This is not the first time that this beautiful desert city has been attacked.
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The clash of cultures

From Syria to Japan cultural clashes between East and West can have very different results – both creative and destructive, inspiring and dispiriting. 

From 1600 to 1350 BC, and called La Consentida, it has yielded finds, such as female figurines and musical instruments called ocarinas. You can read our interview with Dr Hepp on pages 32 to 35.

And now for something completely different: the Museum of Ethnography in Geneva is examining the unlikely meeting of the Buddha and Madame Butterfly. Combined they paint a picture of cultural influences that flowed out of Japan when it reopened its doors to foreigners in the middle of the 19th century. Japonism was one important result in the art world but there were others; see pages 36 to 39.

Dr Catherine Draycott examines this question and others on pages 46 to 50.

On a more festive note, Lucy Marchin went to the British Museum to see a show of exquisite drawings, made in gold and silverpoint, dating from Leonardo onwards. She reports back on pages 8 to 12.

As the season of giving approaches we have found a selection of books on history, art and archaeology that might make suitable gifts for Minerva readers and their families. There is also a special reader discount offer for those of you who like to walk through history; see pages 52 to 57.

After this issue we are bidding farewell to Raphie Varley who has compiled our Calendar (see pages 58 to 61) for the last two years. We thank her for coping cheerfully with this rather time-consuming job and wish her every success in the future.

Finally we send season’s greetings to all our readers and look forward to welcoming you back into the world of Minerva in 2016.

What is there to say about the tragedy, unfolding day by day, in Syria, not least at the ancient site of Palmyra? Even those not interested in archaeology have been appalled by the mindless destruction of this city’s beautiful temples and other unique monuments – not to mention the murder of its 82-year-old Head of Antiquities, Khaled al-Assad. This brave man devoted his whole life to Palmyra and, in the end, paid for it with his life.

On pages 14 to 19, the writer and poet Marius Kociejowski pays tribute to the ‘city of the palm’, tracing its history and showing that, tragically, history repeats itself. We have found some early prints and photographs to illustrate his piece that show Palmyra in more peaceful days.

The effect that Palmyra had on visitors was profound. I went there twice and on the second occasion, when staying at Hotel Zenobia on the actual site, I got up just before dawn and ascended the hill where the Crusader castle stands. From there I had a wonderful view of pale pink light flooding across the ruined city as the sun rose – it was an unforgettable sight.

Other ruins also had a strong effect on travelers and on artists. It is heartening that they often stimulate creativity – as can be seen in an exhibition currently on show at Palazzo Altemps in Rome, as Dalu Jones reports on pages 20 and 24.

Some of the most spectacular ruins in the world are, of course, found in Egypt, another country that has been through some upheavals in recent years, but now seems to be relatively stable. One of the most creative and unifying times in its ancient past was the Middle Kingdom, which is the subject of an extensive exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. We asked one of its curators, Dr Adela Oppenheim, to tell us more about this rich period and you can see some of its treasures on pages 26 to 31.

From New York we move down south of the border to Mexico to talk to Guy Hepp about his ongoing excavation at a Mesoamerican site in Oaxaca. Dating from 1600 to 1350 BC and called La Consentida, it has yielded finds, such as female figurines and musical instruments called ocarinas. You can read our interview with Dr Hepp on pages 32 to 35.

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The Buddha is also a powerful presence in South Korea where temples and shrines, mostly dating from the 7th century onwards, abound. This country is little visited by Westerners, so now may be a good time to do so. You can read more on pages 40 to 45.

Dining after death sounds like a very dark subject but it may not be quite as gloomy as it appears. In ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome depictions of the deceased reclining at banquets or seated before a pile of food occur quite often. The question is whether these scenes were meant to show life in the underworld, or to give an indication of how life was lived prior to death. Dr Catherine Draycott examines this question and others on pages 46 to 50.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Adela Oppenheim is a Curator in the Ancient Egyptian department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. She co-directs the museum’s excavations at the Middle Kingdom pyramid complex of Pharaoh Semwooret III at Dahshur. She has written and lectured on this excavation and Middle Kingdom art.

Richard Marranca is a writer and lecturer. He has taught at the University of Munich and is currently at Montclair State University and at Rutgers University, Newark, NJ. His novel, Dragon Sutra was published in 2012 by Oak Tree Press of California and his short story collection is coming out very soon.

Catherine Draycott is a lecturer in archaeology at Durham University, where her subjects include Classical art, cultural identity and archaeological illustration. She is currently working on a book on the tomb art of Western Anatolia in the early period of the Achaemenid Persian Empire.

Marius Kociejowski is a poet, travel writer, essayist and lover of Syria. His books include: The Street Philosopher and the Holy Food: A Syrian Journey (Sutton, 2004), Syria Through Writers’ Eyes (Bland, 2006) and The Pigeon Wars of Damascus (Biblioasis, 2010).
Recent stories from the world of ancient art and archaeology

Rare ‘lost’ luohan found in London

An impressive and rare Early Ming sculpture of a seated luohan, discovered by a sharp-eyed dealer at a general antiques sale in 2012, is being auctioned at Christie’s King Street in London on 10 November.

When first found, heavy darkened layers of shellac and bituminous varnish obscured its original subtle colouring and fine decoration but, after two years of restoration, it has emerged in all its magnificence. Dressed in long flowing robes, elaborately detailed with intricate chrysanthemum flower scrolls, stylised dragons and cloud scrolls and rendered in shades of white, blue, green and orange. Made of carved limewood, which has been radiocarbon dated (by two research laboratories) to between AD 1296 and 1403, he is 46 inches (117cm) in height.

The word luohan is the Chinese equivalent of the Sanskrit word, arhat, a term referring to those who, through meditation and practice of the dharma (the Buddha’s doctrine), had achieved the highest level of spiritual attainment.

But by the time of the Tang dynasty in China (AD 618-907) luohans were considered to be the Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciples, whose task was to maintain his teachings until the coming of the Future Buddha, Maitreya. Because of political strife in the 7th and 8th centuries many devotees eagerly anticipated the arrival of Maitreya, which elevated the importance of the luohans and their popularity endured for centuries, even in times of relative peace and prosperity.

The newly restored luohan sits serenely in the lotus posture, the conventional attitude of meditation. His right hand is raised as though in a gesture of emphasis while the open left hand is held just above his ankle suggesting the dhyana (meditation) position.

His eyelids are lowered and his gaze, through narrowed eyelids, is severe, quizzical and compassionate. His attention is inwardly focused but, at the same time, he directly engages the onlooker. He appears to be a man of young middle-age still at the height of his physical power. His large nose and full lips appear quite naturalistic, with the hint of a smile. The long bushy eyebrows, large ears with extended earlobes and the protuberance on the forehead (urna) are features sometimes associated with ‘foreign’ (that is, Indian) monks, but this luohan is altogether Chinese and any physical exaggeration indicates his highly developed spiritual powers. His face and other visible parts of his body are white, traditionally symbolising wisdom.

His elaborate and richly decorated outer garment (jiasha) is the patched robe, characteristic of Buddhist monastic tradition, signifying poverty. Its imagery, consisting of animals, clouds and flowers, corresponds to examples found in Chinese textile art. The robe is draped over his left arm and shoulder, the torso and the lower part of his body, but falls away from the right arm and shoulder, ‘a symbol that he is trying to save sentient beings’. The swirl of the drapery is calm and rhythmic, covering his crossed legs and dropping below the knees, while the sense of the body beneath is dignified and natural.

Before the 7th century, luohans were generally represented as a pair of standing figures flanking the Buddha – usually identified as Kashyapa and Ananda, two of his 10 principal disciples.

Later, large individual luohans were created and often in glazed ceramic, as these were both cheaper to produce and more durable than images made of organic material. Only a handful of ceramic luohans survive; and carved wooden ones are very rare indeed. This example, with its subtle polychrome decoration, is a unique find.

Lindsay Fulcher

• The luohan and other lots in The Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art sale can be viewed from 6 to 9 November at Christie’s, 8 King Street, London SW1Y 6GT (visit www.christies.com/). The sale begins at 10.30am on 10 November. For enquiries contact Pedram Rasti at prasti@christies.com or call +44 (0) 20 7389 2556.

Minerva November/December 2015
Under the water near Antikythera

More than 50 ancient treasures have been recovered by underwater archaeologists from the famous 1st-century BC shipwreck off the Greek island of Antikythera in the southwest Aegean.

In 40 hours of sea-bed excavation the team of divers found a bronze armrest (possibly once part of a throne), part of a bone flute, a piece from an ancient board game, exquisite glassware and ceramics, and other items, all of which have not been seen since the wreck's ship sank circa 65 BC.

Most were buried deep in thick layers of coarse sand and broken pottery and their locations in the wreck site, which measures circa 40 x 50 metres, were identified by metal detectors. Once found, most of the artefacts were 3D modelled in situ and then again after they had been recovered.

Now they will be subjected to a series of scientific analyses. Ancient DNA analysis of ceramic jars will identify their contents such as food, wine, perfumes. It is hoped that isotopic analysis of lead objects, which will determine where the lead was mined, will provide evidence for the location of the ship's home port and reveal more about her final voyage. The quality of the artefacts recovered this summer is in keeping with previous precious finds.

The wreck was first discovered by Greek sponge-divers in 1900 who came across a bronze hand. In the years since, other items from the ship's luxury cargo, possibly being shipped to Rome from Rhodes, as well as skeletal remains of members of the crew and passengers, were brought to the surface.

Among the original finds were some marvellous bronzes and marbles, including the Antikythera Ephebe. There is also the Antikythera Mechanism (a mysterious mechanical astronomical device that has been dubbed the first-known analogue computer), now housed in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

This summer’s expedition is part of a long-term project called Return to Antikythera, which was launched in 2014 with the first scientific excavation of the shipwreck and the first comprehensive study of all of its artefacts. It is run by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, with support from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI). Dr Theodoulou, a maritime archaeologist in the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, had this to say about the 2015 exploration: ‘We were very lucky this year, as we excavated many finds within their context, which gave us the opportunity to take full advantage of all the archaeological information they could provide.’

But there is still much to discover, as Dr Brendan Foley, the project co-director and marine archaeologist with WHOI, remarked: ‘This shipwreck is far from exhausted. Every single dive on it delivers fabulous finds, and reveals how the “one per cent” lived in the time of Caesar.’

Lucia Marchini
• (For more information on Return to Antikythera visit http://antikythera.whoi.edu/).
• Finds from previous explorations of the wreck are now on show outside Greece for the first time in an exhibition called The Sunken Treasure: The Antikythera Shipwreck at the Antikenmuseum Basel in Switzerland until 27 March 2016. (Visit http://www.antikenmuseumbasel.ch/en/special-exhibitions/the-sunken-treasure/).

Tomb of the Serpent-Jaguar priests

An intact high-status ancient tomb containing the remains of two priests has been found in northern Peru. A team of archaeologists from Japan’s National Ethnology Museum and Peru’s San Marcos University made the discovery in the Cajamarca region in September. The excavation is part of the Pacopampa Archaeological Project, which explores the ancient culture at the Pacopampa site in the Andes, at around 2100 metres.

Pacopampa is thought to have been occupied between 1200 BC and 500 BC and the Chavin culture of Peru’s northern Andes peaked there between 800 BC and 500 BC. This is when the 2700-year-old tomb of two high priests is thought to date from.

The tomb is in a prominent position, on one side of a large raised square, accessed via two stairways. The remains of two elite individuals were found buried here, one metre below ground, with fine ceramics, gold beads and piles of brightly coloured mineral pigments, whose significance is still not known. The two bodies were in the foetal position, one facing south and the other, north.

One of the priests was interred with a finely crafted (20cm) black jug in the shape of a serpent with a jaguar’s head. The serpent-jaguar motif is likely to be found underneath the area, and the jug has lent its name to the tomb, which is now informally dubbed the ‘Tomb of the Serpent-Jaguar Priests’.

The second priest was buried with a necklace of oval-shaped gold beads, adorned with figure-of-eight patterns.

Before this discovery was made researchers did not believe that an elite or priestly class existed here, so this tomb has given archaeologists a new understanding of this ancient culture. Further research will be conducted. Excavations will continue, and more bodies are likely to be found underneath the tomb of the two priests.

Lucia Marchini
• (For more about the site of Pacopampa and ongoing research visit http://www.pacopampa.com/).
The evolution of a fine museum

Housed in the splendid Passy wing of the Palais de Chaillot, the Musée de l’Homme in Paris has re-opened after six long years in which it has been totally revamped. This was much more than a renovation and refurbishment; it was a complete overhaul. From the outside it looks as if nothing has changed but, inside, there is a brand new museum, plus a research library, laboratory and conservation centre, and lecture rooms that can accommodate 150 researchers and their students. These researchers cover a comprehensive range of scientific disciplines from biology and anthropology to philosophy and history. Together they will explore the nature of humankind, our past and our future. Visitors will be able to learn about their findings and even meet these researchers in the impressive Balcon des Sciences, a space dedicated to the dissemination of the latest scientific discoveries.

The museum’s outstanding and diverse collections of prehistoric, ethnological and anthropological material are now displayed in state-of-the-art, interactive galleries, where the exhibits range from a 45,000-year-old Cro-Magnon skull to the skull of Descartes (1596-1650); from the voluptuous 25,000-year-old Venus de Lespugue to AP Pinson’s 18th-/19th-century anatomical wax models. The museum’s prehistoric artefacts and fossils alone number 700,000 and its anthropological groups, 30,000, as well as 6,000 artefacts.

Neither a museum of civilisations nor a museum of prehistory, this is a museum for explaining human diversity. What does it mean to be human? Many things – from art and language to verticality and laughter – and all are explored within the Musée de l’Homme’s galleries.

Lindsay Fulcher
• (For further information visit museedelhomme.fr).

The riddle of Rhynie

A new excavation at Rhynie led by the University of Aberdeen this August has shed light on the enigmatic Pictish Rhynie Man. First discovered by a farmer ploughing a field in Aberdeenshire in 1978, the Rhynie Man (so-called after the village where it was found) is a six-foot high Pictish stone carving of a man with a large pointed nose and headdress, carrying an axe on his shoulder. The stone is thought to date from the 5th or 6th century AD and to have stood near the entrance of a fort in the ‘high-status and possibly even royal Pictish site’.

Before the dig, Dr Gordon Noble, a Senior Lecturer in archaeology at the University of Aberdeen, said: ‘Over the years many theories have been put forward about the Rhynie Man. However, we don’t have a huge amount of archaeology to back any of these up, so we want to explore the area in which he was found in much greater detail to yield clues about how and why he was created, and what the carved imagery might mean. The Rhynie Man carries an axe of a form that has been linked to animal sacrifice – and we hope to discover more evidence that might support the theory that he was created as part of ceremonies and rituals for high-status events, perhaps even those for early Pictish royal lineages. This may also help us to better understand the imagery used and why the Rhynie Man is depicted in this way. Standing at more than six-feet high the stone must have been an impressive sight to anyone coming to Rhynie some 1500 years ago.’

After the 2011-2012 excavation of the site, Dr Noble reported: ‘We found many long distance connections – such as pottery from the Mediterranean, glass from France and Anglo-Saxon metalwork with evidence to suggest that intricate metalwork was produced on site.’

Similar finds were made during this summer’s dig. Lots of sherds from late Roman amphorae were unearthed, as well as evidence for other imported materials and accomplished metalworking. A more unusual discovery was a probable cattle jaw at the very bottom of a large pit packed with stones, which possibly supported a stone post. The meaning of this find is not yet fully understood.

Lucia Marchini
• (For more information on The Rhynie Environs Archaeological Project, run jointly by the University of Aberdeen and the University of Chester, visit their blog at http://reaparch.blogspot.co.uk/).
In what could be called a timely coup, the Getty Research Institute has acquired Views and Panoramas of Beirut and the Ruins of Palmyra, a set of very early and extremely well preserved photographs of ancient sites in the Middle East.

Shot in 1864 by French photographer Louis Vignes (1831-1896), the 47 sepia albumen prints were made by Charles Nègre, another pioneer in the field. The photographs were taken during an expedition financed by the French art collector, archaeologist and scientist, the Duke of Luynes (1803-1867), who was interested in tracing the historical origins of Christianity. During the trip he negotiated the acquisition of a number of archaeological artefacts for the Louvre collections and also commissioned Vignes to photograph Beirut and Palmyra. Nègre then printed a set of images for the duke's personal collection.

