorated with four intricately chased scenes illustrating his reign, every episode taken from the biographies written by C Suetonius Tranquillus (circa AD 70–130). Suetonius, as we

As a dozen Renaissance gilded silver treasures, the Aldobrandini Tazze or Twelve Caesars, go on show at Waddesdon Manor, Professor Mary Beard unscrews the puzzle of how the Roman emperors and dishes got mixed up.

1. The Julius Caesar dish or tazza, circa 1587–99, gilded silver by an anonymous (Netherlandish?) goldsmith. D. 37.6cm. Museo Galileiano, Madrid.
now usually call him, was the Roman writer who, through his set of 12 Lives (De vita Caesarum, known as The Twelve Caesars, a set of 12 biographies of Julius Caesar and the first 11 emperors of the Roman Empire) bequeathed to the world the very idea of the Twelve Caesars, as well as some of the most memorable and lurid anecdotes about them. The tazze have a good claim to be the earliest surviving systematic attempt to illustrate Suetonius’ text.

I had also picked up some hints about the intriguing complexity of the story of the tazze – how over the centuries they had been sold off, lost, disconnected, dispersed across the globe, and their parts so mixed up that several of the detachable imperial figures had landed on the ‘wrong’ dishes, accompanied by scenes from the ‘wrong’ imperial lives. But the Victoria and Albert Museum in London was supposed to have one of these objects in its original state – the figure of the notorious Roman tyrant Domitian standing on a dish that, at least since the late 19th century, had been identified as ‘his’, decorated with scenes from his Life. So I went to take a closer look.

The encounter was more surprising than I had anticipated. I watched with a mixture of awe and astonishment as expert curators donned their gloves and gently disassembled the thing. The figure of Domitian (3) unscrewed so easily that it instantly became much clearer how the emperors could have migrated from dish to dish: once the statuettes were unscrewed, you would have to look very carefully at the details of the scenes to make sure that each one ended up back on his ‘right’ dish.

But there was a bigger surprise,
and the start of a curious historical detective story, when I tried to match up the chased scenes on the dish with the text of Suetonius’ Life of Domitian. It was a triumphal procession that first caught my eye. According to the museum’s documentation, one of the scenes represented Domitian’s celebration of his rather overblown military success against German tribes, mentioned by Suetonius: ‘after battles fought with different degrees of success, he celebrated a double triumph over the Chatti and the Dacians’.

A triumphal procession does indeed stand out on the dish, and it includes many precise details of the ceremony as it was usually performed. The shape of the special ceremonial chariot reflects Renaissance scholarship on that subject, learning based on careful study of ancient descriptions and depictions of the ritual, and the animals to be sacrificed carry their correct Roman ornaments. But there is one strikingly unorthodox feature: the chariot itself is empty. The victorious general in military dress and wearing the triumphal laurel wreath, has brought the vehicle to a halt along the ceremonial route and dismounted in order to kneel in front of a seated figure attended by 12 official guards (or lictors), each holding a bundle of fasces – the rods of office that were the symbol of official Roman power. This can only be the occasion when, in AD 12 – almost seven decades before the reign of Domitian – the future emperor Tiberius included an unprecedented gesture in the celebration of his victories in Germany.

In the words of Suetonius’ Life of Tiberius: ‘Before he turned to drive up onto the Capitoline Hill, he got down from the chariot and dropped to his knees in front of his father [the emperor Augustus], who was presiding over the ceremony’ (4). It was for Roman readers a sure sign of the appropriate deference of Tiberius, as heir, to the ruling emperor, and for me a sure sign that, whatever was claimed, the dish could not possibly ‘belong’ to Domitian.

That was quickly confirmed by the other three scenes, which...
also turned out to derive from the *Life of Tiberius* and had nothing to do with Domitian. One was as glaringly misidentifiable as a scene of triumph. It had been interpreted as Domitian’s wife travelling in Germany, where her husband was on campaign. But this is not only difficult to match up to the narrative of Suetonius, who in his *Life of Domitian* hardly refers to Domitia at all, and certainly not in Germany; it also fails to explain why on earth the woman in question is almost on fire (the convention here for representing flames being the same as on other dishes) and carrying a baby. The scene must represent the incident, described by Suetonius, involving the infant Tiberius and his mother, Livia, when they were on the run from the woods all along the way and engulfed in a forest fire, as related by Suetonius, further proof that this dish should not have been paired with the emperor Domitian.

Of the other two scenes, one pictured a rare instance of Tiberius’ liberality. Meanness was this emperor’s usual trait, but after an earthquake in the province of Asia in AD 17, he sponsored relief measures and gave generous subsidies to the cities of the area. On one side of a river, we see the emperor, with his lictors behind him, receiving petitions from the local population; on the other side, buildings are toppling from the force of the quake. This vignette had been masquerading as Domitian receiving the submission of the Germans, but that hardly explained the collapsing buildings.

The remaining scene seems, at first sight, a generic image of battle between Roman forces and their enemies under the watchful eye of a splendid river god reclining next to his streaming waters. This had been identified as another episode from Domitian’s German campaigns. But the clear references to Tiberius on the rest of the dish suggest instead that it is a scene from his German campaigns, almost certainly his defeat of the Raeti and Vindelici in southern Germany in 15 BC. One tiny detail of the design more or less clinches it: the pine cone, the traditional symbol of the Bavarian city of Augsburg, shown on a couple of the German standards.

This emblem has often been taken...
as a clue to the place of the tazza’s manufacture, on the assumption that patriotic craftsmen had smuggled in a subtle reference to their own home town. But whether that is true or not, the pine cone image is a clear pointer to the location of the campaign (Roman Augsburg – or Augusta Vindelicorum – eventually became the capital of the Roman province of Raetia) and may hint again at Tiberius himself, for according to tradition, it was he who during that war established the town as a Roman base.

There is more to this story than a simple case of mistaken identity, of the life of Tiberius being misread as the life of Domitian. For a start, there is a piquant irony in the present combination of emperor and dish in the Victoria and Albert Museum that goes back only to 1956. When the tazza first entered the museum (originally on loan) in 1927, it displayed the figure of the emperor Vitellius above what was then taken to be Domitian’s dish. The combination we now see was the result of a well-meaning international collaboration between three museums, each of which owned one of the original 12 tazze and was keen to reunite the right emperors with their dishes. The figure of Vitellius from London was sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to stand above the Vitellius dish (8) in place of the ‘wrong’ figure of Otho; the Metropolitan Museum sent the figure of Otho (7) to the Royal Ontario Museum to rejoin its original dish; while the Royal Ontario Museum sent its figure of Domitian to the V&A to preside over the ‘Domitian’ dish. The only trouble was that – as it wasn’t really the Domitian dish at all – the V&A’s tazza remained just as mongrel as it had been before. Despite all the...
excellent intentions, in this case one wrong emperor had been swapped for another.

There is also the obvious domino effect. If the so-called Domitian dish really ‘belonged’ to Tiberius, where did that leave the so-called Tiberius dish in Lisbon, which had been at some point wrongly attached to the figure of Galba (3 BC–AD 69)?

The answer to that question exposed another series of misidentifications, not far short of farce. It did not take long to see that Galba was actually standing on top of the dish that depicted the deeds of Caligula (AD 12–41) (6).

Thanks to some truly astonishing wishful thinking, the notorious stunt in which Caligula pranced on horseback over a bridge of boats joining Baiae and Puteoli, the neighboring port on the Bay of Naples, had been interpreted as the retirement of Tiberius to the island of Capri. And a famous incident in which, as a toddler and army mascot, Caligula managed to shame Roman soldiers out of mutinying (they repented when they realised the tiny prince was being taken away to safety) had been squeezed to fit a scene from Tiberius’ German campaigns.

Meanwhile, in the final piece of the puzzle, what had been taken to be the Caligula dish at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, wrongly attached to the figure of Augustus, proved to be that elusive Domitian dish. The drastic misreading in this case involved the scene of the burning Capitol. According to Suetonius, in the civil war at the start of Vespasian’s reign (r AD 69–79) the emperor’s young son Domitian barely escaped Rome with his life.

To fit the Caligula narrative, the scene had been construed as an image of the popular disturbances that followed the death of the future emperor’s father, Germanicus.

These confusions have dogged the history of the tazze over the last century and probably much longer. ■

7. Detail showing the figure of Emperor Otho correctly positioned on the Otho tazza, from the Aldobrandini Tazze, circa 1587–99, gilded silver, by an anonymous (Netherlandish?) goldsmith. D. 37.6cm. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, from the Collection of Viscount and Viscountess Lee of Fareham, given in trust by the Massey Foundation.

8. Emperor Vitellus correctly paired with the Vitellus tazza, or dish, from the Aldobrandini Tazze, depicting scenes from his life, circa 1587–99, gilded silver, by an anonymous (Netherlandish?) goldsmith. H. 41.1cm. D. (of tazza) 37.6cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

All images © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

• The Silver Caesars: A Renaissance Mystery is on show at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, (www.waddesdon.org.uk) until 22 July 2018. The accompanying illustrated catalogue is published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (where the exhibition originated), in paperback, at £35. This feature is an excerpt from Professor Mary Beard’s essay in the catalogue.
No wonder Pompeii has been a popular visitor attraction ever since its rediscovery 270 years ago; it holds an appeal that goes right across the spectrum – from academe to the tabloids. It is the nearest we can get to witnessing the everyday life – and death – of the ancient world in all its aspects.

Witness the across-the-board popularity of the British Museum’s blockbuster 2013 *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* exhibition. In the introduction to the catalogue its inspired curator Paul Roberts sets the scene: ‘In AD 79 the beautiful Bay of Naples in southern Italy, famous in Roman times for its fertile soil, welcoming climate and luxurious living, was convulsed by a catastrophic eruption of the volcano Mount Vesuvius. In just one day, two cities, Pompeii and Herculaneum, were completely buried, along with smaller settlements such as Oplontis and Stabiae and countless farms, villas, estates and villages.’

Now, standing in Pompeii’s sunny forum with our guide, the erudite but laid-back Classicist Dr Nigel Spivey, we make up a handful of its annual 2 million-plus visitors. Famous pilgrims who have come before us range from Goethe, Dickens, Cocteau and Picasso, right up to more recent visitors including Bill
Lindsay Fulcher takes a weekend-long whistle-stop tour of Vesuvius, Pompeii, Herculaneum and Villa Oplonto in the footsteps of a stream of famous visitors

Clinton, Meryl Streep, Roman Polanski, Robert Harris (who was researching his best-selling thriller, *Pompeii*, in which he wrote ‘People will perish, but books are immortal’) and, of course, Professor Mary Beard. We are just another band of time tourists whose collective imagination is gripped by the drama that happened here on that fateful day.

For me, this has been put into sharp focus by yesterday’s ascent of Vesuvius – a bit of a trek, that took us 30 minutes or so, up to the crater’s rim, where I was somewhat satisfied to see a plume of vapour still gently issuing from one of its many fissures.

When Goethe travelled into the Bay of Naples in late February of 1787 he reported that it was ‘with quiet delight’ that he saw Vesuvius to his left, ‘violently emitting smoke’. I must admit to sharing this ‘quiet delight’ – even if I only saw a wisp of vapour rather than belching smoke. Goethe walked up the volcano on 2 March of the same year and recorded the event in his *Italian Journey* (translated by Robert R Heitner):

‘I ascended Vesuvius, although the weather was gloomy... Two thirds of the summit was covered with clouds. At last we reached the ancient crater, which is now filled up, and found the new lavas from two months and fourteen days ago, also even a meager one five days old, already cooled. We climbed over them and up a newly created volcanic hill, which was smoking on all sides. The smoke was moving away from us, and I wanted to go toward the crater. We were approximately fifty paces into the smoke when it grew so thick that I could scarcely see my shoes. Holding up a handkerchief did not help. I also lost sight of the guide, and my steps were unsure on the little fragments of lava that had been cast up. I thought it best to turn back and save the desired sight for a sunny day with less smoke. Meanwhile I have also learned how difficult it is to breathe in such an atmosphere.

‘Except for that, the mountain was altogether quiet. Neither flames, nor roaring, nor showers of stones, as has always been the case since our arrival. Now that I have reconnoitered it, I can, so to speak,
besiege it as soon as the weather consents to improve.’

Now, as then, human optimism springs eternal. Vesuvius hasn’t erupted since 1944 but 3million inhabitants who continue to live under the volcano do so at their peril. Some of them sell souvenirs made of its cold grey lava – local people have probably been doing so since the 18th century. The volcano’s eruption is the first story; then there is the tale of Pompeii’s discovery in 1748 at a time when interest in the ancient world was becoming increasingly fashionable – and lucrative.

