Middle School Scholars' Newsletter

Summer Term 2019

The London Issue

Introduction

Architecture and art history are two themes which prevail in this issue of the newsletter. This shouldn't come as a surprise if we consider the 4th year trip to the British Museum (above) and Wallace Collection, respectively, as well as the fascinating talk we heard in the final Roysse Society Lecture of the academic year from OA and acclaimed architect Philip Johnson. Responsible for iconic buildings such as the 2012 London Olympic Stadium, he spoke of how he started by designing sets and producing plays at school. The initiative and independence he showed as a student was a fine example of the values we try to promote through the scholars' programme. In fact, such independence of thought and initiative can be seen in full flight in the following articles from our 4th year academic scholars. We hope you enjoy reading these articles, and have a fine summer.

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A Day Trip to The Wallace Collection by David Haar

Collected over two centuries by five generations of a British aristocratic family, the Wallace Collection displays over 5,500 works of art, from gilded French snuff boxes to several of Rembrandt's masterpieces. The collection was accumulated by the Marquesses of Hertford, one of the wealthiest families in Europe who owned grand properties throughout the British Isles. Sir Richard Wallace (right), the illegitimate son of the 4th Marquess, became one of the leading art collectors of the 19th century, acquiring paintings by some of the greatest names of European Art. In 1897, the collection was bequeathed to the British Nation by Lady Wallace and opened as a museum, displayed in the state-bought Hertford House in 1900. Paintings, porcelain and furniture are displayed together, recreating the atmosphere of the grand private collections of the 19th century.

Of the many works that I enjoyed, those of Nicolas Poussin were particularly captivating. Nicolas Poussin (right) (1594-1665) was born in Normandy and first trained in Rouen. Travelling to Rome in 1624, he was the leading painter in the French Baroque style, despite spending most of his life in Italy. Until the 20th century, he remained a major inspiration for classically-oriented artists, including Jacques-Louis David and Paul Cézanne. Most of his works depicted religious and mythological scenes, painted for a small group of French and Italian collectors. He returned to Paris briefly to serve as First Painter to the King under Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu but was dissatisfied by the overwhelming workload and court intrigues and soon returned to Rome, resuming his more traditional themes. In Poussin's later years he gave growing prominence to the landscapes in his pictures. His work is characterized by logic, clarity, and order reflecting 16th-century Venetian art, especially that of Titian. He also read ancient writers such as Ovid and attempted to recreate ancient myth and history in his works.

My favourite of his paintings is 'A Dance to the Music of Time' (right). It was painted between 1634 and 1636, and commissioned by Pope Clement IX who dictated much of its detailed iconography. The scene is set in the early morning with the goddess of dawn, Aurora, preceding the chariot of the god of the sun, Apollo, in the sky behind. Poussin depicts the hours accompanying him, and he holds a ring, representing the Zodiac. The four dancers represent, beginning with the one at the back seen mostly from behind: Poverty, Labour, Riches, and Pleasure or Luxury. The dancers

signify a progression in human life, completed by Pleasure or Luxury leading to Poverty again.

For me, 'A Dance to the Music of Time' conveys a beauty in life, despite the hardship which comes, literally, hand in hand with luxury. There is a modesty to the joy of mortal existence, a humility to relishing the pleasures that cannot last forever. The four dancers are caught in the music of Time's lyre - the inescapable rhythm of life. Time, although portrayed as divine, plays for man and not the immortal gods, as if the joy that comes from a life in time is reserved for mortals. With the sun rising and the blue skies piercing the cloudy heavens, there is a sense of hope and beauty in everything. The two heads of Janus, robed in a necklace of flowers in celebration, reflect the cyclical nature of existence, as Luxury leads back to Poverty and similarly, life back to death. The four seasons have their heads tilted to Time, who is depicted with a slight smile, almost proud of his dancers. The woman in blue representing Luxury wears an expression of half-suppressed, half-flippant mockery, her eyes directed straight to the audience, as if to prove that life can be enjoyed despite its finite nature. The elegance and beauty of the masterpieces found in the Wallace Collection, inspired this poem:

Romances of the ages past,

Of noble quests, of glories vast

And maidens robed in finest quilt

And flowers that will never wilt,

Of heroes on grave journeys cast

And how their lover's love steadfast,

Of loyal bonds through time rebuilt

Of mortal pride and grief and guilt.

Of blithe and bliss, of woe and war,

Of foe and friend; all this- what for?

Tales of a thousand years and more,

Cast on some delicate décor;

Play the passions of this life! Your

Fancy's beauties we adore-

Be never sated I implore,

Inspire, O Muses, evermore.

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Architecture of the British Museum

by John Bonchristiano

"Every architectural work can be regarded as a sign of power, wealth, idealism, even the misery of its builders and contemporaries" (Braunfels 1988, a German art historian).

Every building not only serves its purpose but also reflects the worldview of its builders and users. Architecture seems to follow the functional logic of its political usefulness, reflecting social interests and shaped by its political and cultural contexts. No less can be said about the British Museum.

The British Museum emerged as a direct consequence of politics, as successful colonial expeditions provided 'exotic' objects to be displayed as indicative of the Empire's power. Therefore, incapable of being neutral, this exhibition space is intrinsically laden with imperialist implications which (whether purposefully or inadvertently) re-contextualise the objects.

The commission for the new building was given to Robert Smirke, a well-established neoclassical architect. The building took around thirty years to complete, its elevation mirroring the expanse of the British Empire itself. The origin of the construction was the east wing, built to house the King's Library, identical to this day as a renowned neoclassical interior of London. Its construction began in 1823 and later the remaining west, north and south wings were under construction until 1853, their combination forming a quadrangle shape.

The colonnaded portico, courtyard and antique sourcing of the façade were defining features of Neoclassicism, which had been the prevailing fashion in European architecture since the 1750s.

This design intentionally matched the multiple classical sculptures in the Museum at the time, particularly the Parthenon sculptures. It is believed the same sculptures influenced the style of the main entrance, which is modelled on Greek temple design and shares the same number of eight columns as the Parthenon itself. Smirke used this style because it connotes the wisdom and learning associated with the Greeks. The architecture of the building expresses the pride and confidence of the British at the heyday of their empire. The mimicking of the Greeks suggests the British were carrying the torch of civilisation, and like their ancient predecessors, were up to the task. The imposing site of the building, at the same time impressive and intimidating, also denotes the sense of power associated with the growing empire.

The manner in which the building was constructed may seem conservative at first glance, but innovative methods were used to convey its nationalist message. Smirke was one of the first architects to make extensive use of concrete, laying it as a base for the cast iron frame that underpins the entire structure. The frame was filled with London stock brick and a facing of Portland stone. The interior design was overseen by Smirke's brother, using polychromatic stonework based on classical buildings. The halls were paved with York stone and the decorative ornamental vases carved from Huddlestone stone. Notably, all these materials were sourced from the British Isles, reinforcing the nationalist message.