The set includes one four-part panorama and three two-part panoramas of the busy port and serene city of Beirut, which is shown ringed by majestic pine trees. There are three single images showing the famous cedars of Lebanon and one view of the road to Damascus.

Dating back to the Neolithic period, Palmyra reached the zenith of its power as a city and centre of trade in the eastern part of the Roman Empire in the middle of the 3rd century. Vignes’ 29 photographs of Palmyra show multiple views of the ancient ruined city and include two panoramas, consisting of two and three prints respectively, and 21 single prints from various vantage points. These show its monumental colonnade, the Triumphal Arch, the monument of Diocletian, the great tomb towers on its south-west side and the temples of Bel and of Baal Shamin. Since most of these wonderful edifices have now been destroyed by ISL militants, these 150-year-old images have an even more special poignancy.

‘The on-going Syrian Civil War now threatens to obliterate Palmyra utterly. These photographs represent rare primary documents of a region and World Heritage Site in crisis, preserving the memory of its ancient monuments and natural beauty for posterity,’ said Frances Terpak, curator of photography at the Getty Research Institute. ‘Additionally, Vignes’ striking photographs are exceedingly important as documents both for the history of archaeology, which blossomed in the mid-19th century, and the history of photography – having been printed by Charles Nègre.’

Lindsay Fulcher

• Views and Panoramas of Beirut and the Ruins of Palmyra, is currently available to scholars for research (for further information visit www.getty.edu/research/).
Exhibition

On their metal
While summering in the Hamptons in the 1970s, the American artist Susan Schwalb (b 1944) watched a fellow artist drawing with a silverpoint stylus. She then decided to try it out herself, and still uses the technique today, as she explains:

‘I have used metalpoint for over 40 years. I was working with fine pen and pencil line drawings and was looking for something even finer. I stumbled upon silverpoint with its wonderful line and I was hooked. Somehow I have continued working in the medium through numerous series, combining the medium with gold leaf, acrylic and coloured pencil.’

Schwalb is now one of the leading silverpoint artists in the world and her abstract work presents a modern approach to a technique with a long history. Her Strata no 407 is currently on show at the British Museum alongside silverpoint drawings by Leonardo, Raphael and Dürer in Drawing in Silver and Gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns, a collaborative exhibition with the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Today, metalpoint artists mostly draw with a wire made of sterling silver held inside a mechanical pencil. The method has changed relatively little in the centuries since silverpoint flourished in the Renaissance. The artist runs a rod of soft metal – most frequently silver, or sometimes a silver alloy, gold or copper – over a specially prepared rough ground, which usually consists of calcified animal bone. Tiny bits of metal from the tip of the stylus rub off on to the abrasive surface and adhere to it, leaving a durable line. The stylus does not need to be refilled with ink or have its tip sharpened, but its lines cannot be easily erased and it is very limited tonally – more pressure does not make a darker line. All this means that silverpoint is a convenient but at the same time extremely exacting medium.

Hugo Chapman, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, tells me more about the charms and challenges of the technique: ‘Silverpoint produces these very spontaneous, very graphic, very gestural drawings. The stylus follows every twist and inflection of your wrist in a very beautiful, smooth and rhythmical way. But obviously it takes enormous confidence to be able to do that because if you mess it up, you then have to cover it up and change the ground. It shows that you really are an amazing artist to be able to draw like that.’

The early history of metalpoint is full of uncertainties. Styli were in use in antiquity; the Romans wrote on wax tablets with them. It is not known when or where people started to use the metal stylus on a rough preparation instead. However, it is believed that silverpoint as an artistic technique originated in the scriptoria of northern Europe, with metalpoint sometimes being used as a base for illuminations in manuscripts. The earliest known examples of metalpoint being used for a drawing proper date back to the end of the 14th century.

The oldest drawings in the exhibition date from this period. These come from the...
illuminated manuscript world of the Netherlands in the 1390s and were probably created to be kept within the studio so that variations and copies of manuscripts could be made. This sort of practice continued well into the Renaissance, when silverpoint had a happy home in the studio. Its durability meant that it was a suitable medium for keeping a record of works sold by an artist.

A number of silverpoint drawings are known to have come from the studio of the great Netherlandish painter Rogier van der Weyden (circa 1399-1464). Most of these were drawn by junior artists in the studio, who would learn their master’s style by copying his works and becoming useful members of the workshop in doing so.

Very few drawings have been attributed to the hand of Van der Weyden himself, but one which has is a silverpoint Portrait of an Unknown Woman. This portrait has been executed meticulously on a pale background, with light gracefully reflected on the sitter’s jawbone and wimple and with crosshatching creating shadow. The tonal limitations of metalpoint make Van der Weyden’s exquisite portrait all the more masterful.

In Italy, drawing in metalpoint was largely confined to the studio. Silverpoint had a key role in training young artists because, as it could not be easily corrected or erased, it forced the pupil to consider carefully every line they drew. One obvious difference between the early Netherlandish drawings and Italian metalpoint drawing is the range of colours used, as Chapman tells me: ‘On the whole northern metalpoint drawings are on pale backgrounds. Italians liked brightly coloured backgrounds to create a sort of midground. That really wasn’t a thing that was done early on.’

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) drew on both pale and intensely coloured backgrounds. He was also an exception among the Italians in that he took advantage of the portability of silverpoint and drew with it outside the studio. While planning a large bronze sculpture to honour his Sforza patron, Leonardo went out to sketch a live horse in silverpoint. Metalpoint is ideal for this sort of work, as Chapman explains: ‘The preparation is a dry medium, so you can just go out with your prepared page in your sketchbook and you can start to draw with it. You get this incredibly beautiful,
fluid line.’ Leonardo perfectly captured the spontaneous movement of the restless horse tossing his head from side to side, but to do so in a medium that demands precision requires both extraordinary skill and confidence.

In the late 15th century, Leonardo was very much at the epicentre of Italian silverpoint drawing world. His pupils, such as Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (circa 1467-1516), became adept metalpoint artists too. Leonardo, driven by a desire to become more monumental and work on a larger scale, then left silverpoint behind in the mid-1490s. Later, Raphael (1483-1520), influenced by Perugino (circa 1450-1523) who learnt metalpoint drawing alongside Leonardo in Florence in the studio of Andrea del Verrocchio (circa 1435-1488), took up the stylus. With his stunning silverpoint drawings of the Virgin and Child, among others, Raphael was the last great metalpoint artist in Italy. Owing to its limited use within the studio, silverpoint was, by and large, forgotten by the Italians after Raphael’s death.

North of the Alps, however, metalpoint still thrived. The German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), travelled in both Italy and the Netherlands and so would have been in contact with these metalpoint traditions. Like Leonardo and other northern artists, Dürer embraced the freedom and convenience of drawing with a silver stylus, as Chapman tells me: ‘Dürer travels in the Netherlands and uses metalpoint to record interesting things he sees along the way. It could be a beautiful hunting dog. It could be the cathedral at Aachen, which he looks down at from the town hall. Or it could just be some tankards and a bit of furniture. This aspect is unique to northern Europe. Italian artists, except for Leonardo, don’t use silverpoint outside of the studio. That’s why, in a sense, northern European metalpoint drawings are more exciting; they have this other dimension beyond the studio.’

The use of metalpoint by artists to record the world around them extended to their loved ones and to special moments in their lives. Silverpoint can be brought into the intimate surroundings of...
the home. In 1512, Hans Holbein the Elder (circa 1465-1524) drew his brother Sigmund. ‘This is the beginning of this aspect of the portability and intimacy of silverpoint, which we don’t get at all in Italian drawings. Artists start using silverpoint to make drawings domestically to record and memorialise the important people in their lives,’ explains Chapman.

More than a century later, around 1633, Rembrandt (1606-1669) turned to silverpoint to capture a moment of his life that must have been of the utmost significance to him. There are only three known silverpoint drawings by Rembrandt, all of which he made while on a trip to Friesland to propose to his future wife Saskia van Uylenburgh. After this trip, he did not use metalpoint again, nor did any of his pupils take it up. It seems as if he chose silverpoint just to memorialise this special, private moment in his life.

The roughened ground necessary for metalpoint can be made on a variety of surfaces. Schwalb, for instance, does her preparations on wood as well as paper. Vellum is another possible base. Hendrik Goltzius (1558-1617), the great engraver, produced a number of very fine drawings in silverpoint on vellum. One of these is a self-portrait on yellow prepared vellum. In it, Goltzius is seen holding the tools of his trade: a burin (for which his right hand, malformed by a fire, was particularly well-suited) and a copperplate. Using a grey wash, he has counteracted the tonal limitations of silverpoint. The level of detail he has achieved on this small page of vellum is astounding. ‘One feels very much that this is made in the age when the Netherlands is becoming a great centre of lens making. This is a drawing made to be looked at under magnification,’ says Chapman.

The use of long-lasting silverpoint on durable vellum gives a strong sense that Goltzius wanted these drawings, including this image of himself, to endure through the ages and to be looked at today.

A significant aspect of silverpoint from the 19th century onwards is the notion of tradition. Metalpoint drawing largely died away in the mid-17th century, and in the 18th century was really only practised by miniaturists. Then, in the 19th century, artists started looking back to the Renaissance, in particular to Leonardo and Raphael in Italy and to Dürer in northern Europe. They used silverpoint to declare their part in this great tradition of artists. Alphonse Legros (1837-1911) for instance came to the British Museum and – like Leonardo making studies of a horse and Dürer recording the world around him – drew the head of Selene’s horse from the Parthenon Marbles in goldpoint, while Muirhead Bone (1876-1953) chose to record some scaffolding at the museum in silverpoint.

The German artist Otto Dix (1891-1969) was one of the artists most involved with metalpoint in 20th-century Europe, producing more than 200 drawings in silverpoint between 1931 and 1944. Dix taught at the Dresden Academy, but, when the Nazis came to power, he was among those branded a ‘degenerate artist’ and he lost his post at the Academy. During this time of turmoil, he moved with his family far away to the south of Germany. There he executed many works in silverpoint, including portraits and landscapes. Through his art he was proclaiming that, despite being labelled a ‘degenerate artist’, in using silverpoint just as Dürer had done, he belonged to the great tradition of German realism.

**Drawing in Silver and Gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns** is on show at the British Museum (www.britishmuseum.org) until 6 December. Booking is strongly recommended. The accompanying catalogue, edited by Stacey Sell and Hugo Chapman, is published by Princeton University Press and is available in hardback at £34.95 ($49.95).
Amaranthine
Flowers of Hellenic Adornment

A celebration in garnets and gold of ancient jewellery, and the unfading obsession with ageless beauty.

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As the Arthur M Sackler Gallery in Washington displays 18th-century engravings and 19th-century sepia photographs of Palmyra, Marius Kociejowski pays tribute to the beautiful ruined city in the Syrian desert whose fate has ever been uncertain.
When I first visited Palmyra in 1995 I stepped inside one of its strange, unique funerary towers that were used to house the sarcophagi of the Palmyrene upper classes. I think, but cannot be sure, that it was the Tower of Elahbel, constructed in AD 103. It was like entering an infernal post office. It contained four storeys, each of which had three or four rows of loculi into which sarcophagi containing the bodies of the deceased were pushed – as if into pigeonholes. At the first level, fairly high up, next to the opening of one of the loculi, I noted a chiselled inscription that read: ‘Chi anima?’ I like to think it was put there by an Italian archaeologist. This poetic phrase translates somewhat awkwardly into ‘whose soul’ – except that there is also the suggestion of ‘whatever it is that animates’ – but it is probably best left in the original, somewhat archaic, Italian.

I have tried without success to find the poem from which the phrase might have come. Maybe, though, all credit for its composition should go to whoever carved that phrase into stone. It would have required a ladder to get up to that level – perhaps one of the rather lovely, rickety, wooden ladders that are still used by local farmers for collecting dates. As soon as I saw those words I knew, although I didn’t know how exactly, they would have to serve as the final words of my book, The Street Philosopher and the Holy Fool: A Syrian Journey. There I employed the phrase to suggest that we write in order that we might pin our fleeting existences to the page or at least achieve the illusion of having done so. I could not have imagined they would one day serve as the opening words to a piece that would be an elegy for one of the world’s archaeological glories.

The Tomb Tower containing that inscription has been destroyed by Islamic State militants along with several of its neighbouring towers in a month that had already seen the destruction of the great Temple of Bel and the smaller temple of Baal-Shamin, the second of which was dedicated to ‘the Lord of the Heavens’ who brings rain and therefore fecundity. The Triumphal Arch, the most photogenic of Palmyra’s ruins, was blown up in early October. The amphitheatre, reconstructed in the 1950s, has been turned into an execution ground.

The first thing to understand about Palmyra is that it must be considered as an integral whole and that for any two or three of its monuments to be removed is to destroy an archaeological synthesis. As if in acknowledgement of this simple truth, visitors had been allowed to wander freely through the greater part of the ruins at any time.

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time of day or night. But, to my eyes, Palmyra was at its loveliest in the early evening when the stone was tinted with fleshy tones, which makes it impossible to think of the place as anything other than feminine. And indeed the epithets written about Palmyra have always reflected this. When ‘the Queen of the Desert’, as many have called the city, went deepest into my soul, however, was at night beneath the stars. Nothing seemed as absolute a statement on what awaits us all as the silhouettes of those funerary towers at its edge.

Without them, what is Palmyra? Chi anima? The damage has been done, and it is to be wondered how, or why, it was impossible to defend a site surrounded by miles of desert.

It would be a mistake, however, to say Islamic State is the first manifestation of terror here. For some decades it was home to the notorious Tadmor Prison, one of the Syrian regime’s many instruments of terror until blown up in May this year.

Palmyra, or Tadmor, which is its ancient Semitic name, is listed in the Bible as one of King Solomon’s cities: ‘And he built Tadmor in the wilderness…’ (Chronicles II, 8:4). What it is best remembered for is the short period during which it became the stronghold of Queen Zenobia (AD 240-274) who rebelled against the might of Rome in AD 270. Such records as we have of the city’s history are sparse but the few accounts that survive are vivid, and it was upon them that Edward Gibbon

4. A panoramic view of Palmyra, engraving from Robert Wood’s The ruins of Palmyra, otherwise Tedmor, in the desart (sic), 1753.
(1737-1794) based several pages of his muscular prose when describing Zenobia. Gibbon draws on the writings of Trebellius Pollio, who describes her thus:

‘She went in state to the assemblies of the people, in a helmet, with a purple band fringed with jewels. Her robe was clasped with a diamond buckle, and she often wore her arm bare. Her complexion was dark brown, her eyes black and sparkling and of uncommon fire. Her countenance was divinely expressive, her person graceful in form and motion beyond imagination, her teeth white as pearls, and her voice clear and strong.’

But we have been asked to treat this account, one of four that comprise the Scriptores Historiae Augustae, with caution. The distinguished New Zealand-born historian and Classicist, Sir Ronald Syme (1903-1989), describes it as being ‘... without question or rival the most enigmatic work that Antiquity has transmitted’.

A whimsical blend of fact and fiction it may be, but when one

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Emperor Aurelian (AD 214/15-AD 275)
sits at the edge of the bath said to be Zenobia’s, the temptation is to throw caution to the desert wind. We greatly desire that ‘uncommon fire’, and are not those very stones imbued with ‘the divinely expressive’?

The Emperor Aurelian (AD 214/15-AD 275) defeated Zenobia’s forces in AD 272 and then utterly destroyed Palmyra and slaughtered its inhabitants. The ruins, though, were in themselves wondrously complete. It is in the nature of the best ruins to be so. They invite the imagination to fill in their absences.

The so-called Islamic State militants are the first to destroy the ruins on the basis of a lie, hermetically sealed inside a hatred of all that suggests a narrative older than the one it has made for itself. And yet the parallels between ancient and new are compelling. The Emperor Aurelian writes to Ceionius Bassus: ‘You must now sheathe the sword. The Palmyrans have been sufficiently slaughtered and cut to pieces. We have not spared women; we have slain children. We have strangled old men; we have destroyed the husbandmen. To whom, then, shall we leave the land? To whom shall we leave the city?’