Since then the tourist tat on sale more and more earns that name. Visitors no longer buy charming little gouaches of the volcano by artists, such as Pietro Fabris (1740–92), whose works were acquired by the great antiquarian, archaeologist and vulcanologist Sir William Hamilton (1730–1803). Yet both the mountain and the towns it destroyed retain their magic.

Pliny the Younger, a witness from AD 79 who wrote about the disaster, paints a vivid picture. He was 18 at the time and staying in Misenum with his uncle, Pliny the Elder, who was in charge of the Roman fleet in the Bay of Naples and who was killed during the eruption. But, unlike his poor uncle and the inhabitants of Pompeii, Pliny the Younger survived and left us an eyewitness account of that dreadful day:

‘... on Mount Vesuvius broad sheets of fire and leaping flames
blazed at several points, their bright glare emphasised by the darkness of night... blacker and denser than any ordinary night... Then the flames and smell of Sulphur... gave warning of the approaching fire... Ashes were already falling, not as yet very thickly. I looked round: a dense black cloud was coming up behind us, spreading over the earth like a flood...

‘You could hear the shrieks of women, the wailing of infants, and the shouting of men; some were calling their parents, others their children or their wives, trying to recognize them by their voices. People wept for themselves or for their relatives, and there were some who prayed for death in their terror of dying. Many besought the aid of the gods, but still more imagined there were no gods left, and that the universe was plunged into eternal darkness for evermore...

‘A gleam of light returned, but we took this to be a warning of the approaching flames rather than daylight. However, the flames remained some distance off; then darkness came on once more and ashes began to fall again, this time in heavy showers.

‘We rose from time to time and shook them off, otherwise we should have been buried and crushed beneath their weight. I could boast that not a groan or cry of fear escaped me in these perils, but I admit that I derived some poor consolation in my mortal lot from the belief that the whole world was dying with me and I with it.’

In Pompeii there is still something in the air – call it atmosphere, a sense of place, or simply the power of human imagination. Although this is my third visit over the years, I am always struck by the underlying sense of quiet here, even when there are crowds all around. It can’t just be that the guides are fascinating – although ours is – it is that something momentous, tragic, unforgettable, happened here, when the lives of around 2000 people were suddenly taken from them in terrifying darkness by noxious fumes and raining volcanic ash. What we see today are their ruined homes and their shops, on either side of paved streets worn by wheel-ruts, their bakeries, bars, brothels and bath houses and their communal latrines. But it is not the ruins of the town’s amphitheatre, temples or civic buildings that touch us, it is the small domestic survivals – the charming, elegant frescoes,
the mosaics showing women, doves and dogs and the little gardens with fruit and olive trees.

Pompeii was one of many seaside resorts, favoured by the emperors and aristocrats of Rome, dotted around the Bay of Naples, but before we decide that we, too, would like to buy a villa here, Nigel reminds us that it wasn’t all wine, women and frescoes. Great quantities of leather and wool were treated here, soaked in large vats of urine outdoors in the sun – so the stench would have been unimaginable and almost unbearable.

It would have been far better to have lived 10 miles down the coast in the more refined and now less-visited city of Herculaneum, or in an elegant house, like the nearby elegant Villa Oplontis (that may have been the home of the family of Poppaea, Nero’s second wife). Unlike Pompeii, to date only about a quarter of Herculaneum has been excavated but there is still a lot to see. Its houses and streets are larger than those at Pompeii, it feels more breezy as it is closer to the sea; there is a better view and also, according to Horace, the wine here was very good.

Meanwhile, at nearby Villa Oplontis we find an ‘Olympic-size swimming-pool’, a garden with fruit trees and luxurious apartments painted with many trompe l’œil devices. We have seen several different styles of interior design – from formal to exotic – in Pompeii, Herculaneum and Villa Oplonto.

On the last day of our tour we visit the mighty National Museum of Antiquities in Naples. Housed in a 16th-century cavalry barracks, it has large airy galleries full of astounding treasures, such as the Alexander mosaic, and many familiar artworks from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

When Jean Cocteau came to Naples on 13 March 1917, with Picasso, Diaghilev and Massine, he wrote to his mother telling her:

‘We are once again in Rome after a trip to Naples, and from there to Pompeii by car. I do believe that no city in all the world could please me more than Naples. The teeming Classical antiquity, brand new, in this Arab Montmartre, in this great mess of a kermesse [a fair or carnival] that never stops. Food, God and fornication, here are the drives of this novel people. Vesuvius crafts all the clouds of the world. The sea is dark blue. Hyacinths hurl themselves on the pavements. (Lettres à sa mère, I, 1898–1918, Gallimard, Paris, 1989).

Today films, television series, video games, exhibitions and books about Italy’s ancient buried cities continue to attract millions of viewers and readers. Charles Dickens, who visited Pompeii, wrote about it in Letters from Italy, published in 1846:

‘Stand at the bottom of the great market-place of Pompeii, and look up the silent streets, through the ruined temples of Jupiter and Isis, over the broken houses with their inmost sanctuaries open to the day,
away to Mount Vesuvius, bright and snow in the peaceful distance; and lose all count of time, and heed of other things, in the strange and melancholy sensation of seeing the Destroyed and the Destroyer making this quiet picture in the sun.’ The sensation of living on the edge of potential danger has always been a source of attraction for visitors to this part of the world, as Goethe memorably remarked: ‘never in human history has such a disaster given so much pleasure’. The Cultural Travel Co (www.culturaltravel.co.uk) is offering another Archaeology in Pompeii – Roman life in the shadow of Vesuvius tour, led by Dr Nigel Spivey, from 19 to 22 October 2018.

Pompeii: An Archaeological Guide by Paul Wilkinson is published in paperback by IB Tauris at £14.99. This compact guidebook deftly bridges the gap between popular handbooks and academic in-depth analyses. It also contains a timeline of what happened hour by hour in AD 79.

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Minerva May/June 2018
More than 3000 years after her death, Queen Nefertiti is widely celebrated as one of the ancient world’s most alluring and powerful women. Her face, preserved by a hauntingly beautiful bust, is a familiar sight, and has inspired generations of artists, poets, playwrights, cosmetic surgeons and tattoo artists. So it comes as a bit of a surprise to discover just how little we know about the lady herself.

Nefertiti was the consort, or ‘Great Wife’, of the ‘heretic pharaoh’ Akhenaten, who ruled Late Bronze Age Egypt towards the end of the 18th Dynasty (circa 1352–1336 BC). She lived, as is said, in interesting times. Her husband acceded to the throne as Amenhotep IV (literally ‘The God Amen is Satisfied’) but soon after his coronation, in tribute to an ancient but obscure solar god known as ‘the Aten’, he changed his name to Akhenaten (meaning ‘Living Spirit of the Aten’). Within five years he had radically simplified Egyptian state religion, replacing the many hundreds of gods with the Aten. The object of his worship was the bright light of the sun, rather than the sun itself.

At the time of his conversion, Egypt recognised at least 1000 deities. These gods both controlled the living and offered the chance of life beyond death. While previous pharaohs had favoured certain gods, none had been negligent in their duty to all members of the pantheon and there was a good reason for this. The pharaoh was, in theory, the only Egyptian who could serve as a link between the people and their gods, so to him fell the awesome responsibility of ensuring that the correct offerings were made in the state temples. These offerings would reassure the gods that all was right within Egypt, and the gods would then allow Egypt to flourish. Who knew what would happen if the offerings were not made? Until now, no one had dared to find out. It turned out that Akhenaten’s decision to devote himself to the Aten was a supremely selfish one, which threatened the security of both his land and his people.

We can tell that his wife Nefertiti was not a member of the immediate royal family because she never used the title ‘King’s Daughter’, which she would have retained throughout her life. Her parents are never mentioned – a sure sign that they were of relatively humble birth – although we do know that she had a younger sister, Mutnodjmet, who appears fleetingly in contemporary tomb scenes. Although Nefertiti translates as ‘A Beautiful Woman has Come’, we need not assume that she was a foreign princess sent to Egypt to marry the pharaoh. It seems more likely that her name is a reference to the goddess Hathor rather than to the queen herself and, indeed, indirect evidence from the tomb shared by the official Ay and his wife Tiy indicates that Nefertiti may have been his daughter.

Like all of Egypt’s pharaohs, Akhenaten maintained a harem of queens but, as consort, Nefertiti enjoyed a very different life to that of her co-wives. She was the queen who lived at court and who, bearing the appropriate titles, crowns and regalia, was represented prominently in works of art.

Joyce Tyldesley traces the life of Nefertiti, consort of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten, who is Ancient Egypt’s most iconic and, some would say, most beautiful female ruler.

Minerva May/June 2018

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observing routine rituals. The queen consort represented all of Egypt’s women before the gods, while representing either all or one of the goddesses before the people.

Inspired by his god, Akhenaten decided to build a new city where the Aten could be worshipped without interference from any other cult. Akhet-aten (‘Horizon of the Aten’) is today better known as Amarna. The new city quickly rose on a virgin site on the eastern bank of the Nile, almost equidistant between the traditional administrative centres of Thebes to the south and Memphis to the north. A series of boundary-markers defined the city limits; these extended across the River Nile to include ‘mountains, deserts, meadows, water, villages, embankments, men, beasts, groves and all things which the Aten shall bring into existence’.

Taking its name from Akhenaten’s new city, the ‘Amarna Period’ is the modern term applied to the time when Egypt was ruled from Amarna. This includes most of the reign of Akhenaten, the entire reign of his short-lived successor Smenkhkare, and the start of the reign of Tutankhamen.

Akhenaten had access to almost unlimited resources, and his civil servants had honed the logistical skills needed to employ these resources effectively. Sun-dried mud-brick, the building material traditionally used in all domestic architecture and now, at Amarna, used in temple architecture too, was cheap and plentiful: thousands of bricks could easily be made in a day. Limestone, the stone used in temple and royal architecture, was locally available. All of this contributed to an almost unimaginably fast build. Construction started during regnal Year 5, and by Year 9 the city was effectively complete, with temples, palaces, private housing, workshops, wells and statues in place. Superficially it all looked splendid, but under the tiled and painted exteriors all was not well, and building work would continue throughout the life of the city as the first-phase structures were improved or replaced.

While his people seem to have been free to come and go as they pleased, Akhenaten took a personal vow never to leave his city. As far as we can see, he was true to his word. The days when the pharaoh travelled the length of the Nile to remind his subjects of his existence had ended; those who had royal business were now forced to travel to Amarna. Not even death would separate Akhenaten from his beloved city and its god. As Amarna rose beside the river, a specialist group of workers started to create a royal tomb in a dry riverbed in the eastern cliffs. To the north and
south, a series of rock-cut tombs would provide the Amarna elite with a suitable final resting-place, and the deceased Akhenaten with an eternal court.

Royal divinity, once reserved for the dead pharaoh, was a living reality at the Amarna court. The asexual Aten required both male- and female-based rituals, and these were supplied by the pharaoh and his consort, with Nefertiti serving as an emblem of divine fertility. Together the royal couple became the living representatives of the divine twins Shu and Tefnut, the children of the solar creator god.

As the pharaoh and his queen prayed beneath the Aten’s rays, the people of Amarna, denied direct access to their god, prayed before images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. This led to a constant demand for royal art works, as the houses and gardens of the Amarna elite all required ostentatious stone statues and carved stelae depicting the royal family. The royal family appeared in the elite tombs, too, where they replaced traditional gods in wall scenes. No longer could the Amarna elite look forward to a life beyond death, living in endless luxury in the kingdom of Osiris. Osiris had been banished and his kingdom had vanished with him. While Akhenaten and Nefertiti looked forward to post-death divinity and unity with the sun god, their courtiers faced eternal life trapped at Amarna.

Yet, while Nefertiti’s religious importance is obvious, her political status is less easy for us to ascertain. She is not mentioned in diplomatic correspondence recovered from the remains of the Amarna royal archives, yet she often appears at true scale beside her husband, while her title ‘Lady of the Two Lands’ emphasises her role as the feminine counterpart of the pharaoh, ‘Lord of the Two Lands’.

Stone blocks recovered from both Karnak (modern Luxor) and Hermopolis Magna (modern Ashmunein: these blocks came from Amarna), show Akhenaten’s boat decorated with traditional images of the pharaoh smiting, or killing, a token enemy. Akhenaten stands beneath the rays of the sun disk, his right arm raised to deliver a fatal blow. Nefertiti stands passively behind him. But parallel scenes on Nefertiti’s boat show the queen herself striding forward to execute a female enemy with the sword that she wields in her right hand. It seems that, while in the presence of her husband, Nefertiti played a traditional supportive role, but when he was absent she stepped forward to assume an active role as his deputy.