By the 1850s there was a demand for a larger library, the Reading Room, a round room in the central courtyard. Its architecture was a masterpiece of nineteenth century technology, built between 1854-57, using cast iron, concrete and glass. If we consider the 42.6m diameter, the speed of construction was astounding. Inspired by the Crystal Palace and the Roman Pantheon, it demonstrated the nation's technological advances with its application of modern building techniques. Even the bookshelves were state-of-the-art, with 25 miles of shelving.

More recently, in 1997, the books in the Reading Room were relocated to the newly built British Library and the room transformed into an exhibition space. This catalysed the revitalisation of the old courtyard, leading to the creation of the Great Court with its recognisable huge glazed dome spanning two acres, connecting the Reading Room and museum. The creation of this area was an important communal space which helped accommodate the new, greater influx of visitors, at around 5 million people per year. The combination of old walls and white refurbishment emanate modernity, combined with the canopy of 3312 undulating glass panes. Since they are not flat, each pane is unique in size. At this time, the economy was now completely service-oriented and the grand figure of the Great Court reflected this modernisation that came with the 21st century.

In conclusion, the story of the establishment, the succession of different wings, the respective meaning of each of these buildings and the space it had acquired, as well as the political views and interests over this sensitive site of British history and politics, can serve as a powerful illustration of the important relationship between power and architecture.

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The Art of Portrait Painting by Alasdair Emmett

In the Wallace Collection in London, we had a fascinating lesson on reading art, much as if it were a book. Unlike a photo, everything is in the portrait through the choice of the painter, everything is there for a purpose; be it as simple as being in the background that the painter was using to draw from or for some deeper meaning. An example of this is in a painting by Jan Steen (pictured above; found in the Wallace collection) where there are some broken egg shells in front of the scene shown. Many would pass this off as a mere detail however we were informed by our guide that they represented infidelity and that the child that has just been born is not the child of the man holding him so proudly in his arms.

Portraits are no different. If anything the small details are even more important because the person whose portrait it is wants to show themselves in a certain light. Robert Dudley's commissioned portrait tells us a lot about

him. However that was the purpose of the painting. In Dudley's lifetime very few people could read and even fewer could write. Other than local gossip about town and the occasional glimpse of the tudor equivalent of a minor celebrity, portraits were the main way to create an impression of who you are to the common person. Dudley (right) is obviously massively wealthy, evident from his fine clothes and the jewels that adorn his jacket. This alone would show he was an aristocrat and of high birth and many would respect him because of this. He also seeks to flaunt his loyalty to Queen Elizabeth (with whom he was believed to be having an affair) by the clusters of pearls on his jacket, all in the shape of a rose, the symbol of the Tudor family. His pose is authoritative with hands on hips and head held high. This was a typical masculine pose at the time and supposed to show that the man was strong and brave which is certainly how he wanted to be portrayed. Female portraits at this time are much different with the woman often being in a position with hands clasped together. Look at where the Earl's hands are placed. He was most likely attempting to seem like a warrior, similar to the Greek heroes of old who many knew of and admired; heroism would make him seem very appealing. A sword is held in his left hand while behind his back we can see a dagger hilt, completing the image of a superior Earl who the people could look up to and if the need arose, follow into battle.

The portraits of our own Abingdon Headmasters are similar in some ways to Dudley's. Michael St John Parker (1975 - 2001) and Mark Turner (2002 - 2010) both dress soberly in formal headmaster's robes with a white shirt and both have straight faces without a hint of a smile. Parker wears a white

bow tie but Turner becomes more adventurous wearing a blue tie. This indicates that both were traditional Headmasters and they wished to be shown as such. On the other hand Felicity Lusk's portrait is far less formal. She is dressed in lurid pink robes with a black overcoat and has a smile on her face. In an even more unorthodox fashion she has a small cockapoo on her lap. In abolishing stereotypes set by other headteachers, she has shown that she is independent and unafraid of what others may think of her. For those who did not know Mrs Lusk personally, this portrait is a good indication of her character. In a way this practice is very similar to the reason why portraits were painted in the Tudor era: to allow those who did not know someone to gain an impression of what their character is like.

People may wish to be portrayed in many different ways and the small details, while they may not stand out, will subtly alter our perception of someone from a simple image.

Who is the Lindow Man? by Tom Morgan

On the 1st August, 1984, a peat-cutter working in Cheshire stumbled upon what he thought was a piece of wood rolling along a conveyor belt. His task was to remove any debris from the belt, and so he tossed the wood away. However, as it hit the ground, chunks of dirt fell from it, and the distinct features of a human leg could be recognised.

Within a few days, archeologist Rick Turner was on the case, and began to investigate the area. In his own words "Walking the uncut sections, I found a flap of dark, tanned skin projecting from below." This discovery brought about the attention of the police, but Turner was given a day to fully excavate the site. On 6th August however, the site was recorded and sampled, the limits of the remains were established, and the "Lindow Man" was lifted straight into the media.

This discovery was one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 1980s. The body had been conserved for nearly 2,000 years by the acidic, anaerobic conditions of the bog. It was so well conserved that the facial features were easily made out: a distinct furrowed brow with close-cropped hair and a beard. His death, a particularly violent one, was caused by a combination of garotting, multiple blows to the head, swallowing mistletoe and drowning in the waters of the peat bog. It was the first time archaeologists could look at the face of a person from Britain's prehistoric past. Britain's first bog body matched the famous examples, Tollund and Grauballe Man.

Tollund man was found in the town of Tolland, Denmark by villagers who had been gathering peat for fuel. This man was found in a much better state than that of the Lindow Man. His body appeared to be fully intact as he was found hunched over himself. He was nude except for a cap and a wide belt around his waist. It is believed that he had met a violent demise, as he was found with a rope tightly wound around his neck.

Grauballe man, also found in Denmark, shows an equally well preserved body of a man from around the Iron Age. This man is well known for his defining ginger hair, as a result of his immersion in the bog. He also met a violent death, with his throat having been cut as part of a theorised ritualistic sacrifice. This particular body was subject to a poem written by Seamus Heaney, who provides a stunning close description of the body, as well as his own emotional responses to it.

On further examination by the British Museum, it is thought that he had been around 25 years old, 5ft 6ins tall, and had weighed around 60-65kg. He had done very little hard labour, as his fingernails were well manicured. His beard and moustache had probably been trimmed by shears, and his last meal presumably contained unleavened bread made from wheat and barley.

The prevailing belief of the Lindow Man is that he had been sacrificed; however that theory itself brings about multiple questions, such as to the reason for his sacrifice, the future of his tribe, and the gods that they were trying to please. Although these questions may never be answered, there were other finds around the moss that strengthened the argument. In May 1983, a well-preserved head was also found in the area, which was shown to be 2,000 years old. In February, 1987, another part of a human body was found, and 70 pieces of a headless human body were excavated. Finally, in June and September 1988, segments of the buttocks and left leg of the Lindow man were found close to the area from which he had been previously excavated.