Some say Queen Zenobia died by her own hand, others that she suffered the worst fate that can befall a woman of ‘uncommon fire’ and married a wealthy Roman senator and settled into a life of domestic comfort. Edward Gibbon provides the most pleasurable reading of her exit from the stage: ‘The beauteous figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome.’

Palmyra was not to come into western view until the English archaeologist Robert Wood (c. 1717-1771) visited the ancient city in 1751. In his book The Ruins of Palmyra, published two years later, the first systematic description of the place, he notes: ‘... it is the natural and common fate of cities to have their memory longer preserved than their ruins... But here we have two instances of considerable towns out-living any account of them. Our curiosity about these places is rather raised by what we see than what we read, and Balbeck and Palmyra are in a great measure left to tell their own story.’ Palmyra almost immediately caught the imagination of travellers, among them the French philosopher Constantin François de Chasseboeuf Volney who used it as a setting for his once popular meditation The Ruins: or, A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires (1791). ‘The dusk increased,’ he begins, ‘and already I could distinguish nothing more than the pale phantoms of walls and columns... I sat down on the base of a column; and there, my elbow on my knee, and my head resting on my hand, sometimes turning my eyes towards the desert, and sometimes fixing them on the ruins, I fell into a profound reverse.’

Another Frenchman, Félix Bonfils (1831-1885), the most prolific photographer of the Near East in the late 19th century, produced an extensive series of evocative sepia images of Palmyra from 1867 to 1876.

In 1995, I fell into conversation with an elderly man who told me that one of his ancestors had entertained somebody called Yadi Astor Sanop. It was only later, on the bus back to Damascus, that I finally twigged. He was referring to Lady...
Hester Stanhope (1776-1839), who probably was magnificent and insufferable in equal measure; she has been described by one of her biographers as having worshipped ‘before the altar of her colossal egotism’. When she first came to Palmyra it was with a rhetorical flourish that she declared: ‘Without joking, I have been crowned Queen of the Desert under the triumphal arch at Palmyra!’ She then goes on to describe, without the least touch of irony, the grand reception she was given.

A more sober account is that written by the remarkable traveller and architect of modern Iraq, Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), who describes first coming to Palmyra not from the West, as do most people, but from the East: ‘It is very different in spirit,’ she wrote. ‘One looks here upon the Arab Palmyra, facing the desert, ruler of the desert and dependent upon the desert for its life and force.’

I have been having an argument with a Syrian friend. He says that the destruction of the old souq in Aleppo is not equal to the taking of a single child’s life. (Might I not add here the death of an elderly scholar?) It is the old, somewhat pointless, moral debate as to which, ultimately, is more important, a cultural artefact or a human life. I come back to him saying that with the destruction of the one, the murder of the other becomes so much easier? I rest my case.

Khaled al-Asaad, the heroic 82-year-old Syrian archaeologist whose life was dedicated to the study and preservation of one of the world’s greatest treasures, and who had so completely made Palmyra his home that, when given the opportunity to leave, he refused to do so, was beheaded by Islamic State militants because he would not reveal the whereabouts of hidden treasures.

The bitter irony is that the treasure they were looking for was right there in front of their eyes. It is highly unlikely that there are any other hidden treasures to sell to help subsidise their warped scheme. Is not the ongoing destruction of Palmyra a vivid enough demonstration – that with the destruction of the one, the murder of the other becomes so much easier? I rest my case.

• A small exhibition entitled Palmyra is on show at Arthur M Sackler Gallery (www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/current/palmyra) in Washington until December 2015. It includes the funerary relief of Haliphat (above right), which has not been on display since 2006, a video screen showing Félix Bonfils’ evocative 1860s photographs of the ancient site and images from Robert Wood’s The Ruins of Palmyra, otherwise Tedmor in the desert [sic] printed in 1753. Robert Wood’s work provided inspiration for countless Neo-Classical scholars in Britain and North America during the 18th century and one of his images, Eagle Decorating an Ancient Roman Temple, was the model used on the seal of the United States. Wood’s depiction of a coffered ceiling in Palmyra also inspired the ceiling of the Freer Gallery’s north entrance.

The oasis of Palmyra offers a poignant glimpse into the world of its former residents who, individually and collectively, contributed to its remarkable legacy, one that was built on an already rich past and continued to inspire subsequent generations.

‘In the face of the current tragic upheavals in Iraq and Syria, every stone, arch and carved relief plays a greater historical and cultural role than it has in the past,’ says Julian Raby, the Dame Jillian Sackler Director of the Arthur M Sackler and Freer Gallery of Art.

‘Like the relief of Haliphat, each stone can remind a people of its past, and fashion identity both individually and collectively.’
Reading the ruins

Seeing the fallen splendour of a past civilisation can stimulate artists to create a fresh, new vision – as Dalu Jones discovers at an exciting exhibition in Rome.

"The ascendancy over men’s minds of the ruins of the stupendous past, the past of history, legend and myth, at once factual and fantastic, stretching back and back into ages that can but be surmised, is half-mystical in basis. The intoxication, at once so heady and so devout, is not the romantic melancholy engendered by broken towers and moulder stones; it is the soaring of the imagination into the high empyrean where huge episodes are tangled with myths and dreams; it is the stunning impact of world history on its amazed heirs."

So wrote Rose Macaulay (1881-1958) in her beguiling book, Pleasure of Ruins, published in 1953. But The Power of Ruins: Fascination and Inspiration, the current exhibition at the Palazzo Altemps in Rome, does not focus simply on the pleasure of ruins, instead it explores the concept of ‘ruins’ and their subsequent interpretation. Ruins are viewed as a source of inspiration for artists past and present. Contemporary artists are faced with an increasing number...
of cataclysmic events worldwide, heralded by apocalyptic messages. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries we have seen and are still witnessing the destruction, not only of ancient monuments and archaeological sites, but of entire regions and populations.

The exhibition finishes with a section called Ruined Landscapes, which explores the despoliation of our environment, filled with ubiquitous industrial waste, a reminder of our wanton greed and disrespect for ecological and cultural values. The apocalyptic photographs of the Kansas-born artist Lori Nix (b 1969) show the consequences of an unknown calamity in which the theatres of our daily life, emptied of their inhabitants, are being slowly reabsorbed by Nature. Originally constructed as dioramas (the scale models traditionally used in museums of natural history), Lori Nix’s images, such as Library (1), are a denunciation of the current unsustainable exploitation of the planet’s resources and a warning of how things may turn out. As Lori explains: ‘These spaces are filled with flora, fauna and insects, reclaiming what was theirs before man’s encroachment. I am afraid of what the future holds if we do not change our ways regarding the climate but, at the same time, I am fascinated by what a changing world can bring... How will nature take places over again, and what will remain of the signs left by the human hand all over the globe?’

In Catastrophes: Modern and Contemporary Ruins, the opening section of the show, its overall theme is established. Here, we see destruction wrought by natural disasters and by war and terrorism – from Hiroshima and Fukushima to Dresden and New York. At present we are also witnessing wanton acts of cultural vandalism by ISIL at ancient sites, such as Nimrud, Hatra, Khorsabad and Mosul in Iraq and, particularly in Palmyra in Syria, where the dynamiting of its Triumphal Arch, Tomb Towers and the temples of Baal Shamin and of Bel have attracted worldwide condemnation.

Then, there is the past and present destruction of historic parts of cities, such as Rome and Beijing, erased by encroaching development fuelled by ideology or building speculation. Photographs show Mussolini’s demolition of medieval and Renaissance districts of Rome (2 and 3) to make way for a triumphal avenue to celebrate the glories of Italy’s past and, of course, his own. Yet The Power of Ruins: Fascination and Inspiration is also tailored to mesh well with the sumptuous
‘The ideas that ruins evoke in me are grand. Everything comes to nothing, everything perishes, everything passes, only the world remains, only time endures. How old is the world? I walk between two eternities.’

Diderot (1713-1784)
must be presented in a way that is meaningful and comprehensible to the non-specialist. Do we prefer to see monuments of the past as the embodiment of our aesthetic ideals, even if this clashes with archaeological evidence suggesting their original appearance was, to modern eyes, garish? We may like sparkling white marble temples and statues but, originally, they were probably painted in bright colours.

Luckily 3D-projection technology may provide a solution without causing any permanent intervention or irreversible damage to the relics.

In another section, Torso: From Wishing for Completeness to the Worship of the Fragment, the restoration of pieces of ancient sculpture is discussed, using as its centrepiece an 18th-century plaster cast of the Belvedere Torso — the original is in the Vatican Museums. The cast reproduces the well-known headless, armless, twisted torso of a nude male figure, a powerful fragment of a marble statue that has inspired many artists, from Michelangelo and Picasso to a very young Logan de la Cruz (b 1989) whose Pollock’d Belvedere Torso (6) is on show here. In it, the young American artist explores the merging of the solid traditions of Classical sculpture with ‘guerrilla art’ whose subversive undertones provoke unconventional methods.

The most favoured and recent hypothesis identifies the Belvedere Torso with the Homeric hero Ajax contemplating his suicide, a 1st-century AD copy of an older Greek statue probably dated to the early 2nd century BC. It is believed that Pope Julius II requested that Michelangelo complete the statue by adding arms, legs and a face. He respectfully declined, stating that it was too beautiful to be altered and, instead, used it as the model for several of the figures he painted in the Sistine Chapel.

Until the beginning of the 19th century it was customary to complete mutilated Classical statues. Famous 16th-century and 17th-century sculptors, such as Alessandro Algardi (1598-1654) and Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), were asked to provide the missing limbs for the newly discovered statues. These limbs were the artists’ reconstructions, imaginative repairs quite devoid of any qualms about authenticity, that were invented purely for the satisfaction of grand families of collectors, such as the Boncompagni Ludovisi and the Altemps.

Because of its unusual approach, The Power of Ruins: Fascination and Inspiration is so much more than yet another group of bucolic landscapes with broken columns. Nevertheless it cannot resist the inclusion of work by well-known protagonists of this genre, including Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) (7 and 8), Giovanni...
Battista Lusieri (1755-1821) (10), and Ippolito Caffi (1814-1866) (4), in two sections of the show entitled Anatomy of Ruins and Landscapes of Ruins. Although their work is descriptive, it was primarily visionary. Giovanni Battista Lusieri, court painter to Ferdinand I, king of the Two Sicilies and later the Earl of Elgin’s agent in Greece, was himself personally involved in the removal and shipping of the Elgin Marbles to England. In this, he was a witness to the dismantling of the Classical temple par excellence, the Parthenon, for the purpose of acquiring fragments of sculptures destined for a private collection.

No Italian exhibition would, it appears, be complete without an erotic element and here it comes in the shape of Semiramis dying on Nino’s grave (9) by Augusto Valli (1867-1945). Painted in 1893, at a time when the depiction of Classical subjects allowed artists to show the naked female form in ways unthinkable in other genres, it shows Queen Semiramis prostrate on her husband Nino’s tomb. Nino, or Ninus, is sometimes identified as Nimrod, who founded Nineveh, although his name does not appear in the lists of kings found in cuneiform texts.

Semiramis also seems to have been a legendary figure, although mentioned by ancient writers, such as Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, who tells us she reigned as queen regnant for 24 years, after the death of her husband, conquering much of Asia, restoring ancient Babylon, and building several palaces in Persia. She is also credited as the inventor of the chastity belt, and the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus says she was the first to castrate youths in order to create eunuchs.

Armenian legend, however, portrays her as a home-wrecker and a harlot who lusted after their handsome King Ara and declared war on him when he refused to marry her. Dante places Semiramis among the souls of the lustful in the Second Circle of Hell. Perhaps it is her home-wrecking skills that make her a suitable subject for inclusion in this show. Not surprisingly, she was irresistible to playwrights and composers who cast her as the heroine: Rossini, for example, in his two-act opera, Semiramide (based on a play by Voltaire) first performed in 1823. This illustrates that there is more than one story behind all of these different kinds of ruins.

The Power of Ruins: Fascination and Inspiration is on show in Museo Nazionale Palazzo Altemps, Rome (archeoroma.beniculturali.it/musei/museo-nazionale-romano-palazzo-altemps) until 31 January 2016. The exhibition catalogue by M Barbanera and A Capodiferro is published (in Italian only) in paperback by Electa at €29.
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Córdoba, the Mezquita, steel engraving c. 1850.

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This highly creative and unifying period in ancient Egyptian history is the subject of an exhibition on show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. One of its curators, Adela Oppenheim, tells us why it is so important.

The Middle Kingdom of ancient Egypt (circa 2030-1650 BC) falls within a cultural continuum that had already endured for millennia and would thrive for more than 1500 years afterwards, yet was neither static nor stagnant. Throughout Egyptian history, new ideas or means of expression often did not replace earlier ones, but rather were integrated into what had come before, creating a society of ever-greater complexity. The Middle Kingdom was a time of profound transformation when many of the ideas formulated during the preceding Old Kingdom (circa 2649-2130 BC) and earlier were revived and re-imagined.

Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom, an exhibition currently on show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art approaches the period from this perspective, examining the adaptations of artistic forms and cultural concepts from earlier epochs, as well as the shifts that occurred over the course of the era.

Encompassing the 11th, 12th, and 13th Dynasties, the Middle Kingdom saw the creation of magnificent works of art: imposing, monumental sculptures that proclaimed the power of the king while also suggesting his humanity, and poignant, intimate pieces.

such as those intended to protect vulnerable members of society.

Our knowledge of Middle Kingdom art, architecture, and culture remains uneven, both in terms of the origin of objects and their date, a consequence of varied preservation as well as patterns of archaeological excavation. Further complicating our understanding of the period, however, are the transformations that arise over the course of the Middle Kingdom itself, when startling sculptures are created, new types of objects emerge, and dramatic works of literature appear, while other artefacts fade. For example, the elaborate models depicting the production of food and other goods cease after the early 12th Dynasty, while the intricate sets of jewellery belonging to royal women, such as Princess Sithathoryunet are first attested in the mid-12th Dynasty.

Both occurrences must reflect new practices and beliefs. Political power also fluctuates between the royal court and the provinces, one result of which is that the brilliantly painted tombs of the Middle Egypt region are no longer constructed in the later 12th Dynasty. For this reason, organising a Middle Kingdom exhibition strictly according to chronology seemed inadvisable. A more fruitful approach has been to understand the era through the different layers of society and their comprehension of life, death, and the ordering of the world.

A major excavator of Middle Kingdom sites, the Metropolitan Museum is uniquely placed to organise such an exhibition. In the first third of the 20th century, the museum’s excavators worked at Deir el-Bahri, the Asasif, and Lisht, uncovering temples and tombs that are invaluable for our understanding of the period. Thanks to the system of partage then in place, though no longer permitted, significant works of art from these excavations entered the museum’s collections. It continues its archaeological exploration of the Middle Kingdom through its current excavation work at the pyramid complex of Senwosret III at Dahshur.

At the end of the Old Kingdom, the unified Egyptian state disintegrated, with local officials increasingly acting independently of centralised, royal authority. This disruption was perhaps the result of low Nile floods that caused poor harvests, but other factors probably contributed, ushering in a 100-year era we refer to as the First Intermediate Period. During the subsequent 11th Dynasty, rulers in the Theban area began to dominate, but now from a power base in southern Egypt, rather than the traditional northern capital of Memphis, south of modern Cairo.

In the early part of this dynasty, three rulers who bore the name Intef and one called Mentuhotep gradually extended their hegemony to adjacent provinces. Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II took further decisive steps in this process; although it is uncertain precisely how far to the north his territory stretched, later pharaohs celebrated him as the king who reunified Egypt.

The geographic as well as temporal gap between the kings of the Old Kingdom and those of the early Middle Kingdom were significant factors that allowed 11th-Dynasty artists and architects the freedom to develop local Theban forms of art and architecture. Sculptures and reliefs of the Mentuhotep era are characterised by expressively attenuated limbs, heavily rimmed eyes with long cosmetic lines, thick, smiling lips, and lively, densely patterned surface, as seen in the relief of Queen Neferu having her hair done. The style reached its apex in the spectacular decoration of the memorial chapels built for the women
of Mentuhotep II’s family, who were also priestesses of the goddess Hathor. As reunification advanced, southern artists seem to have had greater access to Old Kingdom monuments in the north, perhaps concurrent with northern artists moving to the south, ushering in an exciting period of cultural ferment that lead to one of the greatest artistic achievements of the Middle Kingdom: the temple and burial complex built by Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri.