Nefertiti bore at least six daughters: the first three, Meritaten, Meketaten and Ankhesenpaaten, born at Thebes; the younger three, Neferneferuaten, Neferneferure and Setepenre, at Amarna. She may also have given birth to one or more sons but boys were often excluded from official royal family art – Akhenaten himself had been ‘invisible’ until his accession. All six daughters were alive during the great festival marking Akhenaten’s reign Year 12, but Meketaten, Neferneferuaten, Neferneferure and Setepenre died soon after this. We know, from a recently discovered piece of graffiti, that Nefertiti continued to serve as consort until Akhenaten’s reignal Year 16. She then dropped out of sight. Although there have been suggestions that...
she ruled Egypt as a female pharaoh, either alongside her husband or after his death, there is no direct evidence to support this claim.

Akhenaten died in his regnal Year 17 and was buried in the still incomplete Amarna royal tomb. Initially, Amarna life continued as it always had done. Then, during Tutankhamen’s regnal Year 3 or 4, came the decision to leave. Amarna was abandoned, the Aten demoted and the traditional pantheon was restored. Tutankhamen would never escape the fact he had been born a member of the Amarna royal family, while his short-lived successor, Ay, whom we have previously met as a possible father to Nefertiti, was known to have been a prominent member of the Amarna elite. Both were tainted by the ‘Amarna heresy’ and this did not endear them to their more orthodox successors.

Egypt’s official history was revised to exclude the Amarna Period. This caused great confusion for those scholars who, following the 1822 decoding of the hieroglyphic script, started to reconstruct Egypt’s long history. None of the names mentioned in the Amarna inscriptions could be tied into the king lists that formed the backbone of Egyptian history. It would take many years for the fragmented evidence of Akhenaten’s reign to be joined into anything resembling a realistic history. Several key aspects of the Amarna Period remain the subject of fierce academic debate, and no two Egyptologists interpret Queen Nefertiti’s role in the Amarna experiment in the same way but none can deny the haunting beauty of the Berlin bust.

THE BERLIN BUST OF NEFERTITI

On 6 December 1912, a German archaeological team (right) led by Ludwig Borchardt discovered a remarkably well-preserved bust of Nefertiti in the ruined Amarna workshop of the ‘Chief of Works, the Sculptor Thutmose’. At the end of the excavation season, following the division of the finds, the bust was taken to Germany. In 1924 Nefertiti went on public display in Berlin, sparking decades of debate about the legal ownership of the bust.

In the Berlin bust (left), Nefertiti wears her unique flat-topped blue crown decorated with golden ribbons with red, blue and green inlays reflecting the colours in her bead collar. Her symmetrical face has a pink-brown skin, deeper red-brown lips and arched black eyebrows. Her right eye is inlaid with rock crystal and has a black pupil, and her left eye is missing. The tips of her ears and the top edge of her crown are slightly damaged, and the uraeus, or snake, which once reared from her crown has snapped off.

Although we have many other ancient images of the queen – and now contemporary art works, such as Fred Wilson’s Grey Area, 1993, and Isa Genzken’s Nofretete, 2012 – the Berlin bust will always be the definitive Nefertiti. Ancient Egypt has yielded more than its fair share of artistic masterpieces, but it is difficult to think of another sculpture that has so successfully bridged the gap between the ancient and modern worlds.


Nefertiti’s Face: The Creation of an Icon by Joyce Tyldesley is published in hardback by Profile Books at £20.
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Egyptology

Hero of the
On 1 May 1821, a very alluring exhibition opened in London’s Piccadilly at the exotic Egyptian Hall, built in 1812 and inspired by the Egyptomania created by French archaeological discoveries in Egypt under Napoleon Bonaparte. A reviewer in *The Times* called it a ‘singular combination and skilful arrangement of objects so new and in themselves so striking’. It ran for a year.

On display was the interior of an Egyptian tomb in Thebes (modern Luxor), discovered in 1817, from what would soon come to be called (by Jean-François Champollion) the Valley of the Kings. Actually, it was a one-sixth scale model, over 15 metres (50 feet) in length, complemented by a full-sized reproduction of two of the tomb’s most impressive chambers.

The bas-reliefs and polychrome wall decoration, showing gods, goddesses, animals, the life of the pharaoh and manifold coloured hieroglyphs, had been re-created from wax moulds taken of the original reliefs, and from paintings made on the spot by the tomb’s Italian discoverer, Giovanni Belzoni, and his compatriot, Alessandro Ricci, a physician-turned-artist who would go on to work extensively with Champollion in Egypt from 1828 to 1829.

But perhaps the most startling object from the tomb arrived late from Egypt, and was temporarily deposited in the British Museum. This was a creamy-white calcite (Egyptian alabaster) sarcophagus carved outside and inside with hieroglyphs originally inlaid with ‘Egyptian blue’, that is, calcium copper tetrasilicate. Unlike the rest of Belzoni’s exhibition, it can still be seen as a key attraction in Sir John Soane’s Museum, not far from the British Museum, following its purchase by Soane in 1824.

For which pharaoh was this tomb, and its sarcophagus, intended? In 1821, no one—not even Champollion—knew the answer, because no one could confidently read the hieroglyphic script, despite the tantalising Greek alphabetic clues in the Rosetta Stone, which had arrived in London in 1799 and had been on display at the British Museum since 1802. According to Belzoni, the tomb was ‘Presumed to be the Tomb of Psammis’. This name came, very tentatively, from Dr Thomas Young (1773–1829), foreign secretary of the Royal Society: a professional physician, a great physicist and a brilliant polymath who had been studying ancient Egyptian writing since 1814. Young had examined Belzoni’s and Ricci’s paintings and observed a similarity between a prominent hieroglyphic cartouche—that is, a small group of hieroglyphs inscribed within an oval ring—in the tomb, and similar cartouches carved on obelisks in Rome and Egypt. The latter cartouches Young

Andrew Robinson traces the life of the French archaeologist Jean-François Champollion, who deciphered the tantalising inscriptions of Ancient Egypt.
had already identified with Psammis, Psammuthis, or even Psammetichus, the name of an Egyptian ruler mentioned in the writings of Herodotus, Manetho and Pliny: three celebrated ancient historians of Egypt, who were Greek, Egyptian and Roman, respectively. Yet when the exhibition moved to Paris in the second half of 1822, there was no mention of Psammis in the French catalogue. Its author, Champollion — though writing under a precautionary pseudonym — did not accept Young’s attribution. At this very moment, in his famous Lettre à M Dacier, Champollion announced he could read the cartouches of rulers from the Graeco-Roman period of Ancient Egypt, such as Alexander, Cleopatra and Ptolemy, but he was not so confident about deciphering those of earlier Egyptian rulers.

During the rest of the 1820s, however, Champollion went on to read these earlier cartouches, and indeed hieroglyphic writing as a whole. Thanks to Champollion’s decipherment, the world came to know that Belzoni’s sarcophagus is from the tomb of Seti I, a militarily successful pharaoh who was succeeded on his death in 1279 BC by his son Ramesses II, ‘the Great’. Jean-François Champollion was born in 1790 in Figeac, in south-western France, at the edge of the Massif Central, far from the intellectual centres of France. Without the support of his elder brother, Jacques-Joseph, who was 12 years his senior, he would probably be unknown to the world today, given his modest family background, his volcanic personality, his talent for creating devoted enemies as well as close friends, his political sympathy for republicanism during a period of royalist rule, and his frequently poor health. As Jacques-Joseph remarked after Champollion’s premature death at the age of 41, just after his appointment as the world’s first professor of Egyptology at the College of France: ‘I was, by turns, his father, his master and his pupil.’ In later life, Jacques-Joseph himself would become a noted scholar. Known as Champollion-Figeac, he edited his late brother’s papers for publication in the 1830s and after.

In 1801, Jean-François moved from Figeac to Grenoble, to live with his brother. He would reside there until 1821, with breaks in Figeac and Paris, and would come to regard Grenoble as home. Although Paris made him famous, he dreaded the city because of its poor sanitary conditions and its political infighting: he privately
called Paris ‘Babel’. But he did not enjoy the spartan conditions as a boarder at Grenoble’s state lycée, which he attended from 1804–7 on the insistence of his brother, who struggled to pay his school fees. Immediately he entered the school, he took refuge in philological research that had nothing to do with his proper studies. In his schoolboy letters to his brother he demanded numerous erudite works, such as *Ludolphi Ethiopica grammatica*, a Latin grammar of the Ethiopic script, which his bibliophile brother did his best to procure. By 1807, he had focused on Ancient Egypt, stimulated by the presence in Grenoble of Joseph Fourier, one of Napoleon’s cultural savants in Egypt, who had a major collection of Egyptian antiquities and who was, at that time, researching his prestigious ‘historical preface’ to the first volume of the government’s *Description de l’Egypte* with the help of the Champollion brothers.

In 1807–9, supported by Fourier and by his brother, Champollion studied in Paris at the School of Oriental Languages, again under spartan conditions. Working excitedly on a collection of Coptic manuscripts that had been ‘borrowed’ by Napoleon from the Vatican Library, he convinced himself that Coptic might be similar to the language of the demotic section beneath the hieroglyphics of the Rosetta Stone. Demotic was the script used in the later centuries of Ancient Egyptian civilisation, before the Greek alphabet’s arrival in the Graeco-Roman period. In 1808, using a copy of the Rosetta Stone, he translated Greek alphabetic words into Coptic words using Coptic dictionaries, and tried to match them with undeciphered demotic
words. But he failed: the first of his many failed attempts to decipher the Egyptian scripts.

In 1814–15, now as a professor at the University of Grenoble, Champollion tried again, after appealing to London for an accurate copy of the Rosetta Stone, which brought him into contact with Thomas Young, who cautiously agreed to help. But again he abandoned the attempt, as politics intervened. Napoleon escaped from Elba and arrived in Grenoble, where Champollion’s elder brother became his secretary. At a meeting with the two brothers, the Egyptophile Napoleon enthusiastically offered to publish Champollion’s Coptic dictionary and grammar in Paris. But after Napoleon’s fall from power a few months later, the Champollion brothers lost their positions in Grenoble and were exiled to Figeac in 1816–17. Meanwhile, in Paris, Champollion’s most influential professor, Sylvestre de Sacy, who was a royalist by inclination, warned Young that Champollion was a potential plagiarist of his British colleague’s work and probably a ‘charlatan’.

In 1815, Young had hardly begun his research, but during the next three years he was highly productive and, in 1819, he published a pioneering article on Egypt in Encyclopaedia Britannica. This included his observation, based on the Rosetta Stone and other inscriptions, of a ‘striking resemblance’ between demotic signs and their ‘corresponding hieroglyphs’. Young concluded that the demotic script consisted of ‘imitations of the hieroglyphics… mixed with letters of the alphabet’. In other words, this script included both symbolic (logographic) and phonetic elements.

But Young was unsure whether this was also true of the hieroglyphic script which, in 1819, was considered to be purely symbolic, apart from some phonetic spellings of Graeco-Roman names in cartouches. Two of these, Ptolemy and Berenice, Young analysed into a chart of 13 phonetic symbols, which he cautiously labelled ‘SOUNDS?’; six of which are today considered correct, three partly correct and four incorrect. In addition, Young was able, with the help of the Greek portion of the Rosetta Stone, to compile a vocabulary of names and other words in demotic with their hieroglyphic equivalents, spelt with a mixture of phonetic and symbolic signs, of which some 80 words, almost half, are correct.

During this period, Champollion made little progress. On return to Grenoble from exile in Figeac, he became a schoolteacher and even considered becoming a notary – not least to satisfy the expectations of his potential father-in-law, a Grenoble glove-maker. He finally married Rosine Blanc in 1818 and had a daughter six years later. His only notable publication on ancient Egypt in 1817–21 turned out to contain a blunder, a claim that none of the hieroglyphic or demotic signs had phonetic values. A few months later he withdrew the publication and never referred to it again.

By late 1821, he had been forced to leave Grenoble when he was prosecuted by the city’s royalist authorities for supposedly taking part in a rebellion, at the very time of the Egyptian Hall exhibition in London. Though acquitted of the charge, in deep despair and declining health he settled with his brother in Paris. But the unwanted move turned out to lead to his breakthrough – possibly, though not provably, provoked by Champollion’s reading in Paris of Young’s article, ‘Egypt’, with its prescient mixture of (partly correct) phonetic and symbolic signs.