It is widely believed by archaeologists that the burial place of this discovery should be marked, as the spot could be capable of commemoration. Of all the bodies, only the Tollund Man has his burial place marked. Many people believe that these places should be preserved and celebrated. These people believe that Lindow Man's final resting place should certainly not be the British Museum, but rather closer to his original home. The future of Lindow Man's resting place is unknown for now.

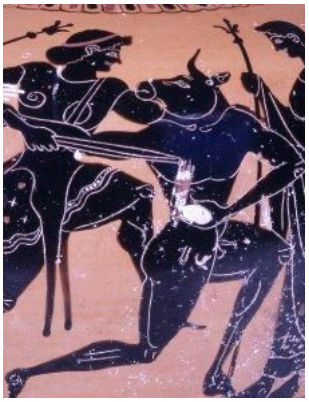
The Minoans by Ross Tselos

On our visit to the British museum, I came across some ancient, Minoan terracotta figurines (below). These tiny statues got me thinking about the Minoans. The Minoan civilisation emerged around 3000 BC on the island of Crete, an island located in the southernmost part of modern-day Greece. Many Minoan palaces were built on the island. By 1580 BC Minoan civilisation began to spread across the Aegean to neighbouring islands and to mainland Greece.

Trade:

The Minoan civilisation flourished mainly due to Crete's favourable geographical location at the point where Europe, Africa and Asia intersect. This allowed the Minoans to trade with the Egyptians, Asia minor (modern-day Turkey) and with Greek cities such as Athens. Trading was very important for the development of the Minoan civilisation.

Minotaur:



The Minoans believed in the Minotaur, an animal with the body of a man and the head of a bull.The British Museum has a bronze sculpture from 1600 BC representing an acrobat bull-jumping. This sport may have had links to the legend of the Minotaur. The Minotaur had the body of a man and the head of a bull. It was supposed to be the offspring of Pasiphae, king Minos' wife, and a bull sent to Minos by Poseidon for sacrifice. Minos decided to keep the bull alive instead of sacrificing it and, as a result, Poseidon decided to punish Minos by making his wife, Pasiphae, fall in love with the bull. Her child with the bull, the Minotaur was locked up in the Labyrinth created for Minos by Daedalus. One of Minos' sons, Androgeos, was later killed by the Athenians. In order to avenge his death, Minos demanded that seven Athenian young men and seven Athenian young women were sent every year to be devoured by the Minotaur. When it was time for the third group of

Athenians to go, Theseus, son of king Aegeus, volunteered. With the help of Minos' daughter Ariadne, he managed to kill the monster. On his way home, Theseus forgot to put out a white sail as instructed by his father. This had catastrophic consequences because his father, Aegeus, due to not seeing a white sail on the ship, thought that Theseus was dead and because of this decided to commit suicide by jumping into the sea which is supposedly called the Aegean sea because of this myth.

Civilisation:

The Minoans' belief in the Minotaur greatly influenced their civilisation and society, with the Minoans partaking in bull-leaping activities

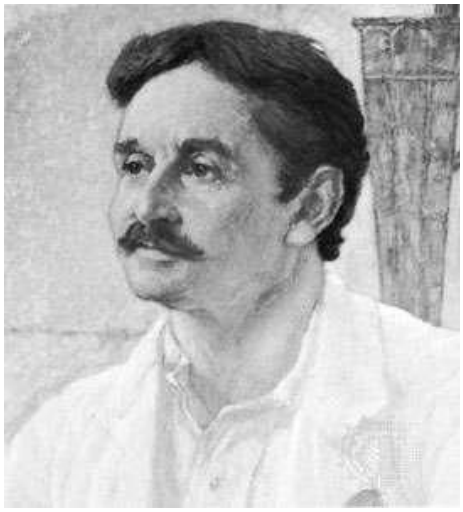
(left) and constructing thousands of bull statues and vases depicting bulls. The Minoans created sophisticated art including elaborate seals, pottery and delicate frescoes on palace walls. The most familiar motifs of Minoan art are the snake, symbol of the goddesses and the bull, seen in the British Museum. The ritual of bull-leaping was often depicted on vases. The Minoans had a matriarchal society with women being respected which was not the case in most societies of that time. Evidence for this matriarchy is found in vases and frescoes that often depict women in elaborate court-style dresses and men as wearing very little or nothing. Also, women are often depicted as powerful and often bore weapons. The Minoans had female goddesses that are often depicted on vases. The Minoans built a range of impressive palaces including Knossos and Phaistos. The Minoans originally communicated in Cretan Hieroglyphic but later on started using Linear A which is believed to be Linear B's ancestor.

Knossos Palace:

The Palace of Knossos is located in central Crete on the northern side of the island, just south of the outskirts of Heraklion on the Kephala hill. The palace was built during the Middle Minoan IB-IIA time (around 1900 BC). By the end of the Middle Minoan IIA time (around 1800 BC), the palace covered an area of almost 10,000 square metres. At other palaces like Phaistos, the original palace was levelled or covered over due to extensive damage before the earthquake in Middle Minoan IIIA (around 1700 BC). Although in Knossos the old palace was not destroyed, new areas were added to the palace and damaged sections were rebuilt by the Minoans. By 1700 BC, there were drainage systems in parts of the Minoan town and in the domestic quarter and north entrance of the palace. Knossos was hit by a massive earthquake in 1700 B.C. which resulted in major rebuilding work. Effectively, the old palace was levelled and a new palace was built. Unfortunately, at around 1600 BC, another earthquake struck, resulting in more demolition and rebuilding.

The palace that is available to us today largely dates from this period. The main changes to the palace during the Neopalatial (new palace) period included the filling in of the kouloures, a major entry into the palace along the Corridor of Procession, the Domestic quarters, the Grand Staircase and the Throne room. Also, the North Entrance Passage was built and decorated with a famous wall painting . Unfortunately, in 1450 BC, widespread destruction occurred throughout the island of Crete. The palace of Knossos was lucky because it was not destroyed in the same way that other palaces were although it was still damaged.

Arthur Evans:



The palace of Knossos was excavated by Arthur Evans, a British archaeologist, from 1900 to 1904. Although not the first to dig on the site of Knossos (the first person was the Greek Minos Kalokairinos), on Friday 23rd March 1900, Arthur Evans began his excavation of Knossos, uncovering the Knossos palace, thus bringing to light a hitherto unknown civilisation. Although the basic excavation took four years, Evans continued to work on the site for the rest of his life. Evans coined the term Minoans after the legendary king Minos who ruled Crete. It is now believed that Sir Arthur Evans produced a heavily idealised conception of Minoan Crete and that his findings are not necessarily empirically and epistemologically rigid. There is currently a big debate in the archaeological world about Evans' conclusion that the Minoan civilisation was the first European civilisation. On the one hand, the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology states that "the Minoan civilisation was the earliest European civilisation known". On the other hand, academic researchers such as Ilse Schoep from the University of Leuvem state that "had someone else excavated Knossos … it seems quite likely that our inherited conceptualization of Minoan society would have been different." Having been born in Crete one can call me biased, but I personally believe that the Minoan civilisation is the oldest European civilisation.