This innovative structure was based on Theban architectural forms characterised by long pillared facades, articulations that created a dramatic interplay of light and shadow under the strong Egyptian sun. Within the temple complex, relief decoration relied heavily on iconography that stretched back to the Old Kingdom, while sculpture portrayed the king in the guise of early monarchs with idealised faces and massive lower limbs, all of which projected solidity and permanence. This can clearly be seen in the colossal statue of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II Standing in his Jubilee garment.

For unknown reasons, after the reign of Mentuhotep IV power passed to another line of kings (12th Dynasty), who were named Amenemhat and Senwosret. During the reign of Amenemhat I, Egypt’s capital returned to the north, not to Memphis, but to a new city slightly south of it at a place called Ijtawi (modern Lisht). The most momentous architectural development was the renewed construction of pyramid complexes, an already ancient form revived after more than 160 years. The pyramid complex of Senwosret I clearly emulated those of the later Old Kingdom, but subsequent ones, particularly those of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III, noticeably diverge, suggesting changes in the beliefs...
surrounding the king’s afterlife and likely kingship itself.

One of the most startling transformations during the Middle Kingdom is the manner in which the pharaohs were depicted, a development that is also reflected in works of art commissioned by the elite.

During the 11th and early 12th Dynasties, relief and sculpture show the pharaoh in an idealising manner, emphasising his transcendent nature as a son of the gods; as seen in the head of a colossal statue of Senwosret I shrouded. In these works the king has smooth, even facial features abstracted by stylised eyebrows and cosmetic lines; he often smiles benevolently.

By the time of the reign of Senwosret III and that of his son Amenemhat III, the face of the king is radically different: he is depicted with soft folds of skin over a sharp facial structure, protruding eyes with prominent lids, a pronounced brow bone, and a downturned mouth with fleshy corners. The most astonishing of these images give the distinct impression that they are portraits, although we have no idea of the pharaohs’ actual appearance or any aspect of their personalities. At the same time, these kings are depicted with the tautly muscled bodies of young men, creating a type of composite image. The meaning of these works has long been debated among Egyptologists. They have been tied to a group of literary works, some securely dated to the Middle Kingdom and others perhaps later, that project pessimistic attitudes and reflect on harsh aspects of life seemingly beyond the control of a supposedly divine pharaoh.

As composite images, these sculptures may attempt to elucidate dual aspects of kingship: the physically strong ruler capable of protecting, defending and extending Egypt’s borders and a mature individual who has the wisdom to lead his people.

Regardless of their precise meaning, these sculptures are certainly another manifestation of evolving ideas about the nature of the pharaoh. The evolution of pharaoh both politically and ritually is also marked by the increase in royal patronage of temples throughout Egypt, in major centres as well as more remote sites. This is shown in

‘The Middle Kingdom was a fascinating and complex era that saw many profound changes in Egyptian culture.’

8. Detail from the relief, Two Officials or Sons of the Vizier Dagi, painted limestone, 11th Dynasty, late reign of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II to early reign of Neftawire Mentuhotep IV, circa 2025-1986 BC. Thebes, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, tomb of Dagi. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.


a relief carved on a limestone lintel that shows Senwosret I running towards the god Min.

In the Old Kingdom stone temples seem to have been constructed mainly for the cult of the king, while most deity temples were subject to local patronage and made of mud brick. Throughout the Middle Kingdom pharaohs commissioned elaborate deity temples filled with impressive statuary, as can be seen in the head of the statue of a bovine deity, and fine relief decoration depicting the king enacting rituals, making offerings to deities, and receiving their blessings.

Our main evidence concerning royal women of the Middle Kingdom, the king’s female counterparts, relates to their ritual roles, as there is little evidence that they exerted particular political influence. Among the sculptures of these women, the most powerful depict them as a sphinx, a protective creature that combines a human head with a leonine body.

Although Old Kingdom queens may have been shown in this guise, female sphinxes were more prevalent in the Middle Kingdom. The changing roles of royal women in the second half of the 12th
Dynasty is reflected in the elaborate sets of jewellery found in some of their tombs. These sophisticated pieces, among the finest ever created in ancient Egypt, such as the pectoral of Princess Sithathoryunet, were not, however, primarily items of personal adornment – they are notably embellished only with the names and iconography of kings – but objects of key ritual and magical significance probably worn during sacred rites.

The Middle Kingdom also witnessed a more expansive world view. For the first time Egypt held territory outside its traditional borders, as is exemplified by the fortresses 12th-Dynasty kings established to the south in the Sudan. Simultaneously Egypt extended its trade relations outside its traditional borders, as is evidenced by the fortresses 12th-Dynasty kings established to the south in the Sudan. Simultaneously Egypt extended its trade relations south in the Sudan. Simultaneously Dynasty kings established to the south in the Sudan. Simultaneously Egypt extended its trade relations south

Nubians and other foreign peoples also lived within Egypt, serving in the army and working in elite households. Although these individuals generally seem to have occupied lower positions, they appear to have been accepted members of society, depicted respectfully and with dignity in numerous works of art. This can be seen in a figurine of an Asiatic woman.

Egyptians of a wider socio-economic range were able to commission works of art during the Middle Kingdom, from the elite who were depicted in works of great sensitivity, such as the statue of the Sealer Menkhetept Seated, to middle-class individuals who owned respectable statues of their deceased loved ones.

Sculptures and stelae were set up in tomb chapels, as they had been in the Old Kingdom, but they were now also dedicated to deity temples and placed in memorial shrines constructed at sites of particular religious significance, especially Abydos, a city sacred to the funerary deity Osiris. An example is the Stela of the Overseer of the Herds, Abkau.

Representations of extended families and households were often included in these elaborately composed objects, particularly in the later Middle Kingdom. Many feature parents and their children, sometimes in poses of familial affection, hints of emotion in a culture that often avoided such visual displays.

Concern for the family and its survival was also manifested in a profusion of magical objects designed to protect the living and assist the dead in their transition to an afterlife. Protection for vulnerable pregnant women and children...
Smooth blend of traveler, scholar and archaeologist, Guy Hepp has a deep love of Mexican culture, both ancient and modern, in particular the site where he and his team are excavating – the village of La Consentida, where he has found hints of social complexity during the initial Early Formative (1650-1500 BC). His research includes the study of early village life and the ceramic figurines and musical instruments they have found there. He has also investigated some of Mesoamerica’s earliest ceramics and its earthen architecture.

Dr Hepp is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado and a Visiting Instructor at Front Range Community College.

Could you give us an overview of the site where you are working?

La Consentida was a small farming village on the coast of Oaxaca, Mexico, occupied between about 1600 and 1350 BC, or 1950 and 1500 calibrated years BC. The first occupants may have been a semi-sedentary group who used several resource sites in the region. The community seems to have become more permanently settled at the site over time and they seemed to have eaten more maize than did some of the other coastal peoples who lived at the same time. The group who founded La Consentida is probably related to modern Chatinos.

Which discoveries have you found most exciting?

The analysis of ceramic figurines and musical instruments from Mesoamerica’s Formative or Preclassic period (1650 BC–AD 250) has been among the most rewarding research I’ve done. It sounds like a cliché, but I think that ceramic images of the human form offer us the best chance we have to see ancient people as they perhaps saw themselves. And through my work with ancient musical instruments, I have had the chance to compare, illustrate and even play ancient...
instruments that (in some cases) hadn’t touched human lips before mine in thousands of years. Two bird ocarinas from La Consentida, for example, are probably among the oldest preserved musical instruments in Mesoamerica.

During the Formative period (1650 BC–AD 250) people began to settle down. What caused this? The establishment of farming villages happened in many parts of the ancient world during about the last 12,000 years. One of the fascinating aspects of this transition is how it compares in regions that were developing independently. In the Fertile Crescent area of the Near East, for example, domestication of crops and the shift to settled villages happened more or less simultaneously, perhaps with some evidence of sedentism before true domestication. But in Mesoamerica, people domesticated crops thousands of years before they were sedentary. The reasons for this discrepancy are the subject of many archaeological studies. Causes proposed to explain these shifts include environmental factors, increased inter-regional interaction, and the growing complexity of symbolic thought and community ritual. I think that these explanations are not mutually exclusive.

With ‘civilisation’ comes disease, hierarchy and standing armies – which are not such good things? One key aspect of the anthropological definition of human culture is that it has the potential to be maladaptive. The establishment of sedentary and agricultural economies, as well as of complex political organisations, has been a multifaceted experience in human history. It comes with positive and negative implications. One way in which archaeologists identify early agriculturalists in some regions, for example, is through the dental pathologies and decreases in overall health that often accompanied the shift to an agricultural diet. I believe such a negative trend in health with increasing agriculture is apparent at La Consentida.

How can we look at this objectively? Many of us might dream of ‘tribal life’ but we live in an industrial society with an explosive growth of cities, media, globalism and technology. What can we learn from ‘tribal wisdom’? One of the things archaeology and anthropology can offer modern society, in a general sense, is a realisation that there is more than one way to live. There is nothing innate about many of the things that human societies do. Culture is learned. Maladaptive practices, such as not caring for the environment, carrying out organised warfare on a massive scale, or even eating too much saturated fat, are all part of a malleable social fabric. We can choose what cultural practices we want to maintain or emulate, just as we can choose to give up some of our harmful habits.

How long did the average person live in La Consentida? It looks as though the early occupants were relatively healthy people. They were of robust stature, had good teeth, and a broad diet incorporating both domesticated maize and local wild fauna and flora from aquatic and terrestrial settings. Increases in dental wear and cavities in later burials tend to suggest that a growing reliance on maize agriculture over time had negative implications for the community’s health. Unfortunately, archaeologists have found that this switch to a less diverse, often more starchy diet (sometimes with ground stone in the milled flour from processing) was frequently bad for people’s health in the ancient world.

How has made you feel closer to the people of La Consentida? The most magical moments come when I am working with a burial, or...
Is there evidence that these people travelled to other areas?
It is hard to know what regions La Consentida’s occupants actually visited but, based on the presence of obsidian (a volcanic glass) imported from Central and Gulf Coastal Mexico, we can at least say that the community engaged in a broad interaction sphere in ancient Mesoamerica. Based on styles of ceramic vessel form and decoration, the La Consentida community had connections with Pacific coastal peoples far to the west (perhaps as far as modern Colima and Michoacán), as well as closer affiliations with the central and southern Mexican highlands.

Can you tell us about their musical instruments, and is it possible to describe their music?
While we cannot say exactly what music sounded like at La Consentida, a few patterns are apparent when we analyse musical instruments from the site and from subsequent occupations in coastal Oaxaca. In many cases, musical instruments (such as bird whistles and ocarinas) actually sounded like the animals they represented. This suggests that music was perhaps related to transformative rituals in which musicians took on characteristics of powerful animals or used the abilities of those animals to carry out tasks such as communicating with ancestors. The common notes played by many instruments from Formative period sites in Oaxaca suggest that they were sometimes played in unison, perhaps with other types of instruments such as drums.

Do you have any evidence of their spiritual beliefs, their burial practices, for example?
La Consentida’s human burials (both of children and adults) include offerings. In fact, two of the most carefully laid-out burials were...
those of children aged about two to three years. Offerings included complete ceramic vessels, figurines, musical instruments, stone tools, plant seeds, and animal bones. These people were laid to rest by family members and fellow villagers who loved them.

What is it that really appeals to you about Oaxaca?
Lots of things – it is absolutely one of my favourite places. With 16 different native ethno-linguistic groups recognised by the Mexican government, and with the Afrotémistazos of the Costa Chica of Guerrero and Oaxaca (who are often marginalised by the government), this area is packed with cultural diversity. When we consider how this diversity is compounded by the ancient history of the region, and that many of the recognised language groups contain peoples who speak mutually unintelligible dialects, the region is an absolute tapestry of human and geographical variation.

I have been to areas over 10,000 feet above sea level, where clouds perpetually blanket small towns, with beautiful churches that emerge and disappear again into curtains of fog as you pass by. I’ve seen towering constructions of cane laced with fireworks and ignited for village religious festivals. I have learned to disregard the stereotypes of the Mexican people perpetuated in some venues in the United States. Lazy? For the working class and the poor in Oaxaca, every day is a hustle – 18-hour working days are not uncommon. Jobs must get done with the tools at hand, so improvisation is a constant process. I don’t mean to imply that Oaxaca is only a place of poverty and struggle. It is also home to some of the most brilliant academicians I’ve met and innovative cultural programmes I’ve experienced. I have an immense respect for the ingenuity and resilience of the Mexican people.

What are your favourite Mexican archaeological sites?
Mexico is home to some of the most amazing archaeological sites in the world. A visitor to this country should see Teotihuacan, the remains of Tenochtitlan amidst the foundations of modern Mexico City, the Maya sites in the jungles of Chiapas and on the Yucatan Peninsula, and the ancient Zapotec capital of Monte Albán above modern Oaxaca City. Other places with amazing and sometimes unique architectural styles and histories include El Tajín in Veracruz and central Mexico’s Tula. The list is far too long to recite. Some of these places are UNESCO World Heritage sites that rank among the most amazing ancient human settlements on Earth. Mexico is also home to fantastic museums. A week in Mexico City could be spent just in the National Museum and the Museo del Templo Mayor on the zócalo (main square). Oaxaca’s museums hold treasures from Monte Albán’s tombs and other sites in the region. The US media often portrays Mexico as a place dangerous for travellers, but I think this is an unfair representation of most of the country. I find central and southern Mexico in particular to be welcoming places, full of things worth seeing in your lifetime.

Have your studies led you to draw any conclusions about humanity?
This gets back to the sticky issue of human universals, a very unpopular topic among modern archaeologists and anthropologists. I do see some extremely consistent patterns, though. As you mentioned, all human groups seem to have some tradition of music and representational or abstract art. All human groups of which I am aware (past and present) have used some sort of mind-altering substance. I do see a complicated set of beliefs and practices regarding the appropriate treatment of the dead. They all use language and trade goods across varying distances, sometimes as part of extremely intricate exchange networks, even among societies considered comparatively ‘simple’.

Are these things dictated by our genes or have some come from our common human history?
I don’t pretend to have the answer to that question. Much of the behaviour that we consider exclusive to humanity has been witnessed among great apes, dolphins – even crows and ravens. These findings should cause us to question facile definitions of human behaviour.
Madame Butterfly meets the Buddha

Nicole Benazeth visits a fascinating exhibition in Geneva that shows the influence Japan and its Buddhist teaching had on late 19th-century Western culture
The intriguing title of Jérôme Ducor and Christian Delécraz’s exhibition, which is currently on at the Museum of Ethnography in Geneva (MEG), is The Buddhism of Madame Butterfly: Buddhist Japonism. With choice exhibits not only from its own collection but also from major international museums (including the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet and Musée Cernuschi in Paris, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London), it sets out to illustrate the profound impact that Japanese art and religion had on European culture at the end of the 19th century.

The reopening of Japan between 1853 and 1867 had a lasting impact on the Western world – in commerce, religion, art and design, and in many other fields. Although Japan had traded with Europe since the middle of the 16th century, first with the Portuguese, who introduced the Christian religion into the country, then with the British and the Dutch, things turned sour at the beginning of the 17th century. As a result, Japan shut itself off from the West allowing only Dutch traders access until the second half of the 19th century.

When, in 1853, an American fleet led by Commodore Perry forced the Shōgun (Japanese military leader) to open up the country to foreign trade, he had no choice but to accept. Treaties were signed with most Western countries and Japan caught up with the industrial revolution in just two rapid decades.

Missions were sent abroad and foreigners were hired to bring modernity to the country. But the old order did not survive the reopening; the emperor became the supreme leader again, the capital was transferred from Kyoto to Tokyo and the Meiji era began.