In early 1822, Champollion correctly analysed two hieroglyphic signs.
cartouches on an obelisk from Philae published by the British traveller William Bankes (1786–1855). Judging from the obelisk’s Greek base-block, the cartouches spelt ‘Ptolmes’ (Ptolemy) and ‘Cleopatra’: the beginnings of a promising hieroglyphic ‘alphabet’.

Then, in September 1822, he was shown a four-sign cartouche from Abu Simbel drawn by a French architect who had visited the site with Bankes. He read the first sign as ‘ra’ from the Coptic for ‘sun’ (which the sign appeared to symbolise), and the final two signs as a double ‘s’ (from the ‘s’ sign in ‘Ptolmes’). He then guessed that the second, wholly unknown, sign might represent ‘m’ – because the four signs would then spell ‘ramss’: the name of the Egyptian pharaoh, Rameses, mentioned in Manetho’s Aegyptiaca. The same ‘m’ sign appeared on the Rosetta Stone, again with the ‘s’ sign, as part of a group of hieroglyphs with the Greek translation ‘genethlia’, meaning ‘birthday’, which reminded Champollion of the Coptic word for ‘give birth’, ‘mise’. This was close, but not quite correct: today we know that the sign stands not for ‘m’ but is, instead, a biconsonantal sign standing for ‘ms’. Even so, Champollion had nailed Rameses.

Further analysis led to his most important publication in 1824, Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Egyptiens. In it, he stated: ‘Hieroglyphic writing is a complex system, a script all at once figurative, symbolic, and phonetic, in one and the same text, in one and the same sentence, and, I might even venture, in one and the same word.’ One century later, in 1922, in the Valley of the Kings, Champollion’s brilliant insight enabled the cartouche of another unknown pharaoh to be immediately read by its discoverer, Howard Carter – it was ‘Tutankhamun’. 

Cracking the Egyptian Code: The Revolutionary Life of Jean-François Champollion by Andrew Robinson is published in paperback by Thames and Hudson at £9.99.
Horse sense

Dominic Green explores the fine equine imagery on Ancient Greek vases and coins in a wide-ranging exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.
Horses, which were first domesticated on the Eurasian steppe some 4000 to 6000 years ago, were our constant companions until the triumph of the internal combustion engine in the mid-20th century. Man’s real four-legged friend disappeared from daily life gradually; in warfare, they were still essential to the German Blitzkrieg of Russia as late as 1941.

Today, however, horses are in what the German writer Ulrich Raulff calls ‘semi-retirement’, with a ‘part-time job as a recreational item, a mode of therapy, a status symbol, and source of pastoral support for female puberty’.

It is horse sense, Raulff argues in Farewell to the Horse (2017), to define modernity’s breach with the human past by our sudden divorce from our equine companions. The last public act of Nietzsche, who had trained as a cavalryman but injured himself attempting an unorthodox dismount, was to throw himself sobbing around the neck of a flogged horse.

In the decades after the philosopher of the modern crisis was carried off to the asylum, horses were slowly put out to pasture. Yet we remain, Raulff believes, haunted by the horse. We measure the strength of jet-engines in ‘horsepower’. When we feel in ‘fine fettle’ we may ‘champ at the bit’. We know better than to look ‘a gift horse in the mouth’, but we rely on testimony that comes straight from it. The horse, practical and mythical, remains with us ‘like the shadow of a dream’ – or the ghostly images in Rembrandt’s Polish Rider and Michael Morpurgo’s War Horse.

The Horse in Ancient Greek Art, now on show at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) in Richmond, USA, is a rich and complex exploration of equine themes in Ancient Greek art – a rather appropriate venue as Virginia is definitely ‘horse country’. Hippomania, a passion for horses, ran high in Greece. The earliest images are Mycenaean, such as a relief-decorated limestone stelai that stood near the ‘mask of Agamemnon’ grave excavated by Heinrich Schliemann at Mycenae in 1876. The stelai marked the grave of a wealthy elite warrior of the 16th century BC. On the relief, a horse in mid-gallop pulls a
chariot. The charioteer, leaning forward for balance, holds the reins taut in his right hand, leaving his left hand free to wield his sword. Despite the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial economy in the late Bronze Age (circa 1200 BC) its traditions and imagery endured on Cyprus. Two findings from the production and trade centre of Lefkandi describe the dual function of the horse in Iron Age Greece. A Protogeometric terracotta model of a horse on wheels, carrying two jars on its back, shows the horse's prosaic working aspect. A funerary assemblage from the Toumba (Greek grave mound) cemetery includes the bones of four horses, sacrificed to accompany a warrior in his tomb – a rare echo of the ritual sacrifice of horses described by Homer in the Iliad.

Horses were one of the most popular figurative ornaments of the Geometric Period, circa 900–700 BC, but the symbolic significance of equine imagery in this period remains unclear. Geometric images are contemporaneous to Homer's poems but, by this period, cavalry had replaced the chariot on the battlefield. Some vase scenes may be nostalgic fantasies about the age of heroes; others are explicitly mythological.

Chariots continued to be used for racing and ceremonial purposes. Two chariot designs proliferated: a 'rail' chariot whose design seems related to Mycenaean antecedents, and the 'high-front' chariot that became the standard design by the 7th century BC. A Geometric Amphora attributed to the workshop of Athens, circa 720–700 BC, depicts a seven-chariot procession. Six of them are clearly high-front chariots, characterised by a wall in front, and are driven by nude chario-teers. The seventh one looks lighter. Its driver wears the xystin, the sleeved and belted garment that would become a form of professional uniform in later depictions, most famously in the Charioteer of Delphi (478–474 BC), so perhaps the seventh is a racing chariot.

The oldest known image of the Trojan horse, on a Boetian bronze fibula, in the British Museum, is from the Archaic Period (circa 700–480 BC). Increased contact with the Near East and Egypt may have stimulated the more naturalistic style,
visible in the trio of horses in the Black-Figure Amphora (circa 675–650 BC) attributed to the Swing Painter, and in the finely detailed Horse-Head Amphora (circa 580–570 BC) attributed to the Gorgon Painter.

Further equine innovations of the Archaic Period included the erection of monumental horse sculptures as dedications at sanctuaries to the gods; the multiplication of horse imagery on engraved gems, miniature ivory carvings, reliefs in terracotta and stone; and vase paintings depicting the hunting of large game, such as boar, stag and lion.

In the Black-Figure Cup With Hunter and Dog (circa 510 BC), attributed to the Virginia Painter, the game is afoot. The rider holds the reins with one hand in a ‘collected’ position, to control his almost bouncing horse, while directing his lance downwards towards his prey. Beside him, his dog runs along, its head slightly turned up towards its master, as if co-ordinating their pursuit.

Archaic horse-drawn chariots appear as architectural decorations to sacred buildings and funerary monuments, and led to the development of the Panhellenic Games and a proliferation of races at local festivals, including the Panathenaic Games, instituted at Athens in 566 BC. Horses were no longer beasts of burden; mules and donkeys did the donkey work, and horse-ownership now symbolised social status.

The highest social class in Athens, the pentakosiomedimnoi, were so named because they owned enough property to produce at least 500 measures of grain per year. The second-highest class were the hippaeis, the horse-owning class. A member of the hippaeis class needed enough money and land to buy, feed and train an equine establishment. The reward was eligibility to join the cavalry, an increasingly important component of military power from the 5th century BC onwards.

A team of well-bred horses and a chariot were even more expensive to equip and maintain. A single owner could enter multiple teams in the Olympic races; in 416 BC, the Athenian demagogue Alcibiades entered seven chariots in a single race, and took the first, second and fourth places. A silver Dekadrachum (circa 405–400 BC) by Euainetos of Syracuse depicts a charioteer whipping a team around a corner in a tettriropion (a race of four-horse chariots). Overhead, a winged Nike confirms his victory. Below, a selection of military equipment advertises his membership of the cavalry.

At the Olympics, the most prestigious events were the tettriropion (introduced in 680 BC) and the synoris (a race of two-horse chariots, introduced in 408 BC). Pausanias, that great Roman tourist, describes the Olympic hippodrome as having an elaborate starting gate by the sculptor Kleitos. The course was four stades long and a little over one stade wide (about 780 by 220 metres). Judging from the story told by an aging tutor in Sophocles’ Electra about a head-on collision – “as they finished the sixth lap and turned into the seventh” – the central divider may not always have been present. Later in the same race, Electra’s brother Orestes, attempts the turn described on the Dekadrachum by Euainetos of Syracuse, but grazes the turning-post with his wheel, is thrown from his chariot and killed. This turns
out to be ‘fake news’, but it is crucial for the plot.

The black-figure amphorae awarded to the winners of the Panathenaic races record the drama of the event. The charioteer and team lean forward in synchrony, the tack and reins are detailed with a horseman’s eye, and the horses’ legs, awaiting the photographic work of Edweard Muybridge, are paired front and back, as if engaged in some lost skipping routine of dressage.

‘A horse whose movement is suspended in the air is so beautiful, admirable and amazing that it rivets the attention of young and old alike,’ writes Xenophon the Athenian in On Horsemanship. He continues: ‘Gods and heroes are shown riding such horses, and the men who ride them well also look magnificent.’

Today Xenophon’s primer is still valued by riders. The variations in bridle and bit, and the greater variations in the purpose of riding – the Greeks rode for war and prizes, not fun – are incidental to the unchanged relationship between man and horse. Perhaps surprisingly, excavations suggest that, while people have become taller since ancient times, horses have not. A good horse, Xenophon advises, should be 14 or 15 hands tall. Once the rider is up (Xenophon’s instructions still apply) after mounting, the raider should sit still, calm the horse, and make him stand until he is asked to walk. There should be no sudden moves; increase the speed slowly. If the horse starts off too quickly, he should be calmly and soothingly restrained. Do not lean into the turns, or the horse may fall. Circle to the left at the trot, and give the signal to canter when his left hoof is raised.

Public equestrian triumphs required, and still require, an unglamorous domestic life of mucking out and brushing down. In a Red-Figure Kylix (circa 510–500 BC) attributed to the Berlin Painter, an Athenian owner has joined three of his grooms in the stable. The owner is sitting and the grooms, two of whom are naked, are in postures familiar to anyone who has attempted to lead a horse that prefers not to be led. ‘Spirit,’ Xenophon wrote, ‘is to a horse as anger is to a man’. Yet this powerful animal never sheds its mythological aspect. The most prominent mythological horse, Pegasus, was rendered as early as the 6th century BC in architectural sculpture, in the
pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu (circa 580 BC) and on a metope from Temple C at Selinous in Sicily.

In the Knob-handled Patera (circa 320 BC) attributed to the White Saccos-Chariot Group Painter from Apulia in southern Italy, Pegasus prances inside a decorated border with a laughing eye. Other flying horses are shown in correspondence with celestial figures, complete with celestial chariots. This traffic includes the chariots of Eos (the goddess of the dawn), Selene (the personification of the Moon) and Nyx (the personification of the night). Perhaps the most telling symbol of the union of man and horse is the centaur.

The delicacy of the line that shapes the creature on the side of a Black-Figure Lip Cup (circa 540–530 BC) by the Centaur Painter belies his strength. But this is the nature of the human-horse relationship, in which both parties acquire ability and intelligence by learned restraint. ‘If oxen and horses or lions had hands, and could produce works of art as men do,’ the poet Xenophanes wrote, ‘horses would depict the gods to look like horses.’

Exhibition

The Horse in Ancient Greek Art is on show at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia (www.vmfa.org) until 18 July 2018. The comprehensive, fully illustrated catalogue, edited by Peter Schertz and Nicole Strobing is published by the VMFA and NSLM at $30.
Myths get people thinking. Atlantis, which has inspired so many quests to find a super-civilised primordial paradise, actually surfaces for the first time in Athens in the 4th century BC in Plato's dialogues *Timaeus* (1) and *Critias*. Never had any mention of such a place been made until the great philosopher introduced it to the world in order to explore some crucial philosophical and political ideas.

In the dialogues, Socrates says he wants to hear about the Ideal State in action, proving its excellence at a time of extreme stress, particularly in war. This prompts an old man called Critias (who was either one of the Athenian ‘Thirty Tyrants’, or his grandfather, Critias the Elder – the account is full of anomalies) to remember a story. According to this story, Atlantis was handed down from Athenian statesman Solon (3) who had heard it from some priests in Egypt in around 590 BC. He told it to Critias’ great-grandfather, Dropides, who told it to Critias’ grandfather (another Critias), who related it from memory when Critias was about 10 years old.