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The Changing Life of a Celt in Roman Britain by Grant Rogan

Roman Britain was a formidable place founded on the fear and power of the dominating Roman Army and Empire. It was a place full of slavery and starvation as the invading Romans controlled the supply and trade of food among the indigenous Celts, or Britons, as they were called by the Romans.

Along with the invasion came a new order to how life worked in Britain, causing the ancient tribal lifestyle of the Celts to change drastically. The most obvious and simple of these changes was the introduction of towns and roads. Later came the fortifications, stone walls and ramparts, to protect the new wave of politicians and high-up military men moving out into the countryside to control the initial rebellion of the locals.

However, most of the locals eventually came to terms with this new order and started to reap the benefits of the invasion. Large amphitheatres were built in the larger towns, the introduction of bath houses, and merchants and traders started selling exotic items from stalls for those that could afford them. The new foreign luxuries began to change the more powerful Celts' way of life with a large part of the population adopting many aspects of Roman family life.

The change in personal life led to yet another drastic change in the life of a Celt. The wealthier of the former tribesmen and women began building and buying villas based on the designs from those commissioned by the settling politicians and officers. These included large scale mosaics of the ancient celtic gods and even some of the new-found Roman gods such as Jupiter or Venus, the king of the gods and the god of love and prosperity. They even built early central heating systems called hypocausts. These worked by the floor being raised up so a furnace can burn underneath, heating the air which then rose up through the floor and even spaces in the wall. The hypocaust was also designed so that the smoke rose up through seperate spaces in the walls and through flues in the roof.

However, having a villa like this with a hypocaust was extremely expensive as it required enough wood to allow them to burn continuously for long periods of time. This also required slaves to keep the fire going, so with these two factors taken into account, having a hypocaust was really one of the greatest shows of wealth in ancient Britain. The fact that many Celts were able to afford these villas truly shows how far many of the once tribal and savage population had adapted.

Some of the best proof though that the Celts had adapted into an almost Roman civilisation is how the Celts took on some of the Roman gods; however they didn't leave all of the old gods until the conversion to Christianity by Constantine. This acceptance of some gods clearly shows that the Celts had finally started to accept the Roman culture.

When the Romans finally left Britain in 400 AD the Britons, continued with the lifestyle the Romans left them. They even held the culture during and after the invasion from the Saxons which lasted until William the Conqueror formed the feudal system and changed society in Britain yet again.

In summary, the Britons faced a very drastic change from violent fieldworkers living in small houses into wealthy sophisticated townsmen, capable of innovation and adaptation.

Comparing Two Paintings of The Annunciation by Ethan Chen

During the 16th and 17th century in the context of the late Renaissance era when artists had been pursuing the philosophy of humanism in their artwork, many artists however, instead of rejecting Christianity, embraced the ideas of religion, and developed their works into a new Baroque style with intense colour and shades. I was visiting the Wallace Collection and saw these two paintings, both by Baroque artists, Philippe de Champaigne and Bartolomé- Esteban Murillo. They both illustrate the Annunciation in the Bible, but we can see the influence of Renaissance art in both paintings and also the differences in the two artists' approaches to present this classic Biblical scene.

Both Champaigne and Murillo illustrate the Annunciation in a typical Baroque way, but we can still see the difference in the styles of the two artists from their choice of colour and painting techniques. A dark background is chosen by both artists and they lay up more and more brighter colours onto the canvas, which is also a common feature of a lot of Baroque painting that makes the intense hues of colours stand out from the background, especially in Philippe de Champaigne's piece. Champaigne uses relatively brighter and sharper colours like blue and some red on Mary's clothes. Intense shades of blue are frequently used in this painting and they look very prominent from the rest of the painting, and thus a very cold and contrasting tone is laid on the canvas. In contrast, Murillo lays a much softer and warmer tone by selecting lighter blue which is less eye-catching, and he covers most of the piece with yellow. Murillo uses softer brushstrokes on the canvas for blending as we can still see the marks that the brush made in the background, together with the vaporous effect of the paint which make the entire piece look very harmonious and almost illusory.

Philippe de Champaigne's piece (right) is painted on a much bigger canvas, giving the artist more space to present details like shades and highlights on the drapery. One of the features of Baroque art that derives from Renaissance art is its realistic presentation

of details compared to a piece of medieval artwork, and leading Renaissance artists like Da Vinci spent a lot of time studying how light affects the shading of objects as well as the composition of human body, laying the basis for the development of realism in the early modern ages. Philippe de Champaigne applies these techniques evolved from the Renaissance into his painting and he precisely presented the complicated shades and forms of angel Gabriel and Virgin Mary's clothes. The same effect can be seen on Murillo's painting (right), although Murillo uses less dramatic shades to display the texture of fibre. Murillo seems to be focusing on presenting the movement of the clothes of angel Gabriel when he is descending from heaven by using light and smooth brush strokes while presenting the texture of drapery, and therefore adding a sense of movement overall to the picture.

The composition of both paintings is very different, and thus they give different overall impressions to the viewers. Champaigne's piece was originally painted for display in the church, and for this purpose, he adopts a relatively orthodox composition where he arranges the objects in the four corners of a square, where Virgin Mary and Gabriel, the main focuses of this painting are put in both bottom corners, giving a sense of solidity and formality. Murillo, on the other hand, decides to use a more dynamic and distinctively baroque composition where objects are arranged diagonally across the canvas, in this case, Virgin Mary on bottom left, Gabriel in middle right and the angels on top right. This composition gives a sense of flow and connection between the objects, which also helps to enhance the sense of movement of Gabriel, as if he is still descending from the heaven, while Mary is in a lower position, kneeling on the floor. I think the characteristics of Mary are better portrayed in the composition of Murillo's painting because in this piece Mary is kneeling on the floor with only half of her body in the light and half in the darkness, showing her modesty in front of the divine power and the holy spirit. Her earthly preoccupation is represented by the sewing basket in the foreground. Meanwhile, Philippe de Champaigne also made effort portraying the modesty of Mary by focusing on her bodily gesture that is bending down towards the angel. However, in Champaigne's piece, Mary and Gabriel are on the same level in the composition, making her look less inferior in the annunciation, which possibly shows the slight different understanding of this event in both artists' imaginations.

Two interpretations of the same event from two different artists reflect the different understandings of the Annunciation, as Champaigne depicts a more realistic Biblical event while Murillo portrays a more impressionist illusion with a softer texture and translucent paint.

A Brief Look at the Rosetta Stone

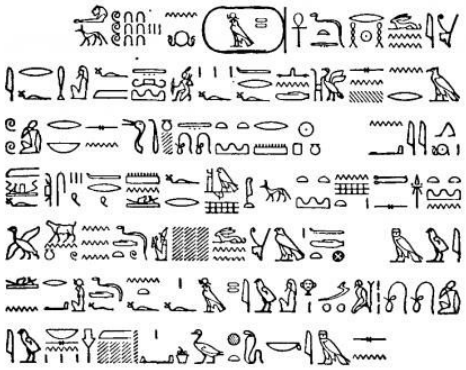
by Alexandre Peuch

When visiting the British Museum I particularly enjoyed taking a look at the world-famous Rosetta Stone, which I had heard so much about a couple of years ago in Figeac, a small town in the south-western part of France and home town of Jean-François Champollion - the French scholar and archaeologist who managed to decipher and make sense of Egyptian hieroglyphs from the stone.