At the same time, travelling eastward had been made easier by the opening of the Suez Canal, and young, well-bred European men extended their grand tours all the way to Japan. This triggered strong cultural interaction; the Japanese started dressing in morning suits and top hats, while the Europeans began to collect Japanese prints and religious artefacts. These prints, together with calligraphy and woodcuts, were all immensely popular and had a deep influence on
Western artists. The Impressionists were won over and, in 1872, the word *japonism* appeared and this, in turn, gave birth to Art Nouveau. This is richly represented in the exhibition, in particular by posters – a novelty in Europe – and drawings by the Genevan artist Alfred Etienne Dumont.

Buddhist sculpture and religious objects also attracted the interest of Europeans even though this ‘godless religion’, that had been brought to Japan from India by the Chinese in the 6th century, rather shocked some. And, after the Japanese authorities decided to remove all traces of Buddhist influence from Shinto sanctuaries (Shinto was the country’s original religion) these artefacts could be bought cheaply and were in good supply.

The most prominent art-collecting traveller was Emile Guimet (1836-1918), a wealthy industrialist from Lyons, who set off on a world tour in 1876 in the company of a painter named Félix Régamey. This artist’s countless sketches made on the journey (he later produced 40 large paintings from them) create a vivid picture of their journey.

Arriving at Yokohama with a letter from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that they were on an official mission to study the religions of Japan, they were given guides and interpreters and allowed to visit all the temples and other places of worship. Guimet was able to meet all Japan’s religious representatives of Shinto and those of six Buddhist schools and also to buy sculpture, objects and manuscripts. He also recruited young Japanese men for the Oriental school he intended to set up in Lyons. By the time Guimet returned home in 1877, he had acquired over 300 religious paintings, 600 statues and 1,000 volumes of manuscripts. His Museum of Religions opened in Lyons in 1879. Then, in 1884, he moved his collections to Paris, donated them to the State, set up a much bigger museum at his own expense and was appointed its Director for life. It was inaugurated as a *Centre de transmissions matérielles et spirituelles* in 1889.

On 21 February 1891, a Buddhist ceremony was held in his museum. Two Japanese monks from the True Pure Land sect who were passing through Paris asked whether they could use objects from its collection to celebrate the annual service in memory of their school’s founder. A shrine and a chapel were set up in the museum library’s rotunda and Guimet turned the ceremony into a brilliant social event, resulting in a large audience, including the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Nijubashi bridge, Vues célèbres de Tokyo, 1888, by Kobayashi Ikuhide (1885-1895, Japan, Estampe ôban, edited by Nagamatsu Sakunosuke, paper. 32.5cm x 21cm. Private collection © J Watts.

5. The Nijubashi bridge, Vues célèbres de Tokyo, 1888, by Kobayashi Ikuhide (1885-1895, Japan, Estampe ôban, edited by Nagamatsu Sakunosuke, paper. 32.5cm x 21cm. Private collection © J Watts.

in resounding approval of the authenticity of his approach. The shrine, chapel and cult objects, used in the original ceremony, are all displayed in a replica of the rotunda in this exhibition.

After Guimet’s death in 1918, his museum was converted into the Musée des Arts Asiatiques, and the religious collection was put into storage. Some of the pieces currently exhibited at the MEG have not been seen for nearly a century.

But how does Puccini’s Madame Butterfly fit into this story? The libretto is distantly derived from Madame Chrysanthème (1888), a novel by Pierre Loti, a French naval officer, which was inspired by the young Japanese girl whom he married for a month during his first visit to Japan. Although the novel showed the country in a poor light and was sharply criticised, a number of variations on the theme of the naive Japanese woman in love with a cynical foreign officer were produced. The opera’s final libretto, by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, also discredits Buddhism by making the young woman’s uncle, a bonze (a Buddhist teacher) curse her for becoming a Christian.

A French version of Madame Butterfly, with costumes by Félix Régamey, was first staged in Paris on 28 December 1906. But by that time, the public had all but tired of Japonisme, even though six years earlier ancient art works from the Imperial Collections were displayed at the 1900 Paris World Fair. So, although one of the most popular operas in the world exemplified Japonisme’s influence on both literature and music, it also heralded its demise.

A serious interest in Japanese Buddhism, revived by academics in the 1950s, continues today and an inventory of all collections of Buddhist art is currently under way. Known as Japanese Buddhist Art in European Museums (JPAE), it is an international project in which the MEG is taking part. It is led by the Hosei University Research Centre for International Japanese Studies (Tokyo) and the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies at the University of Zurich.

The Buddhism of Madame Butterfly: Buddhist Japonism is on show at MEG (The Museum of Ethnography in Geneva; www.meg-geneve.ch) until 10 January 2016. The exhibition catalogue, published by Silvana editorial Milan/MEG Geneva, is available in French only at 39CHF.
It is a rare and ever so slightly startling experience to find oneself in an Asian country and to be the only Westerner in sight. This can happen in South Korea not only in its most secluded, remote Buddhist temples, but even in Seoul, the country’s capital city. There are Asian tourists a-plenty: Japanese and Chinese as well as Koreans enjoying the wide range of easily accessible tourist landmarks; the bewitching landscape and the numerous and varied archaeological sites and important Buddhist shrines, many of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

While the dispute between North and South Korea rages across the world news headlines, South Korean art and archaeology remain little known to non-specialists and this beguiling place is still uncharted territory for most Western travellers. Although South Korea is highly technologically advanced, a thriving hyper-modern country bristling with skyscrapers built even next to rice paddies and tea plantations, it constantly surprises us with the sheer beauty and originality of its monuments and the serenity of its peaceful, unspoilt parks and nature reserves. You can often find yourself walking along well-marked paths through majestic pine or bamboo woods, across meadows full of wild lilies and past streams...
edged by cosmos in full bloom. As you climb steep stone steps to discover an ancient wooden temple of great architectural beauty sheltering centuries-old exquisitely carved Buddhas, only the tingling of bells in a gentle breeze or the chanting of monks breaks the quiet of these shrines hidden deep in narrow valleys or high on mountain peaks commanding magnificent views.

Koreans have embarked on a vast restoration and excavation project of their historical and artistic heritage damaged during succeeding Japanese invasions and the Korean war of 1950-1953 — and with exemplary result. The sites are now impeccably maintained, surrounded by manicured gardens, and each one has an information centre, a café or restaurant. You can even find accommodation in private houses, Buddhist monasteries or comfortable hotels. Even in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) along the 38th parallel, there is a tourist attraction where observation posts afford a glimpse of the mountainous border with North Korea and the deserted beaches and coves along its coast.

Seoul changed hands four times in three years during a now almost forgotten war between North Korea, armed by Russia and China, and South Korea, backed by the USA and its allies. Thousands of young men who had barely survived the Second World War lost their lives, as did the Korean people whose homes were bombed and systematically destroyed. Nearly five million people died, more than half of these — about 10 per cent of Korea’s pre-war population — were civilians. Miraculously, though, the capital still retains painstakingly restored traditional neighbourhoods at Budong and Isadong, with narrow winding lanes where outdoor cafés afford pleasant breaks overlooking the spacious grounds of the Gyeongbok, the palace of the kings of the long-lived Joseon dynasty, that ruled Korea for five centuries.

The royal pavilions of the Gyeongbokgung palace complex have elegant proportions, gentle sloping roofs and a refined, subdued quality in their decorations. The wide ceremonial courtyards allow views of the surrounding wooded mountains that form a propitious backdrop for the palace: nature is never far or absent in Korea.

A symbol of national sovereignty, Gyeongbokgung was completely demolished during the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945. Restoration has been ongoing since 1990 and walls, gates and palaces have been reconstructed...
in their original locations and forms. The Geunjeongjeon Hall is the throne hall where the kings of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1897) formally granted audiences to officials, gave declarations of national importance, and greeted foreign envoys and ambassadors. Here the court was reminded that Geunjeongjeon implies that ‘diligence helps governance’. The imposing wooden structure sits at the end of a large rectangular courtyard, on top of a two-tiered stone platform, decorated with numerous sculptures of imaginary and real animals like dragon and phoenixes. The stone-paved courtyard is lined with two rows of stones, indicating where the court officials were to stand according to their ranks. Less majestic, but charmingly pretty, is the Gyeonghoeru (Royal Banqueting Hall) whose elegant lines are mirrored in the waters of a rectangular lake. A series of mysterious steleae and stone carvings that document the shamanistic practices still alive in Korea were moved here. These underline the country’s uninterrupted links with Siberia and Manchuria, the original homeland of the Korean people according to archaeological and linguistic evidence. The many tombs of the Joseon kings and queens, imitated Chinese imperial tombs of the Ming period (1368-1644). They can be visited in the outskirts of Seoul within the grounds of a magnificent park.

A good introduction to Korean art is to be found in the vast collections of the impressive National Museum in Seoul, the sixth largest museum in the world in terms of floor space. Here, visitors can admire ceramics, metalwork, paintings and sculptures from the various dynasties that succeeded each other over the centuries in a peninsula strategically located at the crossroads between Mongolia, China, Russia and Japan. This is the start of a fascinating journey of discovery, learning about the fruits of an artistic tradition that is too often tucked away in the corners of many European museums. The distinct identity and cosmopolitan nature of Korean art and the strength of its artists lay in simplicity, spontaneity and a feeling of harmony with nature. Decorative motifs, especially on ceramics, are restricted to a minimum or are absent, as is the case with the white monochrome vases, dal hang-ari or ‘moon jars’, in which deliberate technical imperfection reaches aesthetic perfection.

The rich Buddhist section has as its centrepiece an exquisite early 7th-century AD gilt-bronze seated Bodhisattva lost in thought while musing over the fate of humanity, one of many examples of the outstanding skill of Korean metal-workers over centuries. A large
gilt-bronze incense-burner (8) of the Baekje kingdom (18 BC–AD 660) on display at the Buyeo National Museum is another, slightly earlier example of excellent Korean craftsmanship. It was found during an excavation of a temple site in Neungsan-ri, in 1993. Its iconography combines Buddhist and Taoist themes suggesting that the burner may have been used for ancestral rites or special religious ceremonies.

Recent research has established that far from being a copy of Chinese Han prototypes, its structure and designs probably originated from Central Asia, shedding new light on the cultural dimensions of the Silk Route. This extended from the Mediterranean across the Gobi desert and the Chinese empire of the Tang dynasty (AD 618-907) to the three rival kingdoms of Goguryeo (37 BC-AD 668), Baekje (18 BC-AD 660) and Silla (57 BC-AD 935) that dominated Korea for most of the first millennium AD, and, ultimately, reached Japan.

Gyeongju in the southeast, capital of the kingdom of Silla that ruled two-thirds of the Korean peninsula between the 7th and 9th centuries, is truly a ‘museum without walls’. Its territory is dotted with rounded burial mounds, early Buddhist temples and even a stone tower reputed to be an ancient observatory.

It is here that the exquisite Silla gold treasures, including crowns, caps, belts, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings and decorative swords, were discovered. The finds included numerous other excavated artefacts fashioned from silver, gilt-bronze, crystal, glass and jade. Scythian gold artefacts make an intriguing and visually convincing precursor to Silla gold ornaments and weapons. Exotic objects made in Central Asia and further west – Persian and Roman glass, for example – were also found in several Silla tombs, testimony to a continuous east-west flow of artisans and goods. The similarities between the gold ornaments and crystal and jade necklaces of Silla and Japan illustrate the close ties shared by the elites of these two neighbouring kingdoms.

Anyone who visited *Silla: Korea’s Golden Kingdom*, the stunning exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art two years ago, will remember those extraordinarily opulent Silla crowns featuring upright branches, cut from thin gold sheets, hung with comma-shaped pieces of jade, and with gold chains and leaf shapes hanging down from the headband. Equally magnificent are the belts of linked squares of flattened gold from which dangle gold charms.

It is intriguing that the contention of the distinguished American scholar Emma Bunker, advanced in 1978, about a possible comparison between Korean and Peruvian gold crowns, has still not been refuted or developed further.

Even more intriguing are the many mysterious dolmens erected...
mineral during the 1st millennium BC when megalithic cultures were prominent in Korea. At the Hwasun site in the south-west, dolmens are spread over five kilometres across the beautiful and dramatic Bogeomjae Valley, also a protected UNESCO site. The Hwasun dolmens include the huge and revered ‘Pingmae Rock’, which is over seven metres long and weighs 280 tons, making it the largest dolmen in the world. Hwasun is also home of the Ssangbongsa, a 9th-century Zen Buddhist temple.

For a different view, Yangdong village, a few kilometres away from Gyeongju, gives an insight into the daily life of the Korean aristocracy and its Neo-Confucian traditions during the Joseon dynasty. The village was founded during the 15th century on an auspicious site (according to Korean theories of geomancy) by the members of the Wolseong Son and Yeogang Yu clans. Their tile-roofed houses, as well as those of their descendants, are on the high ground while the lower-class homes, characterised by their thatched roofs, were built on lower ground according to the severe social stratification characteristic of Joseon society.

The same elegant architectural restraint and use of natural building materials, such as unpainted wood and thatch, define the country retreat of a Joseon official, Yang San-bo (1503-1557) at Soswaewon, north-west of Hwasun. Wishing to move away from the stressful world of court intrigues, Yang San-bo quit his government position in Seoul and moved to the country. Here, he could devote himself to literary pursuits in a bucolic environment of his own creation that he shared with like-minded friends.

Recreated, thanks to the survival of a map of the original carved on wood in the 31st year of the reign of King Yeongjo (1755), Soswaewon is a typical Korean garden of the middle Joseon dynasty. The entrance is shaded by tall bamboo groves that lead to the main garden terraces. Separate pavilions, which are dotted up a steep slope overlooking a stream, each bear evocative names such as jewol (‘bright moon after raining’) for the main house belonging to the host, and gwangpun (‘bright sun and fresh wind after raining’) for the pavilion in which guests were entertained.

In an increasingly hectic and globalised world, Korea, the ‘Land of the Morning Calm’, well deserves its ancient name and more than just a hurried visit.
Dining after death?

Catherine M Draycott asks whether the ‘funerary banquet’ images found in ancient tombs depict scenes from this life or from the afterlife.
A stroll through collections of Hellenistic and Roman tombstones that crowd the galleries of many museums will quickly acquaint visitors with one of the most common motifs used in Graeco-Roman funerary art: the so-called ‘funerary banquet’. Often known by the German Totenmahl – a somewhat ambiguous term which could mean ‘meal of the dead’ or ‘funeral feast’ – such images formulaically show one or more figures reclining on a couch (Greek, kline), sometimes attended by servants or household members, including pets. Sometimes they contain more mysterious elements: trees, a horse’s head sticking through what seems to be a window, and snakes.

In the 19th century some scholars believed the images showed ‘daily life’ but, by the mid-20th-century, such images were thought to show more eschatological scenes – things to do with death and the afterlife. Rather than a funeral banquet, per se, the idea was that they showed the dead actually dining in the afterlife.

It was the less sensational procedures in archaeology, painstaking studies of relative stylistic chronologies fashionable as a ‘scientific’ pursuit in the earlier 20th century, but which attract less interest now, that led to the recognition that among the Totenmahl reliefs there was a significant group of earlier ones from Athens. These were not, as had been assumed, tombstones, but votive stelai set up sometimes to gods, but more often for ‘heroes’. This was revealed, in part, by reading the few existing inscriptions that had been overlooked. The recorded find places at shrines and sanctuaries also played an important role. This new generation of gifts for gods was part of an interesting social change in the later 5th and 4th centuries in Athens and other parts of Greece, when people increasingly reified ‘lower level’ deities, including figures that may have been ancestors, or local heroes of some kind.

Other themes were depicted on votive stelai, but the banquet was a popular one, and, as time went on, it acquired particular elements associated with ‘heroes’. Snakes shown creeping around reclining diners, sometimes sampling food on tables, are thought to allude to the chthonic aspects of the figures – that is, their connection to the underworld (snakes live underground) – or else in some way to their otherworldly status. Trees could indicate the outdoor setting of shrines where such figures were worshipped, while horses might allude to the military or equestrian prowess and accompanying high status of the figures. More and more, lines of small figures, worshippers approaching the reclining divinities, would also be shown to one side.

Often these reliefs show a couple: a reclining man and a seated woman. In her book, Greek Heroine Cults (University of Wisconsin, 1995), Jennifer Larson suggests that this might have made such images particularly apt for cults where not just a ‘hero’ was worshipped, but also a ‘heroine’. It has also been argued that the banquet theme was suited to the representation of heroes because feasting was part of cult rites, and tables of food like those shown before the diners in the reliefs, known as trapeza, were also offered as gifts themselves.