Critias tells Socrates that Atlantis Island was larger than Libya and Asia combined, and lay in the Atlantic Ocean outside the Pillars of Hercules (4). It had super-abundant flora and fauna, including elephants, and a south-facing coastal plain of almost 250,000sqkm, which rose precipitously above the ocean and was surrounded by mountains. This plain was encompassed by a 2,000km-long Grand Canal (ten times the length of the Suez Canal) and was criss-crossed by a further network of canals that connected to the capital (7). This city was built on concentric rings of land and water (5), and its walls were clad with melted bronze, tin and the mythical metal *oresshalkon*.

The rings surrounded a low hill about 10km inland, at the centre of which was a palace complex containing a temple to Poseidon,
three times as big as the Parthenon (2). This was lavishly adorned with silver, orelhalkon, gold and ivory, encircled by a golden wall, and served as the focus for rituals involving the capture and sacrifice of bulls (9). The city also had hot and cold springs, underground dockyards, barracks for its storm-troopers, a race track as wide as a normal Greek stadium was long, and elaborately patterned buildings constructed of red, white and black stone – which has led some to believe that it is connected to Santorini (8 and 10). For Plato, Atlantis was impressive, but also barbarous and excessive.

Its capital city could deploy 1.2 million fighting men, 10,000 chariots and 1200 ships, and there were nine other cities besides. These people also controlled continental territory reaching to the borders of Egypt and Italy. But the Atlanteans ultimately degenerated into imperialist aggressors and, around 9000 years before the story was told to Solon (there are several anomalies in the dates provided in the story), they came into conflict with an invented antediluvian Athens.

These Athenians, who in many ways embody Plato’s Ideal

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**THE WORLD OF PLATO’S ATLANTIS**

**THE TRANSMISSION OF THE ATLANTIS STORY**

Zeus destroys Atlantis and Athens (9,000 years ago)

Egyptian records (8,000 years old)

Priests at Saîs

Solon (post-reforms)

Deme
dides

either

Critias I

‘The Elder’

(as an old man [aged about 90], passed it to his grandson [aged 10])

Critias III

‘The Younger’

Critias II

‘The Elder’

Socrates & co. in Timaeus and Critias

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**CITY PLAN OF ATLANTIS**

3. The line of transmission of the Atlantis tale according to Critias. Whether Critias ‘The Younger’ or ‘The Elder’ relates the tale to Socrates is still a matter of scholarly dispute.

4. The world as imagined by Plato at the time when Atlantis existed.

5. Atlantis’s capital city, with its citadel, gardens, temples, gymnasia, stadium and barracks, divided by rings of water, as described by Critias.

6. Terror Antiquus, 1908, by Leon Bakst (1866–1924), oil on canvas, shows the destruction of Atlantis by Zeus’ lightning bolt and the ocean engulfing the city. Bakst was inspired to paint this after a visit to Greece in 1907. 250cm x 270cm. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg/Wikimedia.
State, heroically and single-handedly repelled the vast Atlantean forces, before Zeus decided to punish the Atlanteans Atlantis for their hubris (6). Only 24 hours later, the island sank beneath the waves. So the story nearly destroys the evidence for the existence of Atlantis, and Socrates and his friends are amazed by it.

Critias’ story about an ancient, yet extraordinarily advanced, civilisation living on a fabulous island that disappeared overnight is powerful and mysterious. Yet why did nobody tell the tale before Plato? Was he inspired by genuine events and/or places? If so, what were they? And crucially, what was Plato’s reason for telling the story? His star student, Aristotle, who was doubtless with him at the Academy when he wrote his dialogues, thought it was a literary creation for philosophical purposes, but the sheer seductive brilliance of Plato’s story-telling has led others to take it literally, and to look for traces of Atlantis in pretty well every corner of the globe.

The reality of Plato’s Atlantis lies in various historical and mythical places and events that could have inspired him. Homer’s Odyssey gave him Ogygia, Calypso’s paradise isle, which was sometimes located in the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the island of Scherie (home of the Phaeacians and the last destination of Odysseus in his 10-year journey) which had a temple of Poseidon, a glittering palace, luxuriant vegetation and twin springs.

But although the Atlantis story might be ‘fake history’, it also draws on Athens’s ‘true history’. Critias references historians Herodotus (circa 484–circa 425 BC) and Thucydides (circa 460–circa 400 BC), who both wrote about major conflicts from Athens’s past, but never mention the Atlanto-Athenian war. Herodotus described Babylon’s wondrous walls, temples, canals and fecundity, as well as the palace in the Persian city of Ecbatana, with its multiple circular walls and multi-coloured battlements with overlays of precious metal, all of which appear on Atlantis.

As for the ‘Atlantis War’, this has an echo in Darius I’s seaborne invasion of Greece when the imperial Persians were repulsed by the underdog Athenian hoplites at Marathon in 490 BC. The hubris and massive construction projects of Darius’s successor, Xerxes, are mirrored by the Atlanteans, as is his unsuccessful attempt to overwhelm Athens with his vast army. Essentially, Plato’s barbarous Atlantis versus Ideal-State Athens is Herodotus’s Persia versus Athens, and Plato’s readers would have been expected to make the connection.

After the Persian invasions, Athens made the transition from land-power to sea-power, and embarked on a journey of maritime imperialism. Thucydides described the chaotic hubbub of the port of Piraeus, and the plague and moral degeneration in Athens. He also wrote about the catastrophic defeat of the Athenian naval assault in 415–413 BC on Sicily (whose geography Plato knew at first hand, and which has a vaguely Atlantean flavour), political failures that had an impact on Plato’s own family, and ultimately the shattering defeat inflicted on Athens by Spartan land-power in the 431–404 BC Peloponnesian War.

So now Plato’s Atlantis is
equated with Thucydides’s imperialist 5th-century Athens. Both of them became wealthy through maritime trade and naval power, expanded into lavishly decorated, noisy commercial centres, became hubristic, excessive and diverse (Plato loves unity and hates diversity), overreached themselves, and caused their own downfall. Again, Plato’s audience would easily have seen the analogy, or ought to have done. Plato would also have read Thucydides’ accounts of disasters caused by earthquakes and flooding at Orobiæ and Atalante off Euboea in 426 BC. In his own lifetime the city of Helice in the Gulf of Corinth, which had a famous temple of Poseidon, was engulfed in a tsunami.

So, if we want to find a historical basis for the Atlantis story, Plato’s re-writing of history is it. Atlantis is not a geological feature that plunged into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean in the 10th millennium BC. It is first Persia, and then Athens, in the 5th century BC. So modern-day pseudo-historians of Atlantis are engaged in the search for an imaginary island created by a pseudo-historian.

Admittedly Socrates does say that the fact that Atlantis is ‘true history and not an invented myth is massively [pammega in Greek] important, I suppose (pou),’ but we shouldn’t be misled. Plato often uses pan-compounds such as pammega (pan = ‘all; mega = ‘big’) to express disapproval through rhetorical exaggeration. Here, Socrates is being ironic, as the word pou signifies doubt thrown in as an afterthought, and indicates scepticism. He clearly doesn’t believe a word of it. Yet, despite Socrates’s doubts, there remain many who accept the ‘true history’ of the tale. Over 100 theories have been posited since the turn of the millennium alone, predominantly by men rather than women, taking us from Antarctica to Bolivia, Cyprus, Doggerland, Egypt, and so on through the alphabet and around the world.

Looking for Atlantis is like trying to find the real Hogwarts from JK Rowling’s Harry Potter novels. We know that it is a co-educational, secondary boarding-school for pupils aged 11 to 18, and that it exhibits all the characteristic features of the British public-school house system. We also know it can be reached by train from King’s Cross station, that it stands on the shore of a loch in Scotland and it has extensive grounds with lawns, flowerbeds, vegetable patches, a forest, greenhouses, outbuildings and an owlery.

By some Atlantological logic, all these are real, therefore, Hogwarts might be real. Yet anyone reading JK Rowling 2500 years from now, discovering that many of Hogwarts’ details are founded in 21st-century reality, and proceeding to assert that Hogwarts is therefore not a fictional place, and duly claiming to have discovered it in Scotland, would be missing the point. Like Plato’s Atlantis, it is all about the story.

All that Socrates needed in the dialogues was a plausible fiction, so Plato manipulated the Muse of History into making Critias’ Atlantis story appear more truthful than it actually is.

In making Atlantis a foil, Platonic primordial Athens becomes the star of the show. This is the city-state governed by 20,000 Guardians who focus entirely on their role as warriors, live apart from the rest of the population, own no private property, regard everything as communal, receive nothing from...
the state apart from their basic sustenance, and control a cohesive and stable community. And they are invincible. Their Atlantean assailants, on the other hand, look like a happy and blessed super-civilisation, but once you scratch their glossy surface you find a nasty, decadent, morally debased, dystopian nightmare. Their rulers have no checks and balances on their power, and their acquisition of individual wealth leads to disunity, moral ‘drunkenness’, political degeneration, military defeat and, finally, the destruction of their island.

Plato’s message to his contemporary Athenians is crystal clear: ‘Keep it simple, modest, organised and unified; don’t overreach yourselves; don’t be like the barbarous Persians; don’t be like your imperialist ancestors; and don’t be like the imaginary Atlanteans. It can only end badly.’

Socrates never gets the opportunity to comment on the story, because the Critias breaks off unfinished, in mid-sentence, but he would undoubtedly have approved. Overall, the message of the Atlantis dialogues concerns the pernicious effects of wealth and power on the ruling class, an early precursor of Lord Acton’s ‘power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’. Yet the reception of Plato’s Atlantis story shows that there is still a widespread drive to believe it, which sits comfortably with the early 21st-century post-truth penchant for conspiracy theories, fake news and alternative facts.

Many Atlantis theories enter the entertaining realms of the pseudo-archaeologist, the pseudo-scientist, and the psychic but, at times, they have had a very dark side. Atlantis was used by the Conquistadors to justify their annexations in the New World in the 16th century, and by Heinrich Himmler to ‘prove’ the Aryan supremacy in the 20th century. The perils of this type of thinking were eloquently expressed by Voltaire when he wrote that, ‘anyone who has the power to make you believe absurdities has the power to make you commit injustices’. Pseudo-archaeology can be extremely dangerous.

Far too many difficulties – geological, chronological, archaeological, historical – prevent us from accepting Plato’s story at face value but, as Socrates says in the Republic, when we don’t know the truth about the past we can invent a lie as close to it as possible, blurring the boundaries between falsehood and reality, in order to make it useful – a ‘noble lie’, replete with deep philosophical and political truths. And that is what Plato is doing with Atlantis: there is no need to seek it in Antarctica, Bolivia, Cyprus, Doggerland, Egypt, or anywhere else, because its location is not the ‘mystery’ that enters the titles and subtitles of so many Atlantean publications.

The Atlantis story is a vividly contemporary text for us, as it was for the 4th-century BC Athenians, but not because it invites a search for a lost continent. Atlantis existed only in Plato’s imagination, as a dire warning about the pernicious consequences of luxury, excess, corruption and imperialism. Even if it is not true, the Atlantis story of Timaeus and Critias is a myth worth thinking about.

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BOOKREVIEWS

Napoleon’s Commentaries on the Wars of Julius Caesar
Translated and edited by RA Maguire
Pen & Sword
130pp
Hardback, £16.95/$24

While exiled on the South Atlantic island of St Helena after meeting his Waterloo, Napoleon passed the time, and distracted himself from his stomach cancer and insomnia, by dictating commentaries on the military memoirs of Julius Caesar. Published in 1836 as Précis des Guerres de César, each chapter of the commentaries summarises the events of a single Julian campaign, then concludes with some Napoleonic observations. RA Maguire’s new translation is clear, and carries the flavour of Latinate and Gallic syntax into modern English.

Warfare had changed in the intervening centuries, particularly through the invention of firearms. But the rate of movement was still defined by the foot pace of a man or a horse. Human muscle-power, augmented by horses, ropes and pulleys, remained the main source of energy for military construction work, from trench-digging to bridge-building. Napoleon and Caesar had much terrain in common, too. Both fought campaigns in Gaul, Italy, North Africa and the Levant.

Their imperial characters were not dissimilar, either. Both men were famous womanisers. Both seized power by unconstitutional means. Both permanently altered the public administration before taking charge of the legions in Gaul. Maguire supplies another diachronic comparison. If Bernard Law Montgomery (Monty) had not gone directly into the army after school, but had followed a cursus honorarum akin to Caesar’s, then at the time of D-Day, Montgomery would also have been ‘a top barrister, a leading politician and the current Archbishop of Canterbury’.