After Egypt became Christian, Egyptian temples were demolished and their masonry reused. It is believed that the stone was initially part of a temple, which was broken down at some time and the stone was moved from its unknown original location to the town of Rosetta (Rashid in Arabic). In this port city of the Nile Delta, Sultan Qaitbay used it in the fifteenth century for building an Ottoman fortress. Fast forward a couple of centuries, the Rosetta Stone was stumbled upon by French soldiers on expedition during the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt. Napoleon, knowing about Egypt's rich history and valuable artefacts had ordered soldiers to be on the lookout for anything valuable. The importance of the stone was quickly recognised by the scholars who accompanied the army, and the French took the Rosetta Stone as a cultural trophy of war. But when they were defeated, the Rosetta Stone was unwillingly surrendered to British forces under the Treaty of Alexandria in 1801. One year later, in 1802, it entered the British Museum. To this day, there are rivalries between France, England and Egypt about the possession of the Rosetta Stone: in 2003, Zahi Hawass, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, asked for the famed stone to be returned to Egypt as he claimed it to be an "icon of the Egyptian identity". However, the museum denied politely but offered in 2005 a full size replica to Egypt. The French could enjoy the Rosetta Stone on loan for one month (on the occasion of Champollion's discovery 150th anniversary) in 1972. However, for the time being the Rosetta Stone is on exhibition in the British Museum.

This renowned "stele" (stone slab), which is 1.14 meters tall and 0.72 meters wide and weighs around 760 kilograms, bears an inscription in three scripts. The inscription itself is a decree that affirms the royal and divine cult of the 13-year-old pharaoh Ptolemy V on the first anniversary of his coronation in 196 BC. The three scripts are Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs at the top of the Stone, Egyptian demotic script in the middle and finally Ancient Greek at the bottom. The reason as to why the Rosetta Stone was written in three scripts was because when it was carved there were three scripts being used in Egypt. Hieroglyphs were used mainly by priests for important religious documents, the demotic script was the common language in Egypt and,

finally, Ancient Greek was used by the rulers of Egypt at that time. Therefore, the Rosetta Stone was carved in such a way that priests, common people and rulers could all read what it said. However nowadays, owing to its damaged state, none of the three texts are absolutely complete. The Rosetta Stone that is on display in the British Museum is indeed only a fragment of a larger granodiorite stele and despite later searches of the Rosetta site, no additional bits of the original stone have been found.



The Rosetta Stone proved to be the key to the understanding and deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs, which had been up to then a fascinating mystery. Egyptian hieroglyphs were first used around 3500 BC and fell out of use at the end of the fourth century AD; after this time, knowledge of how to read them was entirely lost. It is for this reason that decrypting the Rosetta Stone initially left even the very best linguists clueless, dumbfounded and startled. Many European scholars tried to decipher the mysterious script, but because hieroglyphic signs look like pictures, they assumed that all hieroglyphs were images recording ideas without language. Thomas Young, an English physicist, made a crucial first step: he worked out that a group of hieroglyphs repeated several times on the Stone spelt out phonetically the name 'Ptolemy'. But he hadn't quite cracked the code. It was not until 1822 that Jean-François Champollion, having studied the Rosetta Stone for many years, finally realised that in fact hieroglyphs recorded the ancient Egyptian language with a mixture of sound and picture signs and thus managed to decipher the famous "stele". He also understood that the three fragments of texts had the same contents, so that the stone could be used to translate hieroglyphs as he mastered the two other scripts. It is amazing to think that Champollion's decipherment of the Rosetta Stone unlocked about 4000 years of an ancient written culture and gave access to the understanding of papyri, monuments, statues and mummies of Ancient Egyptian civilisation.

On the whole, I believe that the Rosetta Stone is one of the most important artefacts in the world as it opened the door to a whole ancient culture. Ever since visiting the "Musée Champollion" in Figeac two years ago, I have wanted to see the famous stele for myself and I found this object simply fascinating.

Symbolism in The Effects of Intemperance by Johnny Stavropoulos

The Effects of Intemperance is a painting completed in 1665 by Jan Steen. Jan Steen was a Dutch artist of the 17th Century. He painted scenes of a variety of topics but was famous for his portrayals of daily life. Many of his paintings are seemingly simple scenes but conceal hidden messages in the form of symbolism. And as well as the interest provided by the discovery of these small details, these messages can often also tell us a lot about Dutch culture and values at the time.

This chaotic family scene, alongside its comic imagery, serves as a commentary on alcohol addiction in the upper class. But at first, this image may seem like a depiction of a lower-class family; in the 17th Century, only the rich could afford art, and so it was often drawn to flatter them or disparage lower classes in order to appeal to their sense of superiority. Indeed, many of Steen's paintings are negative depictions of lower-class families. And this painting uses similar dark colouring and chaotic activity to suggest that it portrays a lower-class family. We can also see many immoral activities that would have then been associated with the lower class in this piece, strengthening this assumption. The mother seems to be asleep, and the overturned flagon next to the many grapes implies that alcohol is the reason for this. Her daughter in front of her also seems unsteady and is strangely offering wine to a bird, suggesting that she is also drunk, showing how bad habits pass down through generations. The pig loose among the children makes the family seem uncivilized, and the father in the background is ignoring his family for another woman. The intention seems to be to make the rich seeing the painting mock this family until they realise that they are the people portrayed here.

Looking at this painting as a depiction of an upper-class family also reveals several examples of the use of symbolism. The main clue that this family is not lower-class is the woman's coat. It is brightly coloured, drawing the audience's eye, and is made out of fur, an expensive and fashionable material that only a member of the upper class would wear. And yet this symbol of affluence does not seem to be permanent, as both the pipe in her hand and brazier on the floor risk setting her coat alight. This image tells us that her alcoholism may cause her to lose her upper-class status. The child behind her carefully taking her wallet contributes to this idea, showing that she is losing her money to alcohol. The other children are used to depict the idea of wastefulness. The daughter, as mentioned earlier, is offering wine to a bird which has no use for it, and similarly the three children behind her are feeding pie to a cat, wasting the food they have been given just as the parents

have wasted the opportunities and wealth they have gained from being part of the upper class. The most curious image within this painting is the last child, behind the pig. He is holding roses and seems to be offering them to the pig in front of him, who is turned away from the boy and focused instead on a scrap of food on the floor. This odd image is actually a reference to a Dutch proverb that teaches to 'never cast your rose buds before swine'. The proverb means that you should not waste great things on those who cannot appreciate them, and as we can see here, the pig is ignoring the rose buds in favour of its animalistic desire to eat. The pig may be compared to the father in the background, who is ignoring his family for base desires, or to the mother, whose fortunate upbringing has been wasted on her as she has given it all up for drink. There is also a small hint of the family's future above the mother. A basket, containing a crutch. These items carried connotations of poverty in the 17th Century; the basket would be used for begging, and the crutch may be needed for support after the mother's body is weakened by her excessive drinking. And the fall of the family into the lower class is similarly shown by colour. The younger children have far more plain outfits than the mother or eldest daughter, suggesting that the family cannot afford these extravagant outfits anymore, and the dark colours of the piece make the home seem dirty and unrefined to the extent that it initially appears to be a lower-class residence.