Jean-Marie Dentzer, author of Le motif du banquet couché (Bibliotheque des Ecoles Francaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 1982), a monumental French book on the banquet motif in the art of the ancient Near East and Greece, reasoned that this theme was favoured in order to allude to archaic Greek symposia, which would frame the hero as an aristocratic forefather of days of yore. The basic formula of the Totenmahl had already been used earlier on grave monuments in
Asia Minor during the Achaemenid Persian period (circa 550-330 BC), where the theme may be more related to the importance of drinking and its elaborate etiquette as a sign of social status. From the later 4th century BC on, however, in the wake of the Athenian votive ‘hero reliefs’, the theme started to appear in Greek grave art, first in Athens, and then in other Greek cities.

By the time of the Roman Empire the general formula – the heart of which was the reclining on a couch more than the consumption of food and drink – had become a funerary cliché in the way that putting flowers on graves is now. A tombstone for a particularly beloved pet in Istanbul Museum even shows a dog reclining on a kline.

The very earliest gravestones with the banquet theme did not include snakes, horses and worshippers, but showed simply a couple on a couch. But, later, in the Hellenistic period, the grave reliefs of some Greek cities started to reintroduce these ‘heroic’ elements. This had an impact on the interpretation of the theme in general, because, as indicated above, it was thought that the Totenmahl reliefs depicted the deceased as ‘heroes’, who transcended death to achieve immortality in Elysion rather than facing a gloomy eternity in grey Hades.

The belief in ‘heroisation’ after death was once thought to be supported by the existence of mystery cults such as Orphism and Pythagoreanism but, since the publication of Dentzer’s work in the 1970s, scholars have increasingly dismantled this theory, pointing out that such cults were not the norm in ancient Greece.

For the most part, both ancient literature and inscriptions indicate that a rather more depressing version of the afterlife prevailed. Oswyn Murray, emeritus Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, wrote a 1988 article entitled ‘Death and the Symposium’ (in Archéologica e storia antica 10, 239-57) pointing out a polarisation of drinking on the one hand and death on the other, the pleasures of drinking in life eternally denied after death – a view which tallies with popular Classical Epicurean and Hedonistic philosophies. This view has subsequently been championed by a new generation of scholars, such as Johanna Fabricius, who argue for...
reading the so-called ‘funerary banquet’ images as idealised depictions of social status in life, rather than visions of the afterlife.

In Fabricius’ 1999 book *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs*, she points out that in the Hellenistic period Greek cities could honour their citizens as ‘heroes’, often employing visual symbols associated with heroes to confer civic recognition. These could be employed on personal grave monuments too, including in banquet scenes. In some cities this was limited to a simple wreath crown, which could be shown held by one of the figures. In other places, such as on the island of Samos, the enigmatic snakes and horses familiar from the earlier Athenian votive reliefs were included. According to Fabricius, this should be understood as metaphorical visual language, not evidence for belief in herosisation. She holds up an inscription on a Hellenistic tombstone from Astypalaia, an island in the Dodecanese, as the epitome of common ideas of the hereafter: ‘Bring me nothing to drink here. Wasted toil! For drinking happened when I lived. And nothing to eat either! Enough! Silly nonsense all this. But if in remembrance of me and everything I have enjoyed together with you life you want to bring crocus and incense, my friends, to those who have received me down here, these are worthy of gift-giving: such gifts befit those of the netherworld. With the realm of the living the dead have nothing to do’ (from *Dining and Death*, 2015, edited by Catherine M Draycott and Maria Stamatopoulou).

Lately, however, there has been some rethinking of the matter. In the first place, it is clear that scholars operating in other areas of the ancient world, such as Egypt and the Near East are not so keen to dismiss eschatological meanings. In ancient Egypt plentiful inscriptions and texts demonstrate fairly standard afterlife beliefs attributable to the classes that built monumental tombs – tombs often incorporating images of eating and drinking.

Rather than the reclining banquet of later years, these were more often images of figures seated before a table of offerings or, especially in New Kingdom Egypt, depictions of large feasts that may be in memory of the dead. Perhaps not all (or even any) ancient Egyptians actually
believed the dogma about the afterlife but, as Egyptologists such as Gay Robins of Emory University argue, it would still be difficult to see the images in a purely ‘secular’ light.

A relatively recent find, which was big news in the world of Neo-Hittite studies, was the Katumuwa Stele, found at the site of Zincirli in 2008. Rather like Egyptian offering-table scenes, here too a figure is shown seated before a table of food. The iconography is not so surprising in itself – other similar images of single figures or couples shown eating and drinking were known before – but this stele carries a long Aramaic inscription that prescribes mortuary food offerings to be left for the deceased. Furthermore, the inscription speaks of the ‘soul’, or ṣnš, of the deceased residing in the stele itself. Although, again, it is not possible to state outright that the image shows the deceased in the afterlife, receiving his offerings (the food shown and that listed in the inscription differ), it is difficult to see the relief sculpture purely as an image of social success, unrelated to the ideas about death expressed in the accompanying text.

In some areas of the Classical Mediterranean, such as Etruria, there are images of banquets that specifically locate them in the underworld, showing Hades and/or long-deceased family members, whom the recently deceased join for the meal. Even there, one could argue that the picture is somehow metaphorical rather than evidence of afterlife beliefs, but would that be right or would it actually be a willful imposition, based on an unacknowledged rationalist mindset? What does this mean for the way we should think about the meanings of the Greek Totenmahl reliefs, or banquet images from further afield, such as tomb paintings of Han period China, where the depictions and texts can be even less clear? The lessons of scholars such as Dentzer and Fabricius are salutary – one should not read beliefs into the images but it is also true that one cannot positively determine their absence. Nor, perhaps, should one divorce from the images ideas about death. In her book The Roman Banquet (Cambridge University Press, 2003) Katherine Dunbabin shows that while inscriptions can echo that of the above-mentioned one from Astypalaia, they are not always clear about the afterlife. More recently scholars have been pointing out further examples of mixed messages and discussions have arisen about how the use of such images in places of burial could have encouraged imaginative associations between the banquet theme, the act of reclining, the idea of death and eternal repose. Art, whether visual or verbal, is never fixed; it always has the capacity to stimulate the imagination. Some studies of ambiguity and art have even suggested that the greater this capacity, the greater the art.

Although some can certainly be described as masterpieces of their day, many of the sculptures and paintings that decorated tombs in the past were not ‘high art’. Even so, the success of the Totenmahl image type, and other images of food and drink consumption in funerary art through the ages, may be partly due to their capacity to prompt various ideas in the minds of viewers. Such images then are not so easily unpacked as direct representations of the deceased’s social identity, but may have appealed to the living who erected these monuments in part because of their more indefinite aspects.

• Dining and Death: Interdisciplinary perspectives on the ‘funerary banquet’ in ancient art, burial and belief, co-edited by Catherine M Draycott and Maria Stamatopoulou, will be published by Peeters Press this year.
The Basel Ancient Art Fair has drawn top international dealers in classical, Egyptian and Near Eastern antiquities to Basel for more than a decade. The fair in the baroque Reithalle Wenkenhof, has become an autumn diary fixture in the world of ancient art. The combination of this elegant location with an abundance of fine ancient art creates the unique atmosphere that attracts interested people from all over the world to BAAF every year.


For more information: www.baaf.ch

Red-figure kylix, Greek, Attic, 470-460 B.C., Charles Ede Ltd., London
Books for Giving
Minerva’s seasonal round-up of books on ancient history and related subjects

Only interconnect
By Steppe, Desert and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia by Barry Cunliffe (Oxford University Press, 530pp, 130 colour half-tones, 150 maps, 28 plans, hardback, £30/$49.95).

In the introduction to his mighty tome, Sir Barry Cunliffe, Emeritus Professor of European Archaeology in Oxford, opines: ‘History is far more than a series of events and the biographies of big names, it is the subtle interweaving of human behaviour spread over vast landscapes and through deep time creating a dense fabric, every thread of which has significance. The wonder of it all lies in how interconnected everything is.’

Professor Ronald Hutton says on the cover that Sir Barry Cunliffe is ‘one of our greatest living archaeologists’. I would say he is our greatest living archaeologist – and writer on the subject. Who else could have told this epic 10,000-year-old tale, that begins with the origins of farming circa 9000 BC and ends in the 13th-century AD Mongol Empire? Set on a vast stage, stretching from Europe to China, the movement of people, ideas and artefacts never ceases as empires rise and fall, trade flourishes and declines, and wars begin and end – and still it goes on.

Written in his usual clear, authoritative, elegant style not a word is wasted. What a pleasure it is to read ancient history written in English as she should be spoken. Lindsay Fulcher

Buried in the bog
Bog Bodies Uncovered: Solving Europe’s Ancient Mystery by Miranda Aldhouse-Green (Thames & Hudson, 224pp, 74 illustrations, hardback, £18.95).

Well preserved bodies have been emerging from the peat bogs of northern Europe for at least two centuries. Because their skin, hair and nails are still intact, and because the cause of their death is often still apparent, they were sometimes mistaken for recent victims of crime.

The truth is rather different. Most of these bodies are from the Iron Age and Roman periods, with some dating back to the Neolithic times. So how and why did they die? Were they sacrificed, executed or simply murdered? What is it in that peat that preserves the human body in such a magical way? How has modern forensic science helped us to find out more about these people?

Professor Aldhouse-Green tackles all these questions and provides us with satisfyingly full answers and, a witty and not inappropriate touch, is that the foreword of her book is written by best-selling crime novelist Val McDermid.

This archaeological detective story would interest any aspiring Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple, or Agatha Christie herself. Lindsay Fulcher

Anglo-Saxon attitudes

How dark were the Dark Ages? It depends on where you lived. If the decline and fall of the Roman Empire left you close to the Mediterranean, you were in Late Antiquity, and perhaps warmed by the weak rays of Byzantium. If you were in a remote province nearer to the Atlantic, such as Britannia, or beyond the empire’s borders entirely, like the Picts, then a certain amount of darkness was unavoidable. After the Romans left, the horizon contracted and the neighbours grew more threatening. Britannia, lightly Christianised in the 4th century, fell to the pagan hordes: the Picts from the north, slave-raiding Scotti from Ireland, then the Angles, Saxons and Jutes.

The result was, as Martin Wall says in The Anglo-Saxon Age, ‘chaos’ – but also a ‘Celtic cultural revival’. Then again, this depended on where you lived. The south and east took the brunt of the Anglo-Saxon invasions, and again four centuries later, when the Vikings came. DNA testing, which shows that the maternal lineage of many British people can be traced to the indigenous population, suggests that the Anglo-Saxons killed the men and enslaved the women. But the small Celtic kingdoms of the north and west, Northumbria and Mercia, were less affected by the invaders, and even benefited from an influx of refugees from the south and east.

The ensuing conflicts between the seven kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England are not entirely dark to us, but they are rather murky. We are unsure of the historicity of Arthur, or the extent of the ‘kingdoms’ described by later chroniclers, or whether Mercia, having assembled a confederation in AD 658, was then able to actually rule it.

SPECIAL DISCOUNT READER OFFER
Walking is this country’s most popular hobby and you don’t have to go far to find an archaeological site or historic building. Walking is also my favourite pastime, so I would be happy to find any or all three of these books (all recently published by Cicerone) in my Christmas stocking.

First up is Walking the Jurassic Coast, Dorset and East Devon: The walks, the rocks, the fossils by Ronald Turnbull (235pp, colour illustrations and maps, paperback, £12.95) which won the Best Guidebook award from the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild. Having only spent three days walking in the footsteps of Mary Anning (pioneer paleontologist), I am now inspired to walk the whole coastal path; this book also tells you all about the area’s fossil-rich geology. But if long distance is not for you, circular day-walks are described for each section.

Next is Mark Richards’ Walking Hadrian’s Wall Path: Described west-east and east-west (236pp, colour illustrations and maps, paperback in clear plastic wallet, £14.95), which includes a handy 1:25,000 route map booklet. If you have ever tried to use a guidebook when walking in the reverse direction from which it is written, you will know that it is not easy. So how very thoughtful

Minerva November/December 2015
of Mr Richards to include instructions for going in both directions. Last but not least is The National Trails of England, Scotland and Wales (272pp, illustrated in colour, paperback, £18.95) by Paddy Dillon, a prolific outdoor writer with more than 70 guidebooks to his name. Beautifully illustrated with colour photographs, this introduction to the 19 official long-distance trails across Britain can be enjoyed by armchair travellers as well as hardy trekkers. (Readers of Minerva will get a 25% discount off the price of these books by entering the voucher code MINERVA at the checkout on Cicerone’s website www.cicerone.co.uk). Lindsay Fulcher

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mists clear only with the rise of Alfred the Great, around 900.

We do know that around AD 800, following the death of the dyke-building King Offa, the Northumbrians invaded his kingdom of Mercia. We also know that around this time, the Welsh invaded too.

As Mercia tumbled, someone, probably the Mercian king Penda, buried a massive hoard of exquisitely worked precious metals in a field in what is now Staffordshire. We know about this because metal detectorist Terry Herbert dug up the Staffordshire Hoard in 2009.

At that time, Martin Wall, a keen amateur historian, was living just 20 miles up the road. The Anglo-Saxon Age is Wall’s rejoinder to ‘the canard’ of the Dark Ages being entirely dark. There were seven kingdoms in Anglo-Saxon Britain, and they fought constantly. But the richness of Celtic culture survived, and Wall makes excellent use of the fragments to cast light on the Anglo-Saxon interlude: poetry, chronicles, and the kind of deductive examination of terrain and place names that made Graham Robb’s recovery of the Celtic map of Europe, The Ancient Paths (Picador, 2013), such a pleasure.

As a patriotic Mercian, Wall places the rise and fall of the ‘Mercian Supremacy’ at the heart of his tale. But the story is also one of the slow unification of the seven kingdoms, and the formation of the first, forgotten England. It did not last long. Arthur’s heirs feuded with their nobles, especially the Mercians. Then the Viking raids began, and next, the Normans. ‘When a civilisation is finally overwhelmed,’ writes Wall, ‘there is nowhere left for its gods and heroes to go except underground.’

So the Anglo-Saxons receded into myth, and the Staffordshire Hoard remained buried – until Terry Herbert appeared with his metal detector. Martin Wall’s fascinating, readable, and often ingenious reconstruction casts light on the shadowy, harsh and surprisingly sophisticated life of Anglo-Saxon England.

Perhaps the northern Dark Ages should henceforth be known as the ‘Murky Ages’. Dominic Green

Dreams of the past


Bad money drives out good money, but does better history drive out worse history? Each age imagines the past in its own image, but the next age may strip away the illusions. No age or place has attracted so many errors, weird ideas and illusions as the ancient Eastern Mediterranean, because no book has exerted such influence as the Bible. Antiquity Imagined is a history of bad history: the faulty theories, discarded narrative and superannuated chronologies that have attached themselves to Ancient Egypt and the Holy Land. Robin Derricourt does not spend his spare time mapping crop circles, or searching for lost civilisations beneath the Antarctic ice. He is a scholar, a professor of archaeology at the University of New South Wales, and the author of respected books on sub-Saharan Africa.

Here, he performs two vital services. The first is wading into the Augean stable of ‘alternative history’ – ‘alternative’ in the way that fantasy is the alternative to fact – and cleaning up the mess, by putting the false starts and wrong turns into historical order. The second is to force us to acknowledge the implications of playing fast and loose with the ‘imagined past’. We have only ‘commonsense’ to go on, but sense is not always common among historians.

As Derricourt says, we do our best with the available materials, whether they are an internet connection, an old scroll, or a pyramid. Until the Renaissance, those materials were religious. Christianity defined Europe’s understanding of Egypt and the Levant. There was no need to talk of ‘sacred history’, because all history was sacred.

The secularising of historical methods in the Renaissance unleashed a new ‘experience of knowledge’, and necessary speculations. Egypt morphed into the ‘mystical’ fount of the freshly minted ‘Hermetic Tradition’, which traced its knowledge back to the mysterious Hermes Trismegistus. The question of the Great Pyramids’ function became entangled with a yearning for the resolution to all questions, in the most exciting way possible. Enter the higher daftness, the Rosicrucians, the Blavatskites, and the aliens who built the pyramids.