Napoleon and Montgomery were professional soldiers, and there is more than a little personal pride, if not imperial vanity, in Napoleon’s observations. In 55 BC, Caesar built a bridge over the Rhine at Cologne on piled supports in the space of 10 days. Napoleon notes that both of Caesar’s incursions during this campaign were ‘premature and unsuccessful’, and that his conduct towards civilian populations at Berg and Zutphen was ‘contrary to the law of nations’: ‘In his memoirs, he seeks in vain to tone down the injustice of his conduct, and Cato condemned him for it.’

Plutarch, Napoleon writes, considered Caesar’s bridge-building a ‘prodigious achievement’, but the view from St Helena is that it seems ‘an entirely unwarrantable work’ that should have taken fewer than 10 days. As evidence, Napoleon cites the bridging of the Danube in 1809 by General Bertrand. He then notes that construction of a bridge does not require possession of the bank. Speaking of himself in the third person – the voice of egotism – the ex-emperor writes: ‘Napoleon built a pontoon bridge 160 yards long as a single unit’ in the shelter of an island. His men carried it to the river under darkness, then swung it across the river. Within ‘a very few minutes’ it was moored to the opposite bank, and his infantry had surprised the enemy.

Napoleon’s commentaries are the response of one great military-political mind to another. The little Coriscan admires the mighty Roman, but cannot resist cutting him and his contemporaries down to size. But then, Caesar never made the error of invading Russia, and he did manage to invade Britain. And while Napoleon may have been the bolder builder of bridges, Caesar, albeit indirectly, laid stronger foundations for an imperial dynasty.

Cato the Younger, the champion of the republic, committed suicide in Africa rather than surrender to Caesar. Napoleon calls this a strategic error. Cato should have joined the other supporters of Pompey in Spain; it might even have altered the outcome of the civil wars. This is the Napoleon of the Hundred Days – the modern Caesar. It would be no less interesting to know the first Caesar’s opinion of his French admirer.

Dominic Green

Palmyra: An Irreplaceable Treasure
Paul Veyne
Translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan
University of Chicago Press
128pp, 13 colour illustrations
Hardback, £17.82/$22.50

‘Streets of Palmyra,’ the German Romantic poet Hölderin wrote in Aages of Life, ‘Forests of columns in the level desert! Where are you now?’ Baudelaire, too, dreamt of ‘the lost jewels of ancient Palmyra.’ The ruined city itself is now a twice-lost jewel – lost to time, recovered by 20th-century archaeologists, only to be tragically lost again, in 2015 to the barbarism of so-called Islamic State.

For now, Palmyra, the French archaeologist and historian Paul Veyne writes, ‘can only be known and experienced through books’.

He begins with anguished questions: ‘Why did they destroy Palmyra, which was classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site? And why are there so many massacres, including the torture, suffering, and decapitation of the Palmyrene archaeologist Khaled al-Assaad, to whom I dedicate this book?’ Veyne’s direct answer is an elegant and illuminating revivification of the life of ancient Palmyra. Implicitly, this portrait of the city builds an indirect answer. Ancient Palmyra ‘holds the record for the number of rich cultures that can be found in one place’. The Islamists, Veyne implies, wish the world ‘to be condemned to a life of suffocating sameness’.

Palmyra was a mixing-pot, a city on the frontier between east and west. It was not ‘a Syrian city like others, just as Venice, in contact with Byzantine and Turkish civilization, was not representative of all Italy’. The Roman visitor of around AD 200 would have noticed this at once. The Palmyrenes spoke Greek for business, but their daily tongue was Aramaic. Their statues were of bronze, not marble, and their massive temple was dedicated to the Mesopotamian Bel, not Jupiter. The temple’s Cornithian columns were familiar, and so were its Ionic capitals, though they would have been ‘a bit old-fashioned’ to Roman eyes. But the monumental entrance was at the side, not the front. Even more strangely, the temple had windows and a terraced roof, like a human habitation.

Appian called the Palmyrenes ‘a trading people’ who ‘bring Indian or Arabian products from Persia, and market them in Roman territory’. Palmyra possessed enough
of the ‘uniform’ traits of Graeco-Roman world to be a ‘civilised and even cultured place’, but it existed ‘dangerously close to nomadic non-civilisation’. Its colomnade and its agora with 200 statues marked it as ‘a true city-state, following the Graeco-Roman concept’. But its low and wide, single-storey dwellings, its encampment on the northern edge of the city where the camels and traders gathered, and its souk were not Graeco-Roman. Its traders carried luxuries across the sand from the Persian Gulf, past the brigandage of the desert tribes. Its theatre was ‘one of the smallest in the ancient world’, and there were no theatrical competitions or Olympiads.

In the 3rd century, the weakening of Rome and the rise of Sassanian Persia upset this balancing act. A Palmyrene empire rose under Queen Zenobia in AD 270 but quickly fell. In AD 273, Aurelian’s legions razed the city and tore down its earlier buildings and carrying off its statues. ‘But why, in August 2015, did ISIS need to blow up and destroy that temple of Baalshamin?’ asks Veyne. Not, he believes, because it was a pre-Islamic or pagan temple, but because it is ‘venerated by contemporary Westerners’.

The liberal West, Veyne argues, sees Palmyra as an ancestor, a polycultural and tolerant ‘merchant republic’. Like the Romans, the Islamists pillaged Palmyra in order to standardise it in their image, ‘to prove that they are themselves’.

Palmyra is an elegantly written, effortlessly accomplished and deeply tragic book – one to be read with regret because we can no longer visit the real thing.

Dominic Green

A New History of Italian Renaissance Art
Stephen J Campbell and Michael W Cole
2nd edition
Thames & Hudson
712pp, 58 colour and black-and-white illustrations
Hardback, £24.95

The Renaissance was so-named in the 19th century. A Florentine would have described the English language in the 1830s via French. The French Revolution, with its revival of Roman Republicanism, really had been a deliberate ‘rebirth’, yet it had also transformed modern politics. This is a hard idea to absorb, because it requires the reader to look backwards and forwards in history at the same time, while simultaneously focusing on the Renaissance itself.

Stephen J Campbell and Michael W Cole’s New History of Italian Renaissance Art does all that, and more. This elegant and comprehensive reconciliation of this double view of the Renaissance was acclaimed upon its publication in 2012. This, the second edition, expands Campbell and Cole’s survey of 14th-century art, revises their assessment of several artists, Leonardo da Vinci among them, and includes a valuable appendix on the materials and techniques of the Renaissance workshop. The whole story is laid out in short, richly illustrated chapters, from Giotto and the ‘political geography’ of the Tencento to ‘church humanism’ and the divergent paths that led into the 16th century. Each chapter has plenty of historical context, and a lightness of touch that comes from heavy learning.

Naturalism, the Renaissance method, was not simply ‘a problem of imitating the physical world’. The artwork was not a mirror of Nature, but an historically conscious interpretation, using ‘a symbolic visual language’ that a sophisticated viewer would have understood in historical terms. Verrochio’s Water Sprite (c. 1470) was made for the Medici villa at Careggi, near Florence. Its motif, a winged infant carrying a dolphin, was an ancient one. Verrocchio’s contemporaries, Campbell and Cole write, would have seen the ‘ancient prototype’, but they would also have seen modern and local innovation. They would have seen the Water Sprite in conjunction with Donatello’s spirtelli, the angelic figures described by Aristotle and carved by Donatello for the marble cantoria, or singing gallery (1432–38) in Florence’s Duomo. The authors link Donatello’s frieze thematically to the dancing, drapery-clad figures of Pisanello’s drawings, whose attitudes and dress express ‘artistic allegiance to antiquity’, even as Pisanello’s use of a live model, rather than a sculpture, deviated from it.

This single thread in Campbell and Cole’s magnificent tapestry shows how the Renaissance, by bequeathing the idea of ‘the artist’ and artistic method, used its past in order to shape its future.

Dominic Green

The Etruscans
Lucy Shipley
Reaktion Books
216pp, 56 illustrations, 47 in colour
Hardback, £15

One of the most iconic Etruscan images we have is the Sarcophagus of the Spouses, a striking sculpture of a stylish couple reclining together, which appears on the cover of Lucy Shipley’s book. Their fine appearance and enigmatic smiles are made more tantalising by the fact that our knowledge of their culture is far from complete. This addition to Reaktion Books’ Lost Civilizations series is therefore to be welcomed.

Shipley sets her course by identifying a select object or place as a focus for each chapter, such as the Piacenza Liver – a life-size, heavily inscribed model of a sheep’s liver, used for foretelling the future. These prompt an examination of different aspects of the Etruscan world. It is a neat device enabling the author to guide us through what has actually been discovered, what the objects may say about the Etruscans, and to

Minerva May/June 2018
BOOKREVIEWS

Hadrian’s Wall: Rome and the Limits of Empire
Adrian Goldsworthy

Head of Zeus
192pp, 35 colour and 4 black-and-white illustrations
Hardback, £18.99

Hadrian’s Wall is the largest monument remaining from the Roman occupation of Britain. Stretching across the northern reaches of the country, from the Tyne to the Solway for a mighty 73 miles (118km) and punctuated by a series of turrets, milecastles and forts, it is a unique feature of the British landscape.

Today it is one of the nation’s most popular historic sites, and little wonder. Its arresting appearance, its longevity and the sheer audacity of its construction combine to form an irresistible attraction. It is also a good subject for Adrian Goldsworthy, an ancient historian, noted for his expertise in Roman military matters, and an accomplished historical novelist, to tackle.

Hadrian is thought to have ordered the construction of the wall during his visit to Britain in AD 122 or perhaps before, and its construction continued throughout his reign. Although evidence of Roman Britain at the time is somewhat scarce, the presence of the wall suggests there was a real or perceived threat to Roman control in the region at the time, a view supported by the fact that it shows evidence of being hastily put together.

Early on, the wall was decommissioned and another defence, the Antonine Wall, was built further north, between the Forth and the Clyde. When that was abandoned, Hadrian’s Wall became the northern frontier of the Roman empire again. Could it stop a strong invading force from the north? The author believes not, but it could slow it down, providing the Romans with time to respond. It also made it harder for spies to cross the frontier.

Goldsworthy deftly guides us through the entire, multifaceted life of the wall, including the methods used to build it and its later repairs and restorations. Its construction remains a formidable accomplishment and the units of legionnaires helpfully left inscriptions proudly noting their contributions. But he does more than just describe the physical and strategic aspects of the wall: he also evokes the atmosphere of the great forts scattered along its length that were added later and are now relics of their time.

Occupied for around 300 years, Hadrian’s Wall was a focus of Roman life in northern Britain. Goldsworthy includes plenty of insights into the world of the soldiers and civilians who lived in its forts and surrounding settlements, enabling us easily to imagine the humbling community around it.

Part of the Landmark Library series of compact volumes dedicated to the great achievements of mankind, Goldsworthy’s book contains excellent colour illustrations, an array of arresting photographs and a useful guide for today’s visitors to the wall.

This book provides a clear, concise guide to one of the favourite heritage sites of Britain and transports us back to the frontier life of the Roman Empire in another vital era of our history.

Diana Bentley

Mortal Wounds: The human skeleton as evidence for conflict in the past
Martin Smith

290pp, 45 black-and-white photographs and 19 black-and-white illustrations
Hardback, £22.95

Dr Martin Smith is a forensic anthropologist who has spent 10 years working in orthopaedic, surgical and accident and emergency departments. This has given him a practical knowledge of wounds and how they have been inflicted, and he has carried this knowledge into his work on wounds still visible on skeletal remains from the distant past. But, from the outset, he makes it clear that this book is aimed at the general reader rather than specialists in the subject of osteoarchaeology. This is to be welcomed.

In the first chapter he describes the materials that make up bones, and illustrates it with clear, well-noted diagrams. He is aware that most non-specialists are not familiar with the names of most of the bones that make up the human skeleton, and to help clarify this he provides annotated drawings naming them.

He begins with a clear statement of his view of his subject, when he says: ‘I see dead people; the human body as archaeology.’ The book then examines a variety of human remains from prehistory to the 19th century.

As Smith analyses the wounds on skeletal remains, he demonstrates that humans have been inflicting deliberate violence on one another from the earliest times. This is crucial in the field of Battlefield Archaeology. Although each chapter could be read independently from the rest of the book, the
Smith describes the difference between wounds that have healed on skeletal remains and those still present at the time of death. He tells us that these wounds may not have been the cause of death, explaining that soft tissue wounds that are fatal may leave no trace on the skeleton.