So what does this painting tell us about life in the 17th-Century Netherlands? From the context of Jan Steen's other paintings, we know that there was a general assumption of immorality among lower classes. But this painting turns that idea on its head to point out flaws within the upper class. Of course, it tells us that the upper class is also prone to immorality both of alcoholism and adultery. The fact that the image of roses being given to a pig can be used confidently with the expectation of understanding tells us that this moral idea was commonly known, but simply ignored by the upper class, while they also criticised the lower classes who didn't even have the opportunities to waste. The out of control children of the house, including the drunk daughter, also show us that these mistakes are passed down through upper-class families, rejecting the possible defence that only a few squander their money. So to conclude: in this painting, Jan Steen, gives us a sense of the moral ideas held by the Dutch people, but also shows the hypocrisy in those who repeat these ideas and yet continue immoral behaviours themselves and teach them to their children. The message of the painting seems to be that nobody is innocent, whether upper or lower class, so the upper class must stop pretending that they are above immorality.

A Critique of Boucher and de Champaigne by Dominic Wood

The Rising of the Sun, François Boucher 1752

The Grand Staircase of the Wallace Collection is dominated by the sheer size of this piece. For me, the size of the canvas was initially the most striking element. Upon further research, I found that the canvas is 3.8 x 2.6 metres large. Another immediately apparent feature is Boucher's use of lighting to portray the central figure, Apollo (the Greek god of sun and light), as a focal point of the piece, as shafts of sunlight beam down solely onto Apollo. Boucher is still able to keep the composition tonally balanced, by contrasting the tints of turquoise with dark ultramarine hues in each corner. This contrast between tints and shades of blue further helps to elevate Apollo's position as a focal point. The importance of Apollo in this painting is referenced in the Wallace Collection website, which states that, "Apollo ascends into the sky with arms outstretched, chasing away nocturnal darkness." There is a clear mythological theme to this piece, not only demonstrated by the inclusion of Greek gods and cherubim, but also through the fusion of sea and sky. It could be argued that this piece is, compositionally, bottom heavy, however I feel this helps to highlight Apollo as the centrepoint of the piece, as it seems that he is rising up above the bodies in the sea. Boucher has seamlessly fused figures at the base of the painting into the water, by matching the form of the nude curves of the body with the waves in the sea. Overall, it is very easy to be overwhelmed by a painting like this as a result of its enormity, and crowded subject matter. This was definitely how I first felt when I saw this piece. However, after climbing up to the top of the stairs, I had a more distant view of the painting. This helped me see not just individual elements, but instead the whole painting, and from there I was able to appreciate the complex composition.

The Annunciation, Philippe de Champaigne, 1648

As I walked into the Great Gallery, I saw this painting tower over the whole room on the far wall. Similar to The Rising of the Sun, this painting is 3.5 x 2.4 meters large. This painting shows the moment of the Angel Gabriel telling Mary that the Holy Spirit has chosen her to bear Jesus, with the Holy Spirit portrayed by the descending dove in the top right of the piece. My eyes were instantly drawn to look at the dove, as a result of the lighter tints of heavenly light spilling onto the rest of the dark background. The body language of each figure also contributes to the dove being the focal point, with each cherub facing it, and Angel Gabriel pointing up. The light from the dove is only seen on the inside of each character, leaving the outside in shadow, which further helps to illuminate where the dove is coming from. The fact that such importance is placed on the dove, demonstrates how the dove symbolises the Holy Spirit. Because I entered the Great Gallery through the opposite entrance to where this painting is, as I approached the painting, more and more elements of it began to unfold. Basic shapes and forms soon transformed into clear sharp, figures and the overall clarity and detail of the painting began to unfold. One particular detail that I was able to notice was how even from a distance, it was still possible to make out each individual toenail of Mary and the Angel Gabriel. The dark background contrasts the vibrant palette used for the clothing of these two characters. To illuminate the painting and these characters, de Champaigne has cleverly used two sources of light, one natural source coming from the right, and another being emitted from the heavenly dove. Another element that de Champaigne included is his portrayal of Mary. She is presented in a humble and submissive manner through how she doesn't meet the eye of the Angel Gabriel, and turns away from the light cast by the dove. To summarise, this painting is very impressive to look at and is eye catching even from a great distance, such as across the whole of the Great Gallery. Whilst the dove is initially the focal point, the astounding detail of the painting reveals itself, as de Champaigne succeeds at recreating the textures of coarse stone tiles, delicate satin clothing, and the soft skin of each figure.

A Brief History of the Elgin Marbles
by Ed Saunders

The Elgin marbles (also known as the Parthenon marbles) are currently housed in the British Museum but they were originally located in Athens on the Parthenon. They are a collection of Classical Greek marble sculptures that were sculpted by Phidias and his assistants on the Parthenon between 447 and 438 BC and most are still standing today. They stretch up to 75 metres long, containing scenes of a chariot race and statues of gods and goddesses and some mythical creatures. They are currently in the British Museum because Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin and ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (rulers of Greece at the time), began to extract the extensive marble sculptures of the Parthenon and move them to England in 1801. The British Parliament then paid £350,000 in 1816 for the Elgin marbles, of which most went to Lord Elgin's creditors as he was in great debt. They were then stored in the British Museum. Lord Elgin took the Parthenon Marbles because he was impressed by the sculptures and wanted

to restore and preserve them, as they were in a dilapidated state at the time he started to move the marbles. This was because the Parthenon had been partially destroyed by Christians, then it was later converted to a mosque and, when he moved the marbles with the permission of the Ottoman Turks, it was a weapons store for the Ottoman Turks and 40% of the 2,250 year old Parthenon Marbles had been destroyed and more were damaged, and Lord Elgin even claimed that the Turks were grinding parts of the sculptures down to make mortar. The Elgin Marbles taken to Great Britain included half (75 metres) of the sculpted frieze that ran around the inside of the section between the pillars and the roof of the whole building, 17 life sized marble statues from the gable ends and 15 of the 92 metopes. However, he damaged many of the fragile ruins in removing pieces of the marbles. Since that time, the Elgin marbles have been housed in the British museum, except for a short stint in Aldwych underground station to protect them in World War II but it is still the subject of a great debate of whether they should be returned to Greece as the Greeks do not accept or recognise the ownership of the British Museum.