It was 19th-century archaeology that intensified fantasies about Egypt, because it proved that Pharaonic Egypt was older than either the Greek or Hebrew civilisations. Archaeology then captured the public imagination. Mummies were unwrapped in public before ticket-buying audiences, and hoards of visitors began to travel from museum to museum. This popularisation coincided with the expansion of European empires and that entangled Egypt with Victorian racial theories, some of which still adhere to ‘alternative’ history. In time, those dismal theories produced their equally dismal mirror images.

Meanwhile, the microscope and the shovel transformed our reading of the Bible. Again, science generated speculation. Many of the early archaeologists of the Holy Land were conscientious Protestants, hoping to correlate their findings with the sacred text.

Today, the public for ‘Biblical archaeology’ remains selective in the way it views the ‘nuanced picture’ of modern academics. Lost Tribes and apostolic legends are much more exciting than bits of broken clay and sheep droppings, but they are also potentially dangerous.

Israelis and Palestinians alike use Biblical archaeology as a weapon in their modern political struggle. Racists use false history to prop up their fantasies of power. And academics who pride themselves on the probity of their methods may succumb to the fashion of the day. Apocryphally the great kabbalistic scholar Gershom Scholem was once asked how he would feel if the object of his life’s work turned out to be rubbish. ‘The history of rubbish,’ he replied, ‘is scholarship.’ In Antiquity Imagined, Derricourt expertly excavates the rubbish of bad history and restores the fragments to pristine falsity – a remarkable labour, and a fascinating story.

Dominic Green

Books for Giving
Friends, Romans, countrymen...

**SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome** by Mary Beard (Profile Books, 544pp, 21 colour and 103 black and white illustrations, five maps, hardback, £25).

The year 63 BC may seem like an odd starting-point for a history of a city that had been founded some seven centuries earlier, but this is where Mary Beard introduces us to the Romans in her new book **SPQR (Senatus Populus Que Romanus, The Senate and People of Rome)***, a symbol of the empire. Here, we encounter Cicero in one of the most exciting moments of Rome’s history, his defeat of the Catalinarian conspiracy to overthrow the Republic.

As Professor Beard writes: ‘It is only in the first century BCE that we can start to explore Rome close up and in vivid detail, through contemporary eyes… There is no earlier period in the history of the West that it is possible to get to know quite so well or so intimately.’ But it is not just the detailed knowledge of the period that makes this event a suitable starting point; Cicero’s Catalinarians have long served as most famous families in history. Thanks to books such as Robert Graves’ *I, Claudius*, tales of poisoning, assassination, imitating the gods, a horse as senator, sexual scandal and defamation are already familiar to us.

Now Tom Holland (author of other histories, such as *Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Republic*, 2003) takes us through the lives and reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero, drawing from a wealth of ancient sources to present an exciting but well considered history of Rome’s First Family. This is not just a tale of intrigue and sordid deeds; Holland pays a great deal of attention to the politics of the Caesars, their military exploits and what they can tell us about the people at large.

*Family trees, a timeline, and an extensive list of dramatis personae all help the unfamiliar reader navigate this murky century of Roman history.* - Lucia Marchini

**Wars and Battles of the Roman Republic** by Paul Chrystal (Fonthill, 176pp, 16 colour and 17 black and white illustrations, paperback, £18.99).

Much has been written about Rome’s tumultuous rise to power through the Republican period, and so the subject is often treated as a routine historical narrative. It is, of course, requisite to present coherent chronological pictures of events as they unfolded from the mythical foundation of Rome in 753 BC to the birth of Julius Caesar in 100 BC. This book not only does that but adds considerably more colour by addressing many interesting aspects that may be associated with the consistent stream of warfare. The author places each campaign in its military, social and political context, making the important point that no war was ever fought in isolation, there always being a casus belli (cause of war) and a set of consequences.

Some of the more gory details of conflict are chronicled, such as the battle of Mons Alginus (431 BC) with the Volscians and Acqui. Livy records how the dictator Aulus Postumius Tubertus left the battle when his skull was fractured by a stone; Marcus Fabius, in charge of the cavalry, had his thigh pinned to his horse by a spear; Gnaeus Julius Mento, a consul, had his arm torn off.

The *casus belli* in 282 BC was sparked by the mere arrival of the Roman fleet in the Bay of Tarentum. When the admiral Marcus Valerius Staurus dropped anchor, he assumed that the Tarentines would be friendly. However, this opinion was not shared, since his prospective hosts promptly sank his flotilla. (When did the Romans ever drop in for a friendly visit?) This led to the famous defeat by Pyrrhus (with his elephants), who lost an estimated 13,000 men to the Romans’ 15,000; although the author calculates that the ratios were more likely to have been 4,000 to 7,000. This hefty loss on the part of the victors gave us the term ‘Pyrrhic victory’. Pyrrhus is reputed to have said: ‘Another victory like that and I’ll be going back to Epirus without a single soldier.’

As well as the novel appearance of elephants on the battle-field, the Romans encountered the deployment of another technology – incendiaries – this time at the Battle of Fidenae (426 BC). Here, the legions of the Republic were challenged by women armed only with flaming torches.

Paul Chrystal goes on to examine the decisive three Punic Wars in detail, each culminating in Roman victory, despite the tactical humiliation inflicted by Hannibal at the famous set-piece battle of Cannae (216 BC). Ultimately, Rome fulfilled the objective of Marcus Porcius Cato: *Ceterum censeo Carthago delenda est* (‘I am of the belief that Carthage must be destroyed.’)

The author rounds off his highly engaging book with an informative list of battles and wars, a glossary of terms and three interesting appendices of the *Cursus Honorum* (Roman official career path), the various Roman assemblies, and the seven kings of Rome.

**Wars and Battles of the Roman Republic** is refreshingly illustrated by obscure images taken from trade cards, advertisements, and books published in the 19th and 20th centuries, although the resolution is at times a little challenging. This is a good stocking-filler for all lovers of Rome. - Mark Merrony
deftly crafted a series of skillful manoeuvres and sweeping settlements (the First and Second Settlements of 27 and 23 BC) to cement a unified and totalitarian state. However, he plausibly argues that Augustan policy was essentially ad hoc, tempered with overarching violence.

The author’s approach is humanistic, concentrating on the undercurrents behind the leading figures of the era – Cicero, Caesar, Antony, Octavian – that led to ferocious competition and to bloodshed. He also addresses the harsh realities of life for both the Roman citizen and soldier, their day-to-day battle for survival, their motivations and their rewards.

The book is complemented by an informative timeline, outlining key events from the Tribunate of Tiberius Grachus in 133 BC to the death of Augustus in AD 14. It also contains an interesting list of characters involved in the tumultuous events from Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, the close friend and supporter of Augustus, to Virgil, the epic Roman poet of the Augustan Age. It is well written and engaging, ideal for students and scholars, but also accessible for non-specialists.  

Mark Merrony

in Roman art can, as Iain Ferris shows, tell us a great deal about identity, status and gender difference in a patriarchal society. He also explains the significance of the male gaze and eroticism in imperial Rome and the influence they had on how these works of art were received.

In a chapter on the depiction of imperial women, most significantly Livia (wife of Augustus), Julia Domna (wife of Septimius Severus) and Helena (mother of Constantine), we can learn about marriage and motherhood from how they were depicted. Funerary monuments show women of all classes, and reliefs from Ostia dating from the 2nd century AD show women working as poultry and vegetable sellers and as cobblers. Particularly interesting is Ferris’ discussion on the metaphorical use of mythological women to instruct, both morally and politically, the women of Rome.

The Mirror of Venus contains plenty of colour photographs, showing familiar Roman works, such as the Ara Pacis, and many lesser-known pieces. Ferris’ well researched work would be accessible to anyone interested in Roman women or art.  

Lucia Marchini

No friend of Rome

Carthage: Fact and Myth, edited by Roald Docter, Pieter Ter Keurs, and Ridha Boussoffara, (Sidestone Press, 144pp, 100 colour/10 black and white illustrations, hardback, £30).

This book was originally published to accompany an exhibition simply called Carthage on show at the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden until earlier this year. The city was founded by Phoenician migrants around the 9th century BC, and was a flourishing hub of Mediterranean trade, both by sea and land, for more than 600 years until it was completely destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC.

Most of us know that Carthage’s most illustrious son was Hannibal, its most well-known daughter was Queen Dido, and its most famous product was the purple dye produced from murex sea snails. But there is, of course, much more to the history of this great city than that. This slim, large format, lavishly illustrated book takes us on a journey from the Punic and Roman runs on Byrsa Hill to comic book images of Moloch receiving child sacrifices. The truth lies somewhere in between and it is a fascinating read.  

Lindsay Fulcher

Rome’s heir apparent

The Lost World of Byzantium by Jonathan Harris (Yale University Press, 280pp, 33 black and white illustrations and five maps, hardback, £30/$45).

The Byzantine revival continues: Gibbon introduced Rome’s heir in the second trilogy of Decline and Fall; more recently, John Julius Norwich wrote a peerless trilogy. Compared to these peaks of multi-volume narrative, the lower slopes of Byzantine history are somewhat bare. A growing flock of academics forges productively, but their works are a specialised taste. Until now, newcomers to Byzantium have lacked a single volume history. To read the best, Lord Norwich’s 1997 abridgement of his epic was to forego the better experience of reading his trilogy.

At last, Jonathan Harris has written The Lost World of Byzantium, a superb single-volume account, condensing 1000 years of history for neophytes, and refreshing the vision of non-specialists who already know their Julian from their Justinian, and their Komnenos from their Kantakouzenos.

Much of this clarity and freshness derives from Harris’ narrative approach. Instead of the usual chronology of emperors and battles, he examines each phase of Byzantine history via the study of a key personality,
By the River Nile
Lost Voices of the Nile: Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt
by Charlotte Booth (Amberley, 304pp, 30 illustrations, hardback, £20).

Outside the Underworld, it appears that the intimate lives of the ancient Egyptians were not that dissimilar to our own. They loved eating and drinking, sometimes to excess, music, playing games and story-telling. Both sexes were keen on personal hygiene, using soap, removing bodily hair and anointing themselves with perfumed oils. They cleaned their teeth using brushes made of the frayed end of a twig. They also took regular measures to keep their hair and wigs clean and did not want to go bald – for which they tried to find a remedy.

Women’s eye make-up was not just used for dramatic effect but also served a medical purpose by repelling flies and keeping the eyes moist. They suffered from colds and headaches and other ailments for which they made medications and used cloves to alleviate dental pain.

It seems extraordinary to find so many parallels between the lives and concerns of this ancient people and ourselves but freelance Egyptologist Charlotte Booth presents the facts and they are undeniable.

Lindsay Fulcher

It’s all Greek to me

Democracy, one of the most widely celebrated of Athens’ institutions, is still at the heart of many governments today and continues to be the subject of countless tomes. Much loved as the ideology behind democracy, it can be all too easy to look at Athenian democracy through rose-tinted glasses. Not so for Thomas N Mitchell, who has written this impressively thorough and analytical history of the rise and fall of the democratic system in Athens. He pays as much attention to the shortcomings and ultimate failure against the invading Macedonians of Athenian democracy as he does to its great achievements.

Drawing from a wide range of ancient literary sources and current research, Democracy’s Beginning leads us through the reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes, the temporary
overthrow of democracy in the late 5th century, and all the constituent parts of Athenian democracy such as the Council of the 500, the Assembly and the courts.

Mitchell has produced a lively and detailed history, which would be a valued resource for anyone studying the history of democracy.

Lucia Marchini

Join the Spartans

The Spartan Army by JF Lazenby (Pen and Sword, 239pp, 11 b/w photographs, 14 maps, paperback, £14.99).

In the modern world, we use the word Spartan to mean simple and severe, an existence with all comforts denied. But, in antiquity, it referred to a city in Greece that produced an army of warriors acknowledged by friend and foe alike as the best fighting men in the world. Most of the armies fielded in antiquity were made up of conscripts or pressed men, supported by mercenaries and hand-picked troops. The Spartan army was different, as all its troops were full-time soldiers. They had no skills other than fighting. The whole life of a Spartan man, from boyhood to death, was devoted to being a soldier, in the service of his city.

Other Greek armies were amateurs in comparison: the Spartans were professionals. There was no other army like it in antiquity, until the Roman army, also made up of professional soldiers, was created by Marius, in the first century BC.

Although the Spartans were skilled, brave individual fighters, in a one-to-one combat they were probably not superior to other trained warriors. Their strength lay in their ability to move at speed, fight as a body, and respond quickly to orders. This meant that when they faced an enemy who fought as individual warriors, they were usually victorious.

Although the Spartan army was never larger than 9000 men it is no exaggeration to say that it was the most efficient military machine of its time.

At the beginning of his book, Professor JF Lazenby tells us that it is about the Spartan army, not the history of Sparta as a whole. He covers the origins of the army but admits that even now some aspects of its make-up are not clear, mostly due to lack of original texts, or the fact that Classical writers disagree on military terms. This sets the scene for the second part of the book, where he describes the major battles fought by the Spartan army. Here the narrative does tend to drift a little. Giving us lots of additional information takes the thrill out of his descriptions of the battles.

The Battle of Thermopylae is probably the one best-known to the general public, especially since films and computer games have been around. The heroic stand of 300 Spartans, against the one million men of the Persian army captures the imagination. This battle is dealt with in scholarly fashion, showing that the 300 had help and was not as mostly people perceive it. The chapter ends with a very moving moment, when the author steps down into the narrative and describes his personal feelings on seeing the sunrise over the battlefield.

The other chapters on battles are just as enlightening and the author’s description of the reason for the final failure of the Spartan army is convincing.

JF Lazenby is Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the author of several books on the Classical world but this book was written over 30 years ago and is published here without revision of any sort. While it is a good read its style seems somewhat wordy and may not appeal to today’s younger readers.

David Sim

It's in the stars

Constellation Myths by Eratosthenes and Hyginus with Aratus’ Phaenomena translated by Robin Hard (Oxford University Press, 256pp, two constellations maps and one diagram, paperback, £8.99).

In the Hellenistic period, Eratosthenes of Cyrene (circa 285 BC-circa 194 BC), third director of the library of Alexandria, compiled the Catasterisms, a now lost book of myths which explained the constellations. Some of these stories survived only through later summaries. Hyginus (circa 64 BC-AD 17), Augustus’ librarian, wrote the Astronomy, describing each constellation and its myth, largely based on Eratosthenes, but Hyginus also gives other versions.

Now here is Robin Hard’s new translation of these Constellation Myths, complete with an excellent introduction on astral mythology and ancient astronomy and explanatory notes on how the Greeks and Romans viewed the heavens. We read how Athena placed the Argo, the first ship, among the stars to inspire confidence in future sailors and how the centaur, either Chiron (tutor of both Asclepios and Achilles) or Pholos (an expert at divination), was catastrophically by Zeus.

Also included is Hard’s translation of the poem Phaenomena by Aratus (circa 310 BC-circa 240 BC), who teaches us how to tell the time and date by looking at the heavens and even how to interpret signs of bad weather from animal behaviour.

Lucia Marchini

Art: ancient and modern


Earlier this year the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University held an exhibition called From Ancient to Modern: Archaeology and Aesthetics, which was ‘a confrontation between Sumerian and modern and contemporary art’. It featured some stunning Sumerian artefacts, dating from the third millennium BC, including pottery, figurines and exquisite jewellery in gold, lapis lazuli and carnelian, all of which are reproduced in this, the accompanying catalogue. Along with these ancient works of art are drawings by Giacometti, colourful paintings by De Kooning, and Henry Moore figurines, which all appeared in the exhibition.

As well as shedding light on the significance of the Sumerian finds and their reception, the essays in this informative catalogue also tell us about Queen Puabi of Ur and Mesopotamian archaeology. Much is written, too, about Leonard Woolley’s excavations at Ur, illustrated by his drawings and photographs of the dig, and press clippings from the 1920s and 1930s.

In all, From Ancient to Modern offers us an exciting link between ancient civilisation and modern art. The inspiration of the past breathes life into the work of later artists.