He also addresses the intriguing question of when war, as we understand it today, started. His conclusion is that it developed not as a single explosion, but by slow incremental steps because of changes in human behaviour. He argues that there was never a golden age when we lived in peace and harmony, but that men have been killing each other with weapons since the earliest times, and he supports this contention with convincing evidence. The possibility that the first weapons were made for hunting animals and were subsequently used to kill fellow humans as a deliberate act is discussed. He states that many of the wounds found on early skeletons could be the result of accidents. However, he also points out that there are too many for them all to be accidental, and concludes that many were homicides. Evidence that different human groups tried to annihilate each other has been found in the ‘Pit of Bones’, that dates back 400,000 years, at Atapuerca in northern Spain. He goes on to discuss how the advent of the use of metal produced a different category of wound on skeletons from those made by stone weapons. He also asserts that the use of metal weapons made the taking of heads as trophies much easier. This gives rise to something uniquely human – that is, says Dr Smith, ‘the use of violence as a means of communication’.

This well researched, well written book is recommended for archaeologists, military historians and all those interested in the development of human kind.

David Sim

Minerva May/June 2018

CLASSICAL CONUNDRUMS

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) tinnimentum (Latin)
A) a tinkling
B) the process of spreading manure
C) an inducement, a bribe
2) tykedon (Ancient Greek)
A) a pathway up to a steep hill
B) a melting away, consumption, a wasting away, a decline
C) a small cavity in a rock
3) squamosus (Latin)
A) tired, exhausted
B) ill-balanced, shaky
C) covered with scales, scaly
4) toichoruchos (Ancient Greek)
A) a torch-bearer
B) one who digs through the wall – a housebreaker, burglar, robber
C) an arrow quiver bag
5) vocula (Latin)
A) an invitation
B) a small or feeble voice
C) a halo round the moon
6) hyperthurion (Ancient Greek)
A) overeagerness, overenthusiasm
B) an excess
C) the lintel of a door or gate
7) uspiam (Latin)
A) anything badly formed or out of shape
B) at or in any place, anywhere, somewhere
C) diagonally across from something else
8) mesenguau (Ancient Greek)
A) to deposit a pledge in the hands of a third party
B) to distribute
C) to become angry
9) spurcidicus (Latin)
A) with protruding ears
B) something very rickety and unsafe
C) using filthy language, smutty, obscene
10) prosdiamartureo (Ancient Greek)
A) to take advantage
B) to predict
C) to testify in addition
11) tolleno (Latin)
A) a swing-beam, a swipe
B) to walk with long strides
C) to laugh loudly
12) muria (Ancient Greek)
A) a pimple
B) silliness, folly
C) a baby’s tooth

• 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.

ANSWERS

Minerva May/June 2018
Ravilious and Co: The Pattern of Friendship
Eric Ravilious (1903–42) was at the heart of one of the most important circles of innovative English artists and designers of the mid-20th century. His designs for wallpapers, textiles and ceramics are displayed alongside his familiar landscapes, especially of the South Downs, and war paintings in an exhibition which charts his relationships and collaborations with fellow artists, such as Paul Nash (who influenced his work as a wood engraver), John Nash, Enid Marx and Eileen ‘Tirzah’ Garwood (who became his wife). Ravilious also produced over 400 book illustrations, book jackets and more than 40 lithographic designs. This aspect of his oeuvre is displayed in a mock-up of a 1930s’ bookshop, showing books and illustrations, such as *The Westbury Horse*, 1939 (below). Eric Ravilious was lost in action over Iceland, aged only 39, while working as a war artist.

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(www.comptonverney.org.uk)
Until 10 June 2018.

DEDHAM, Essex
*Munnings and the River*
In the 250th anniversary year of the Royal Academy, this exhibition takes a look at a less familiar aspect of the career of one of its presidents – Sir Alfred Munnings. He is best known for his equestrian and sporting scenes but, here, his landscapes are in the spotlight. Rivers provided a backdrop for most of the artist’s life, from his childhood home in a watermill to his later residence near the Stour in Dedham, and it is these natural features that flow through his landscape paintings, such as *Tagg’s Island* 1919 (right) on the Thames. Munnings Museum
+44 (0)1206 322127
(www.munningsmuseum.org.uk)
Until 31 October 2018.

EDINBURGH
*Canaletto and the Art of Venice*
Over 100 paintings, drawings, and prints by Canaletto (1697–1768) and his contemporaries show how they captured the allure of Venice. Not only did they meticulously record the vibrancy of the city around them, they also developed the capriccio, architectural fantasies conjuring up Classical ruins, which can be seen in Canaletto’s *A Capriccio View with Ruins*, circa 1742–44 (above), Marco Ricci’s *Capriccio View with Roman Ruins*, circa 1729, and *Landscape with Classical Ruins, Cattle and Figures*, circa 1741–42, by Francesco Zuccarelli. All these paintings come from the Royal Collection. They were acquired by George III from Joseph Smith (circa 1674–1770), an English merchant and later British Consul in Venice. The king, a great patron of the arts, bought almost all Smith’s collection in 1762, an acquisition that has made the Royal Collection one of the pre-eminent collections of 18th-century Venetian art in the world containing the largest number of works by Canaletto.
The Queen’s Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse
+44 (0)303 123 7334
(www.royalcollection.org.uk)
From 11 May to 21 October 2018.

HOUGHTON HALL, Norfolk
*Damien Hirst at Houghton Hall: Colour Space Paintings and Outdoor Sculptures*
The home of Britain’s first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, is now playing host to new works by Damien Hirst. On public view for the first time, in Houghton Hall’s historic State Rooms, 46 paintings from the Colour Space series, a development of the artist’s earlier Spot Paintings, the first of which was created in 1986. Hirst’s sculpture is on display in the house and gardens, including the Pegasus and unicorn duo of *Myth* and *Legend* (above right), which was first seen at Chatsworth in 2011.

Houghton Hall
+44 (0)1485 528569
(www.houghtonhall.com)
Until 15 July 2018.

LIVERPOOL
*Egon Schiele/Francesca Woodman*
Drawings by the early 20th-century Austrian Expressionist artist Egon Schiele, who died 100 years ago, and
photographs by the later American artist Francesca Woodman (1958–81) together demonstrate innovative approaches to capturing movement through dynamic compositions. Both artists created intimate nude portraits and self-portraits with the focus on emotional intensity – Schiele used quick, sharp lines and Woodman used long exposures. 

Tate Liverpool
+44 (0)15 1702 7400
(www.tate.org.uk)
From 24 May to 23 September 2018.

LONDON
Charmed lives in Greece: Ghika, Craxton, Leigh Fermor
After meeting at the end of the Second World War, artists Niko Ghika and John Craxton, and writer Patrick Leigh Fermor became firm friends, shaping each other’s work and sharing a love of Greece, where they spent much of their lives. Centring on their homes, on Hydra, Crete, Kardamyla and Corfu, this sunny, Mediterranean exhibition shows paintings, photographs, book jackets, personal possessions and letters that bring their friendship and the people and places of Greece to life. Below is John Craxton’s 1948 Study for a Poster.

British Museum
+44 (0)20 7323 8299
(www.britishmuseum.org)
Until 15 July 2018.

Edward Bawden
Throughout his long career, which spanned 60 years, Edward Bawden (1903–89) demonstrated his great versatility and humour as an artist and designer. He also had a flair for storytelling, which can be seen in his linocuts depicting Aesop’s Fables, such as *The Gnat and the Lion*, 1970, (above right) and the illustrated books he created for his children. Today, his artistic accomplishments are largely overshadowed by his commercial designs for companies including Fortnum & Mason and Shell. Presenting material from every stage of his career, including unseen pieces from his family’s private collection, this exhibition sets out to redress this imbalance with a particular emphasis on his role in reinventing watercolour with a particular emphasis on his role in reinventing watercolour with Paul Nash and Eric Ravilious, and his work as a war artist between 1940 and 1945.

Dulwich Picture Gallery
+44 (0)20 8693 5254
(www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)
From 23 May to 9 September 2018.

Tacita Dean: Still Life
Curated by Tacita Dean and featuring some of her own work, this exhibition presents a contemporary artist’s view of still life in a range of media, and its importance in the history of art. The paintings come from the National Gallery’s own collections, which serve as a source of inspiration for artists. Paintings such as Zurbarán’s *Cup of Water and a Rose* are shown alongside works by contemporary artists such as Wolfgang Tillmans and Roni Horn. Dean has also made a new film diptych, *Ideas for Sculpture in a Setting*, especially for the National Gallery exhibition, which is part of a collaboration between the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery (above right) and Royal Academy, who are staging, respectively, her *Still Life, Portrait and Landscape show.*

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

Thomas Cole: Eden to Empire
An influential figure in American landscape painting and founder of the Hudson River School, the British-born artist Thomas Cole (1801–48) travelled England and Italy and engaged actively with European art of the time. Cole’s grand cycle of paintings entitled *The Course of Empire* will be on show, reflecting his interest in enhanced scenic ruins – a good example of this is *Aqueduct near Rome*, 1832 (below) – and his dialogue with other artists such as JMW Turner and John Constable.

National Gallery
+44 (0)20 7747 2885
(www.nationalgallery.org.uk)
From 11 June to 7 October 2018.

Ed Ruscha: Course of Empire
Presenting a very different view of progress and the cyclical nature of civilization to that of Cole’s *The Course of Empire Series* (displayed concurrently) is Ed Ruscha’s 2005 series of American landscapes that feature the industrial buildings of Los Angeles. Ruscha’s *Course of Empire* is shown in its entirety for the first time since its debut at the 51st Venice Biennale.

National Gallery
+44 (0)20 7747 2885
(www.nationalgallery.org.uk)
From 11 June to 7 October 2018.

Tacita Dean: Portrait
While the National Gallery explores what still life means to Tacita Dean, the National Portrait Gallery next door focuses on another genre usually associated with painting – portraiture. Instead of paintings, for the first time at the gallery the emphasis will be on the medium of 16mm film. As well as two new works by Dean (*Provence and His Picture in Little*), her six-screen installation *STILLNESS…*, 2008, which features the American choreographer Merce Cunningham, and film diptych of Ethiopian artist Julie Mehretu, 2011, have their first showing in the UK.

National Portrait Gallery
+44 (0) 20 7306 0055
(www.npg.org.uk)
Until 28 May 2018.

Splendours of the Subcontinent: Four Centuries of South Asian Paintings and Manuscripts
During the 17th century, when the newly formed East India Company was bringing South Asian exports to Britain, the Mughal empire was flourishing. Exquisite paintings and manuscripts portray the Mughal court at the time, and a number of these, presented to George III, are now held in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. The collection grew as the East India Company rose in

Minerva May/June 2018
prominence and continually gifted manuscripts to the monarch. Queen Victoria received many illuminated letters, paintings, manuscripts and books from India, including a volume of her journals translated into Hindi. Her Hindustani diaries and phrase book will be on show too, giving a glimpse of her studies with her secretary Abdul Karim. Pictured above is Queen Tissarakshita, 1911, by Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951), founder of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace
+44 (0)20 7300 8000
(www.royalcollection.org.uk)
From 12 June to 19 August 2018.

The Art of Diplomacy: Brazilian Modernism Painted for War
One little-known aspect of the Second World War is the contribution made by a group of 70 Brazilian Modernist artists. In 1944 they exhibited and sold their work to raise funds for the British military effort. It was the first Brazilian collective exhibition in the UK, hosted across eight galleries around the country. Paintings by 20 of the artists, including Thea Haderfeld, Candido Portinari, and Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, ended up in public collections. They are reunited for the first time since 1944 in this exhibition.

Sala Brasil Arts Centre, Embassy of Brazil in London
+44 (0)20 7747 4500
(www.theartofdiplomacy.com)
Until 22 June 2018.

The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition
This year the Royal Academy of Arts celebrates its 250-year history; its Summer Exhibition has been held annually without interruption since 1769. Highlights from past RA exhibitions will be on display, including works by Thomas Lawrence, John Everett Millais, Frederic Lord Leighton, Tracey Emin, Zaha Hadid and David Hockney. A Private View, 1881 (below) by William Powell Frith, sums up this great social occasion at the height of its fashionability.

Royal Academy of Arts
+44 (0)20 7300 8000
(www.royalacademy.org.uk)
From 12 June to 19 August 2018.

European society, and how they engaged with themes, such as remembrance and rebuilding. Over 150 pieces from this challenging period are on display, including works by William Orpen, Otto Dix, Stanley Spencer, Hannah Höch and Winifred Knights, whose The Deluge of 1920 is shown above.