Brief History of the Royal Standard of Ur

The Royal Standard of Ur is an ancient artefact that is a hollow, wooden box that is 21.59 centimetres wide and 49.53 centimetres long and is decorated on 4 sides with a mosaic of shell, red limestone and lapis lazuli set in bitumen. The lapis lazuli tesserae were cut by flint blades and cut, as is shown, by a groove cut on many of the polished surfaces of the tesserae showing a rough surface below. It was created in the ancient city of Ur in roughly 2600 BC and so is approximately 4600 years old and dates back to the the First dynasty of Ur and the Early Dynastic Period. It was discovered by archaeologists in the Royal Cemetery in Mesopotamia, although the region of the Royal Cemetery nowadays is in the Dhi Qar governorate of Southern Iraq. The Royal Standard of Ur shows a war scene on one side of the box with a Sumerian army with wheeled wagons and infantry charging towards an enemy. There are also prisoners being brought before a larger person who is accompanied by guards and has his own wagon waiting behind him. On the reverse side, it depicts scenes of men bringing animals, fish etc, possibly as a tribute; at the top, the same large person banquets with other men and they are entertained at the right by a singer and a man playing a lyre. This contrast on the pictures of the Royal Standard of Ur juxtaposes war and peace and gives us an insight into life in Ur at the time. The triangular sides at the end also

show vivid scenes that can also be interpreted to see life at the time. The Royal Standard of Ur was found crushed at the Royal Cemetery when it was excavated but it has since been restored and is now on display at the British museum and has been since 1928 as one of the most famous artifacts in the British Museum and one of the biggest discoveries at the Royal Cemetery in the ancient city of Ur.

A Look at François Boucher by Isaac Mortiboy

Amidst the many elaborate pieces at the Wallace Collection, two, in particular, caught my attention. Straight ahead through the entrance, there are two great oil paintings framed above the staircase, filling the entirety of the wall. This pair of paintings were finished in 1752 and were painted by François Boucher, a French painter traditionally known for his depictions of classical figures and who often worked in the "Late Baroque" style as one of the most celebrated and decorated artists of the 18th century. These pieces are typically large and combine asymmetry, pastel colours and realistic detail to create large ornamental pieces which are often painted on ceilings in halls or theatres.

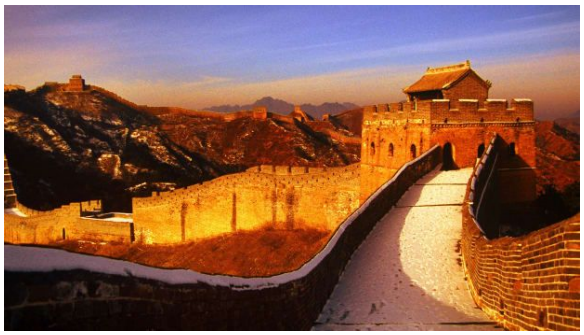
The pair of paintings were commissioned by Madame de Pompadour, Chief mistress to Louis XV and member of the French court, who was known for her passion for architecture and decorative arts. The paintings were intended to be used in the Gobelins Manufactory, a tapestry factory in Paris. After the paintings were finished, two tapestries were made of each and finished between 1754 and 1755, which were to be hung in the bedroom of Louis XV. She then exhibited them in the guard room on the ground-floor of Bellevue. Since then the pair of paintings have been passed through 4 different collections before finally resting in the Wallace Collection in London. After Madame de Pompadour had received the paintings, she further commissioned François Boucher to paint a portrait of her, which now hangs in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich. By commissioning Artwork such as this, Madame de Pompadour played a key role in making Paris the perceived capital of culture in Europe.

Looking at the paintings, you can see the two are similar, both depicting the classical god of the sun, Apollo, among ocean waves filled with nymphs, naiads and cherubs. They also show the asymmetry and pastel colours, typical of Rococo style,;however, they are also quite different. The rising of the sun portrays Apollo with his lyre, (Middle Left) looking up towards the bright top right of the painting, making the sunrise, with cherubs pushing away the dark

clouds (top left), casting the light upon the subjects. To his right, Thetis, a sea nymph, bears the reins to Apollo's horse which he used to carry the sun across the sky. Pompadour used Thetis to mirror herself helping King Louis XV, shown to be Apollo. This portrayed Pompadour as loyal, as well as symbolising Louis as powerful and controlling. The setting of the sun sees Apollo return to the dark waves bringing the sun with him and features an overall darker tone, with the source of light now the middle left. Beside his horse, Apollo is now looking down into the arms of his mother, now that the day has ended. Cherubs are bringing darkness over the top of them. In the bottom third, nymphs and naiads are now resting under the moon on the right. Furthermore, you can see sea creatures present in both images and Apollo wearing a red material. Red was a particularly important colour in Roman culture as it was used to signify a general's victory, holidays and war. Boucher may have used red as he wanted to attribute these features to King Louis XV. One thing I notice between the two pieces is that the focal point is on the top third in the Rising of the Sun, due to it being brighter, whereas the Setting of the Sun focusses more at the bottom third with the Nymphs and naiads standing out against the sea.

This pair of paintings stood out to me in particular as Boucher was able to depict this classical scene and maintain a level of detail, comparable to that of much smaller artworks, throughout both pieces stretching around 20 metres squared. Thematically I also like the concept of Apollo carrying the sun across the sky and the way in which Boucher depicts the Roman gods and mythology as pure and natural. I think this is an interesting portrayal of Roman culture; Boucher uses a scene and concept which we are all familiar with (sunrise and sunset on the sea) in order to make the gods relatable and closer to humanity than omnipotent beings. The use of pastel colours also makes the gods seem more human, whereas a more vibrant and saturated tone would make them appear more abstract. Overall I find the pair of pieces to be exceptionally well produced.

The Significance of Jade in Ancient China by Alexander Boorer



After seeing the multitude of different objects made out of the beautiful yet unfamiliar jade in the Ancient Chinese exhibit I was wondering why the Ancient Chinese world was so obsessed by it. I was intrigued by its uses and properties, as there are very little amounts of jade seen in the UK other than the odd souvenir brought back from a trip in China, such as my own singular jade ornament.

In the case of China jade refers to the mineral nephrite which is the hardest and rarest of the hard stones, not to be confused with the other, similar mineral jadeite which was unknown to the Ancient Chinese world. Nephrite can come in various different shades of green depending

on the iron content and other trace minerals of nephrite. However it is not limited to having a green colour and can be found in other colours such as white and brown. It was principally harvested in the Xinjiang area and other main sources for jade in Ancient China have most likely been exhausted and there are no records of them. The jade was collected from river beds or excavated out of mountains and could not be cut by any metal knife at the time, so the nephrite was shaped using cord and an abrasive material such as sand. This caused the fashioning of jade products to be a very lengthy and labour intensive process. The green nephrite was the most sought after jade for most of Ancient Chinese history but there were times when the white jade was preferred such as the 5th century BCE.