Lucia Marchini
**LONDON**

*Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs*

After the death of Antony and Cleopatra in AD 30 Egypt became first a province of the Roman Empire, then fell under the rule of the Islamic Fatimid dynasty until AD 1171. This exhibition takes the visitor on a journey through those 12 centuries of faith. The many artefacts on display all serve to tell a complex tale of largely peaceful coexistence, with intermittent tension and violence between Jews, Christians and Muslims. It touches on how the state used religion to assert power and also how such changes impacted on daily life. The seated figure, pictured below, is the Egyptian god Horus, dressed in Roman military garb. After Egypt became part of the Roman Empire, such depictions of Horus served to express the god's power in accordance with the new combined authority and, conversely, to validate Rome's political dominance. The overarching focus of this show is the shift from the traditional worship of many gods to monotheism – the transition from the ancient to the medieval.

*The British Museum*

+44 (0) 20 7323 8299

(www.britishmuseum.org)

Until 7 February 2016.

**Cambridge**

*Following Hercules: The story of Classical art*

This exploration of Classical art uses Hercules as its guide. Every one of the 40 objects in the exhibition features the son of Zeus, ranging from rare gems and coins, Renaissance drawings and bronzes, to 18th-century paintings and a polystyrene statue of the muscle-bound hero – the visual centrepiece of the display – based on the 3rd-century BC Farnese Hercules by contemporary Cambridge-born artist Matthew Darbyshire. The gallery describes the exhibition as one more labour for Hercules – to show how sculptures made in the Mediterranean millennia ago came to define Western art.

*Fitzwilliam Museum*

+44 (0) 1223 323900

(www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

Until 6 December 2015.

**Chester**

*The Sorrell Family: An exhibition of paintings and drawings*

The late Alan Sorrell is well-known in historical and archaeological circles for his lively reconstruction drawings and paintings of ancient sites but *Interrupted Conversation* (above) is his witty take on life in a museum gallery. Other members of his family are also artists. His wife Elizabeth was a fine watercolourist, his son Richard and daughter Julia are both accomplished painters, while his younger son Mark is a published poet. Together this family put on a jolly good show.

*Chelmsford Museum*

+44 (0) 1245 605700

(www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums)

Until 29 November 2015.

**CHELMSFORD**

*The Sorrell Family: An exhibition of paintings and drawings*

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*Chelmsford Museum*

+44 (0) 1245 605700

(www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums)

Until 29 November 2015.

**United Kingdom**

*Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire, Revolution*

Pepys lived through a tumultuous period of British history – from the execution of Charles I in 1649 through the plague and the Great Fire of London to the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658. This exhibition brings his candid diary to life through a diverse display of objects and recordings. It explores his first-hand accounts of the plague, the monarchy and revolution, medicine and food. Pictured above right is a 1970 cast bust of his wife Elizabeth after the 1672 marble original by John Bushnell. Pepys’ contribution to the development of England’s truly ‘professional’ navy is his link with the National Maritime Museum.

*National Maritime Museum*

+44 (0) 20 8312 6565

(www.rmg.co.uk)

From 20 November 2015 until 28 March 2016.

**Cambridge**

*Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire, Revolution*

Pepys lived through a tumultuous period of British history – from the execution of Charles I in 1649 through the plague and the Great Fire of London to the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658. This exhibition brings his candid diary to life through a diverse display of objects and recordings. It explores his first-hand accounts of the plague, the monarchy and revolution, medicine and food. Pictured above right is a 1970 cast bust of his wife Elizabeth after the 1672 marble original by John Bushnell. Pepys’ contribution to the development of England’s truly ‘professional’ navy is his link with the National Maritime Museum.

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From 20 November 2015 until 28 March 2016.
show are other splendid works from the Royal Collection by Gabriel Metsu, Jan Steen, Gerrit Dou and Pieter de Hooch.

The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace
+44 (0) 20 7766 7300
(www.royalcollection.org.uk)
From 13 November 2015 until 14 February 2016.

Jean-Etienne Liotard
The Swiss artist Jean-Etienne Liotard was in great demand during the 18th century, both in Enlightenment Europe and beyond. He developed a reputation for his unflinching powers of observation, most often in portraiture, in his signature pastels on parchment. He travelled regularly through the Ottoman Empire to complete commissions and there he developed a penchant for all things Oriental, subsequently adopting the title ‘Turk’. Following its recent success at the Scottish National Gallery, this exhibition brings together more than 70 of his finest works, including his sumptuous portrait of a lady in Turkish costume, entitled Woman Reading on a Sofa (circa 1748), shown above.

Royal Academy of Art
+44 (0) 20 7300 8000
(www.royalacademy.org.uk)
Until 31 January 2016.

The Fabric of India
The focal point of the V&A’s Festival of India is an exhibition devoted to the vibrant world of textile production in the Subcontinent from the 3rd century up until today. Over 200 objects are on show, including the beautiful tent of Tipu Sultan, now seen in its entirety for the first time since its capture in 1799. Historic costumes displayed alongside contemporary fashion illustrate the enduring nature of age-old techniques, such as dyeing, weaving and embroidery, as well as the immense skill required to produce such garments. The role dress that was played in the politics of Indian Independence as well as the impact of mass-production are also explored.

Victoria & Albert Museum
+44 (0) 20 7942 2000
(www.vam.ac.uk)
Until 10 January 2016.

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Victoria & Albert Museum
+44 (0) 20 7942 2000
(www.vam.ac.uk)
Until 10 January 2016.

body of research, this show traces continuities in Venetian drawing, from around 1500 to the foundation of the first academy of art in the Republic in 1750. It also highlights the importance of drawing both as a concept and a practice in work by Bellini, Titian, Canaletto, Tiepolo, Tintoretto and Vittore Carpaccio, (circa 1460–circa 1525), whose study of a female head is shown above, and reveals the variety of their aims and purposes and techniques used. Many of the works on show, on loan from the Uffizi in Florence and Christ Church, Oxford, as well as the Ashmolean, have not been seen since the 1950s.

The Ashmolean Museum
+44 (0) 1865 278000
(www.ashmolean.org)
Until 10 January 2016.

OXFORD
Titian to Canaletto: Drawing in Venice
Artists of the Venetian school are thought to have introduced the primacy of colour over line, in contrast to the practice of the adherents to Mannerism prevalent in the rest of Italy during the late 15th century. Based on a new body of research, this show traces continuities in Venetian drawing, from around 1500 to the foundation of the first academy of art in the Republic in 1750. It also highlights the importance of drawing both as a concept and a practice in work by Bellini, Titian, Canaletto, Tiepolo, Tintoretto and Vittore Carpaccio, (circa 1460–circa 1525), whose study of a female head is shown above, and reveals the variety of their aims and purposes and techniques used. Many of the works on show, on loan from the Uffizi in Florence and Christ Church, Oxford, as well as the Ashmolean, have not been seen since the 1950s.

The Ashmolean Museum
+44 (0) 1865 278000
(www.ashmolean.org)
Until 10 January 2016.

UNITED STATES
CHICAGO, Illinois
Dionysos Unmasked: Ancient Sculpture and Early Prints
The Art Institute’s Department of Ancient and Byzantine Art has collaborated with its Department of Prints and Drawings to stage an exhibition that examines how Renaissance and Baroque printmakers responded to Classical antiquity through the figure of Dionysos, who was a popular subject. Ancient sculpture depicting the god of wine and his hedonistic entourage inspired artists to find new ways to transform age-old subjects into drawings and prints that would appeal to a contemporary audience. Prints from the 15th to 18th century are shown alongside Greek and Roman sculptures, separated by as much as 1,500 years; these juxtapositions shows the course of Classical Revival.

Art Institute Chicago
+1 312 43 36 00
(www.artic.edu)
Until 15 February 2016.
calendar of events

Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings
Also on show at the Art Institute Chicago is the United States’ first major exhibition dedicated to Pushthimarg, a Hindu denomination from the state of Rajasthan. Pushthimarg is an intimate religious community focused on the devotion of Shrinathji, a divine image of the Krishna as a seven-year-old. The tradition originated in the 16th century when it was founded by saint and philosopher Shri Vallabhbacharya (1479-1531). The visual culture of Pushthimarg has a distinctive and highly aestheticised manner and is renowned for its legacy of miniature devotional paintings. The exhibition includes pichvais (textile hangings), drawings, paintings and historic photographs, and visitors follow a trail through a year in the faith’s calendar. The title of the exhibition comes from the religious and artistic centre of Pushthimarg – the temple town of Nathdwara, which translates as ‘The Gates of the Lord’.

Art Institute Chicago
+1 31 24 43 36 00
(www.artic.edu)
Until 3 January 2016.

WASHINGtON, DC, Washington
Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculpture of the Hellenistic World
Hellenistic art travelled from Greece across the Mediterranean between the 4th and 1st centuries BC. After it was discovered that bronze was a better medium than copper for portrait sculpture, it was widely used. It enabled artists to create true representations, meaningful expression and exquisite detail – qualities that characterised the sculpture of the period. But as it was easy to melt down and recycle, few pieces have survived. Nevertheless, 50 prime examples from leading museums around the world are displayed here.

National Gallery of Art
+1 20 27 37 42 157 15
(www.nga.gov)
From 13 December 2015 until 20 March 2016.

PARIS
Dau: Variations d’Artistes
French crystal studio Daum was founded in 1878, and 90 years later this traditional manufacturer invited the unlikely collaboration of Salvador Dalí to create an artwork using their unique production method by which crushed glass is remoulded and then fired in a kiln, creating a soft, frosted finish. Ever since, Daum have collaborated with leading artists, and the result is an eclectic collection of crystal works, the highlights of which form this exhibition. The gold Neo-Classical nude figure, L’amour de Vénus, shown right, is based on one of Dalí’s original designs.

Espace Dalí
+33 (0)1 40 20 50 50
(www.louvre.fr)
Until 4 January 2016.

ITALY
BOLZANO
FROZEN STORIES – Discoveries in the Alpine Glaciers
How climate change has affected archaeology is the theme of this collection of objects that had, until recently, lain hidden under Alpine glaciers. The sub-zero environment protected items made of wood, leather and material, from light and air, providing the perfect conditions for preservation. The exhibition asks the question: ‘Why have humans always inhabited the inhospitable Alps?’ Through the 30 items found across the Alps’ glacial regions, the stories of our intrepid ancestors can, it seems, be reconstructed.

South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology
(www.iceman.it)
+39 04 71 32 01 00
Until 10 January 2016.

NETHERLANDS
AMSTERDAM
Spanish Masters from the Hermitage: The World of El Greco, Ribera, Zurbarán, Velázquez, Murillo and Goya
This is the first time this collection of Spanish masterpieces from the Hermitage has been exhibited in the Netherlands – and some of these paintings have not been seen outside Russia before. Mainly works from the late 16th and 17th centuries, they reflect a time of Spanish colonial gold fever and immense wealth. Highlights include work by the country’s best-known artists, such as Murillo, Velázquez, Goya and El Greco – whose The Apostles Peter and Paul,1592, (above right) is on show – right up to more modern painters, such as Picasso.

Hermitage Amsterdam
+31 20 53 08 75 5
(www.hermitage.nl)
From 28 November 2015 until 29 May 2016.

A Brief History of the Future
Inspired by the book A Brief History of the Future (2006) by the French economist Jacques Attali, this exhibition reflects on the past millennia. Contemporary works are shown against seminal works from history, such as Thomas Cole’s La destin des empires. La Destruction (1836), shown above. Around 200 works are presented in four themes – the ordering of the world, empire, its expansion, and our contemporary world. Ai Wei Wei, Mark Manders, Tomás Saraceno, Wael Shawky, Camille Henrot, Isabelle Cornaro and Chéri Samba all accepted the Louvre’s invitation to create new works for the show.

Louvre
+33 1 40 20 50 50
(www.louvre.fr)
Until 4 January 2016.

Minerva November/December 2015
sculpture, which explore the way in which society builds histories, and how using art and science together can further improve our treatment of sensitive and traumatic moments of our collective past.

Museum of Struggle and Martyrdom
+ 48 25 78 11 65 8
(www.treblinka-museum.eu)
Until February 2016.

QATAR

DOHA

The Hunt: Princely Pursuits in Islamic Lands
Drawing on treasures from the collections of both Qatari and Turkish museums, this exhibition shows the lavish lifestyle of the princely hunters portrayed in Islamic art from the 11th to the 20th centuries. The emphasis was always on the strength and courage required for horsemanship when hunting. In this way rulers demonstrated their expertise and asserted their authority; as can be seen in the decorated 12th-century bowl base from Kashan in Iran, pictured below. Images of mounted huntsmen became synonymous with brave, powerful rulers. As well as the royal sport of hunting, the objects on display also depict characters engaged in other indulgent pastimes such as duelling, polo and feasting.

Museum of Islamic Art
+97 44 42 24 44 4
(www.mia.org.qa)

EVENTS

UNITED KINGDOM

CAMBRIDGE

Events held in conjunction with Following Hercules at the Fitzwilliam Museum
To tie in with this exhibition, the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge has organised this programme of events in November:

Hercules and the Aesthetics of Exhaustion
Led by Dr Nigel Spivey, Senior Lecturer in Classics

In the Thrall of the Antique: Plaster Casts and their Viewers
A discussion about the changing perception of plaster cast copies of Classical sculpture.

Collecting the Antique
Caroline Vout, Reader in Classics, University of Cambridge, and Tim Knox, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, lead a seminar on collecting antiques and their role in Classical-style interiors.
8 November 2015, 18.30-20.00.

Victorian Visions of Classical Greece and Rome: A Panel Discussion
Dr Lucilla Burn (Head Keeper of Antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum), Dr Yannis Galanakis (Director of the Museum of Classical Archaeology) and Dr Kate Nichols (CRASSH and the University of Birmingham) form the panel in a discussion about the Classical world in Victorian Britain.
20 November 2015, 18.30-20.00.

Fitzwilliam Museum
+44 (0) 1223 332900
(www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

London

Three-day conference held in conjunction with the Artist and Empire exhibition at Tate Britain
Tate Britain has joined up with Birkbeck, University of London and Culture at King’s College London to organise this major conference marking the opening of Artist and Empire. Scholars, curators and artists from around the world will consider art created under the British Empire, its aftermath and its future, in museum and gallery displays.
24 November 2015, 18.00-19.00
25 November 2015, 09.00-17.00
26 November 2015, 09.00-17.30

Tate Britain
+44 (0) 20 7887 8888
(tate.org.uk)
From 24 to 26 November 2015.

Events held in conjunction with Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs at the British Museum
Events from November 2015 until January 2016 are as follows:

Egypt: the frontier of meaning
Karen Armstrong, British Museum Trustee and world-renowned commentator on religious affairs, explores interreligious relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the first millennium AD.
6 November 2015, 18.30–20.00.

The Soul of Egypt
This is a multisensory evening of performances, workshops and activities celebrating the enduring spirit of Egypt, past and present. It includes traditional folk music and food, as well as a demonstration of the 5,000-year-old Egyptian martial art, using sticks and known as tahtib.
11 December 2015, 18.00-20.30.

Study day: introducing religions
This study day in partnership with the Open University (OU) explores beliefs and rituals of some of the great religions of the world, as shown through the British Museum’s collection and the exhibition Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs. The study day of lectures and gallery talks is open to OU students and the public.
30 January 2016, 10.30-17.00.

The British Museum
+44 (0) 20 7323 8299
(www.britishmuseum.org)
From 6 November 2015 until 30 January 2016.

UNITED STATES

CHICAGO, Illinois

Family Festival: Gates of the Lord
All the family can participate in the festivals of Sharad Navratri, the autumn Gujarati celebration, and Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights, with activities including dance demonstrations led by Mandala, with Garba and Dandiya Raas, two traditional Gujarati dance forms.
Art Institute Chicago
+1 312 44 36 00
(www.artic.edu)
21 November 2015, 10.30-15.00.

NEW YORK, New York

The Grand Tour: Asia
To mark the 100th anniversary of the Department of Asian Art, the Metropolitan Museum presents an exploration of performance art, including dance, theatre and music, from India to China.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 212 53 57 10
(www.metmuseum.org)
20 and 27 November and 4 and 11 December 2015, 18.00-19.00.

Minerva November/December 2015

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