Tate Britain
+44 (0)20 7887 8888
(www.tate.org.uk)
From 5 June to 16 September 2018.

Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up
With her brightly coloured clothing and distinctive eyebrows the iconic Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907–54) cultivated a highly individual look that can be seen in her self-portraits. This is the first exhibition, outside Mexico, to show her most intimate possessions, including her medical corsets and prosthetics, displayed with photographs of her including Frida with Olmec figure, 1939 (above right), jewellery and letters, which reveal how she proudly drew on Mexican traditions in her Coyoacán home, the Blue House.

V&A
+44 (0)20 7942 2000
(www.vam.ac.uk)
From 16 June to 4 November 2018.

Fashioned from Nature
Exploring the relationship between fashion and nature since 1600, including camouflage, such as the 1998 design for a suit by Richard James (below), this exhibition shows work by Stella McCartney, Christopher Raeburn and Vivienne Westwood. It also highlights the challenges of sustainability in the fashion industry and showcases some of the research and cutting-edge processes involved.

V&A
+44 (0)20 7942 2000
(www.vam.ac.uk)
Until 27 January 2019.

Aftermath: Art in the Wake of World War One
When the First World War ended 100 years ago, it left its mark on art in Britain, Germany and France. Works created between 1916 and 1932 reflect how artists reacted to the physical and psychological scars of the dreadful conflict felt across
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**Mark John Callanan, Simon Nowell, and Mariele Faithfull (also of the Israel Antiquities Authority).**

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**Mark John Callanan, Simon Nowell, and Mariele Faithfull (also of the Israel Antiquities Authority).**
CALENDAR

(Mexico) that offer an insight into the cultural climate of the time. During this period, artists set up academies, worked with great versatility on portraits, costume paintings (depicting racially mixed families), and scenes for grand chapels and university halls. In an expression of local pride, they added to their canvases not just their signatures, but two Latin words: *pinxit Mexici* (painted in Mexico).

**Metropolitan Museum of Art**
+1 212 535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
Until 22 July 2018.

**Visitors to Versailles** (1682–1789)

As Louis XIV would have wanted, his opulent palace of Versailles has stood the test of time and attracted many visitors since he moved his court there in 1682. Using the relocation as a starting point, this exhibition focuses on the following century of visits from royalty, ambassadors, artists, scientists and daytrippers up until 1789 and Louis XVI’s forced move to Paris by the revolutionary mob. A wide variety of items, such as *Fun with a View of the Château de Versailles, circa* 1780–85 (above), give a glimpse of different experiences of Versailles and the impression the palace made.

**Metropolitan Museum of Art**
+1 212 535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
Until 29 July 2018.

**Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination**

Staged at The Met Fifth Avenue and at The Met Cloisters, this exhibition brings together Vatican vestments, medieval art and modern women’s wear to investigate the influence of the high church on high fashion. Among the many world-class designers featured are: Cristobal Balenciaga, Coco Chanel, Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, Jean Paul Gaultier, Jeanne Lanvin, Yves Saint Laurent, Elsa Schiaparelli and Donatella Versace.

**Metropolitan Museum of Art**
(The Met Fifth Avenue and The Met Cloisters)
+1 212 535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
From 10 May to 8 October 2018.

**The Second Buddha: Master of Time**

The legends of Padmasambhava, who is believed to have played a vital role in converting Tibet to Buddhism, see him overcome obstacles, liberate himself from life and death, and blur notions of time. Works from the 13th to the 20th century (and new interactive technology) tell the story of this key figure, hailed by Tibetans as ‘The Second Buddha’, with a focus on the links between past and future for establishing identity and projecting teachings forward for a more enlightened time.

**Rubin Museum of Art**
+1 212 620 5000
(www.rubinmuseum.org)
Until 7 January 2019.

**WASHINGTON DC**

**To Dye For: Ikats from Central Asia**

With their distinctive patterns and bright colours, Ikats have a wide appeal. In 2005, Oscar de la Renta helped secure their place in contemporary fashion by including the Central Asian designs in his collection. Others followed suit and the motifs soon spread to T-shirts, stationery and wallpaper. Ikat hangings and coats from Central Asia and designs by de la Renta are displayed together to investigate the original function of the fabrics and highlight their lasting appeal.

**Arthur M Sackler Gallery**
+1 202 633 1000
(www.freesackers.or)
Until 29 July 2018.

**BELGIUM**

**BRUGES**

**Mummies in Bruges: Secrets of Ancient Egypt**

Human and animal mummies, including the Mummy of Pawiament, 700–650 BC (left), from the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden’s collection are shown alongside statues, stelae, burial gifts, papyrus sheets from the Book of the Dead, magical amulets and scarabs, to bring to light ancient Egyptian ways of life, rituals, burial customs and beliefs about the afterlife. Scans of the mummies also virtually unwrap them to reveal the secrets of the mumification process.

**Oud Sint-Jan Exhibition Centre**
+32 50 47 61 00
(www.xpo-center-bruges.be)
Until 11 November 2018.

**DENMARK**

**COPENHAGEN**

**High on Luxury: Lost Treasures from the Roman Empire**

Some 90 objects – including goblets, dishes and statues – comprise the spectacular Bethoville Treasure. This set of 1St-2nd-century AD Roman silverware, weighing 25kg, was discovered in northwest France in 1830, where it lay hidden on the site of the burned down Temple of Mercury since the 3rd century. After four years of cleaning and restoration, these luxury goods are on display in an exhibition that indulges in the extravagances of the Roman Empire and lavish feasting.

**Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket**
+45 33 41 81 41
(www.glyptoteket.dk)
Until 2 September 2018.

**FRANCE**

**LENS**

**The Rose Empire: Masterpieces of 19th-century Persian art**

The Qajar dynasty ruled Persia (modern-day Iran) from 1786 and 1885. In this period prolific court artists created a wondrous array of art, using traditional techniques in painting, glasswork and metalwork. Over 400 works, many from private collections and on public view for the first time, are in a setting by Christian Lacroix designed to evoke the palace of Fath Ali Shah in Sulaymaniyah (r 1797–1834). As well as charting traditional practices, including drawing and calligraphy, by the rulers themselves, they reveal how Nassereddin Shah introduced photography in the 1840s and how changing Qajar styles still influence contemporary Iranian art.

**Louve Lens**
+33 3 21 18 62 62
(www.louvrelen.fr)
Until 22 July 2018.

**PARIS**

**Gérard Garouste: Diane and Actaeon**

Important texts like the Bible, the Talmud, and Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* have served as inspiration for Gérard Garouste’s paintings, engravings and sculptures, but, for the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, he turned his attention to the legend of Diana, the goddess of the hunt, and the ill-fated hunter Actaeon who was torn to pieces by his own hounds. Garouste, has created a number of works based on this myth, including *Diane et Actéon*, 2015, (above right), which have now been brought together in this exhibition.

**Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature**
+33 1 53 01 92 40
(www.chassenature.org)
Until 1 July 2018.

**Neanderthal**

Neanderthals have received some bad press since the first discovery of a skull in Germany’s Neander valley in 1856, but recent research is continuing to transform our ideas about this species. With Neanderthal remains on show, such as this 60,000-year-old skull (above) from La Chapelle-aux-Saints, this exhibition explores changing public perception, depictions in the arts and latest scientific investigations.

**Musée de l’Homme**
+33 1 44 05 72 72
(www.museedelhomme.fr)
Until 7 January 2019.
Ghosts and Hells: The underworld in Asian art

Focusing on ghost stories from China, Thailand and Japan, this exhibition takes a look at how the spirit world has been manifested over the centuries in religious art, Hokusai prints, theatre, cinema, contemporary design, manga (Japanese comics) and PAC-MAN (a video game). Here, you can meet a wide range of ghosts, including supernatural cat-women, hungry spirits who have come back from the dead, jumping vampires and yokai from Japanese folklore.

Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac
+33 1 56 61 70 0
Until 15 July 2018.

SPAIN

BILBAO

Esther Ferrer: Intertwined Spaces

Installations by one of Spain’s leading performance artists, octogenarian Esther Ferrer, highlight the participatory aspect of art, presenting viewers with questions that encourage them to form their own interpretations. Central to Ferrer’s diverse work, much of it here not seen before, is the construction of space, reflected in a selection of pieces, such as Napoleon’s Triangle, from the 1980s (below right).

Guggenheim Museum
+34 944 35 90 80
(www.guggenheim-bilbao.eu)
Until 10 June 2018.

MADRID

Viktor Vasarely: The birth of Op Art

Tracing the evolution of the Hungarian artist Viktor Vasarely (1908–97), this exhibition examines his important creative output in France and his role in developing post-war geometric abstraction and Op Art. Paintings by Vasarely also offer us a chance to reflect on his experimentation and his interest in a closer union between art and society.

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza
+34 917 91 13 70
(www.museothyssen.org)
From 7 June to 9 September 2018.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

DUBAI

Art & Jewelry

As this exquisite selection of bracelets, necklaces, earrings and rings shows, many artists in the 20th and 21st centuries turned their hands to designing jewellery, often for their lovers or wives. Paintings, sculpture and works on paper shed light on the relationship between art and jewellery. Anish Kapoor’s jewellery, for instance, continues the sense of play with depth and perception seen in his sculpture, while Alexander Calder’s pieces share their tribal, African-inspired symbols with his gouaches and mobiles. Other notable artists whose work is featured include: Pablo Picasso, Peter Blake, Lucio Fontana, Anthony Gormley, Jeff Koons and Marc Quinn.

Custot Gallery
+971 4 346 8148
/www.custotgallerydubai.ae
Until 2 June 2018.

EVENTS

GLASGOW

Glasgow Greek Weekend

Bringing together philhellenes from across Scotland, this event celebrates all things Greek. At the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, on Saturday there will be talks on Herakles, political exiles on Anafi, and sculpture, as well as stalls selling books and Greek products, and an exhibition of Hellenic-inspired works by local artists. On Sunday, there will be tours of Glasgow’s atmospheric, Classically-inspired necropolis (above) and the city’s Neoclassical buildings, and around the Ancient Greek vases in the Hunterian Museum.

19–20 May
/www.scottishhellenic.org

LONDON

Accordia Lectures

Late Antique diptychs and their use in Carolingian Italy

Cristina La Rocca

Joint Lecture with the UCL Institute of Archaeology
8 May
Room 612, UCL Institute of Archaeology
www.ucl.ac.uk/accordia/

Ancient Philosophy Seminar 2017–18

Cosmology and Human Nature in the Timaeus

Emily Fletcher
14 May
Seminars organised by the Institute of Classical Studies are held Mondays 4.30–6.30pm
Room 243, Senate House
ics.sas.ac.uk/events

Institute of Classical Studies Lectures

Dorothy Tarrant Lecture

The Goddess and Damned Wrath: How a Linguist Reads the Iliad

Josh Katz
8 May, 5pm
Room G22/26, Senate House

JP Barron Memorial Lecture

Socrates, Eros and Magic

Angie Hobbs
6 June, 5pm
Room G22/26, Senate House
ics.sas.ac.uk/events

SWANSEA

Summer School in Ancient Languages

Swansea University offers intensive summer courses of one or two weeks in classical Latin, ancient Greek, medieval Latin and hieroglyphs. There are classes to suit people at different levels, and the summer school also arranges talks, films and optional trips to Welsh sites of historical interest.

15–28 July
Swansea University
/www.swansea.ac.uk/classics/summerschool/ancient-languages

A Life on the Road: the Exploits and Adventures of the 17th-century Ottoman Traveller, Evliya Celebi

In this British Institute at Ankara Lecture, Ottoman historian and Evliya Celebi expert Caroline Finkel discusses the inquisitive courtier, his travels and his writings, with a special focus on his 1671 Haj journey.

17 May, 6.30pm
British Academy
Carlton House Terrace
/www.biaa.ac.uk/events

London Summer School in Classics

This summer school offers intensive classes in Latin and Greek at all levels, as well as beginners’ courses in Syriac, Coptic, Biblical Hebrew, plus other lectures and workshops.

10–19 July
King’s College London
/www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/classics/study/summerclass/index.aspx

Summer School in Ancient Philosophy

Through lectures, debates and close readings of texts (mainly in translation), this summer school explores some of the principal issues and figures in ancient philosophy. The main subjects of the five courses are an introduction to ancient philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology (taught with translated texts), and Plato’s Symposium (using the original Greek text).

16–20 July
UCL
/www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/outreach/summer-schools/Ancient-philosophy/2018-summer-school-ancient-philosophy

Swansea University

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15–28 July
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/www.swansea.ac.uk/classics/summerschool/ancient-languages
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