Jade was thought to have many different properties and was associated with many different things by the Ancient Chinese. The aesthetic qualities of jade led it to have many positive connotations such as becoming a symbol for purity, prosperity and health and it also became a staple for Ancient Chinese aristocracy with many Chinese aristocrats adorning their homes with various jade ornaments. Not only was it associated with aristocrats but it was also linked to Chinese royalty and by 3000 BC it was made the “yu” or royal gem. Jade was used in the creation of many household objects and was used to create practical things such as bowls just as much as it was turned into decorations. Jade was also seen to be indestructible and a popular Ancient Chinese belief was that a person’s jade objects imparted a certain sort of immortality on their owner and thus jade objects were often buried with their dead owner with the most wealthy and influential citizens being buried in jade suits. Jade was so important that it even made an impact on Ancient Chinese mythology with one the major Chinese gods , the Jade Emperor, being named after the stone, and there have even been entire Chinese kingdoms starting war with one another over the precious stone.

As I mentioned earlier jade was not just used for decoration but was also used for many other different purposes. There were many ritual objects of unknown use that were often made out of jade such as the “bi” a disc with a hole in the centre and cups called “zong” which date back to the Zhou Dynasty (1121-211 BCE). Other common uses during this period included miniature tools made out of jade such as combs, sickles and knives; miniature figurines of humans and some animals and the obvious decorative uses such as crescent discs called “huang” which often depicted stylised birds or dragons.

As time went on sculptors’ abilities increased and the range of things that could be created out of jade increased. By the 8th century BCE with the advent of new techniques and increase in carving abilities there was a rise in the creation of animal figures made out of jade which included tigers, horses, owls and many more. By the fifth century BCE the

advancement in different types of drills prompted the creation of more elaborate decorations often depicting dragons protruding from some sort of flat plaque. There is even a suggestion that jade products were almost mass produced even in Ancient Chinese society, as around the 2nd century BCE items were seen to be poorly finished even though the methods had only improved which gives a sense of how popular jade was and still is in China with it being sold at the same price, carat for carat, as diamonds in places such as the USA.

The Elgin Marbles by Edmond Wang

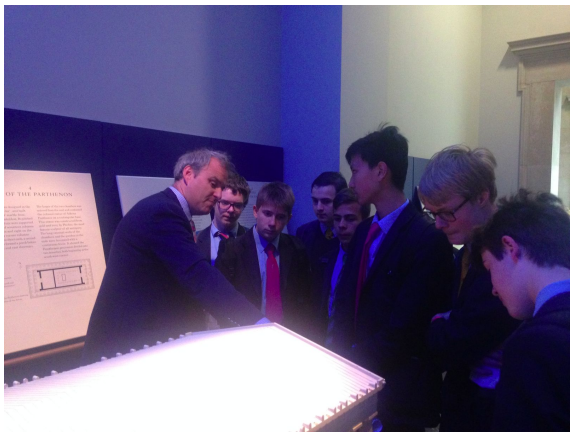
As a collection of ancient Greek architectural sculptures, the Elgin Marbles, now renamed as the Parthenon Sculptures, are currently displayed in the British Museum and remain as some of its most remarkable displays. Thanks to them, our Scholars' Trip to the British Museum was fruitful and captivating. As we were all fascinated by the ancient cultures and their displays, our group of ancient history students went straight to the Greek section where we were intrigued by the long columns of marble images across the extensive display room. Pleased to see our interest in the Parthenon Marbles, Dr Burnand strolled over and introduced us to the engrossing history of these controversial marbles.

This collection of stone sculptures and inscriptions was removed from the Parthenon in Athens and shipped to England between 1801 and 1805, by the 7th Lord Elgin Thomas Bruce. As a British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Elgin then sold the collection to the British crown in 1816. The Parthenon Sculptures were then presented by parliament to the British Museum, where they have remained ever since. In the 19th Century, the removal of the Elgin Marbles created a storm of controversy within the UK and Greece, exemplifying questions about the ownership of cultural artefacts and whether antiquities should be returned to places of origin. Elginism, then, is the official word describing the action of taking cultural treasures from one country and shipping them to another (usually to a wealthier one). The fact that a term was named after Elgin and the Elgin marbles demonstrate the historical importance of these notable marbles.

In Elgin's account of the events, he had only acquired the artworks fearing that they would be damaged in the temples of Greece under the Ottoman sway. Therefore, he had requested permission from the Sublime Porte (central government of the Ottoman Empire and also the rulers of Greece) to have artists measure, sketch and copy important pieces of sculpture for posterity. The request was granted with an official decree (firman) along with the words, "to take any pieces of stone with old inscriptions or figures thereon". The firman was not found in any of the Ottoman archives, and the veracity of the account is still

debated. With or without the permission granted, Elgin then selected a vast store of treasures for shipment to England, including friezes, pediment sculptures, and even fragmented statues from the interior chamber walls of the Parthenon. Various other antiquities were also taken from Athens, Attica and other sites. Then, he initiated a series of shipments to transfer the treasures to England in 1802-12. Despite the sinking of one of the ships, HMS Mentor off the Greek isle of Cythera, the cargo was recovered and nothing was lost. After leaving the embassy in 1803, Elgin then arrived in England in 1806. For the next 10 years, the collection remained private.

As a result of the affair, Elgin was assailed for a series of crimes including rapacity, vandalism and dishonest for not hauling the Grecian treasures to London. He was then attacked many times by people even including Byron. They likened Elgin's actions to vandalism and even looting. In 1810, Elgin published a defence for his actions, silencing most of the detractors. Although Elgin originally intended to donate his collection to the nation, he was troubled with financial problems as soon as he returned to England. In 1816, following a public debate in the Parliament and exoneration of Elgin, the collection was then acquired by the crown for £35,000, only half of Elgin's costs through shipping. Through this line of events, one could argue that the Elgin was really only a lover of art without the desire of gaining wealth through his artefacts.



Ever since gaining its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1832, the Greek government has always demanded the return of the marbles. Since the Acropolis and the Parthenon were regarded as one of the world's greatest cultural monuments, the Greek state has often expressed disapproval of Elgin's action since the beginning. The British Museum, on the other hand, claimed to have saved the marbles from damage and deterioration and not agreed to ship the marbles back. In 2008, the New Acropolis Museum was completed in Athens, with a large space devoted to the Parthenon. The pieces removed by Elgin could only be represented by veiled plaster casts. Subsequently, the Greek government has continued to encourage the return of marbles to be unified for the complete Parthenon frieze sequence to be restored. In 2014, UNESCO attempted to mediate between Greece and the UK but was turned down by the British Museum.

Moving on from the history of the marbles, the marble itself and its backgrounds must also be examined. After being built in ancient times, the Parthenon was damaged during the Great

Turkish War from 1683 to 1699 against Venice. The Turks occupying the region used the Parthenon as a gunpowder magazine and the Acropolis as a fort. On the 16 September 1687, artillery round fired from the Hill of Philopappus blew up the magazine and partially destroying the Parthenon. With the central portions of the building destroyed, the walls crumbled with 3 out of the 4 walls collapsing. Over 300 people were killed in the explosion, showering marble fragments over a huge area. For the next 150 years, portions of the Parthenon was scavenged for building materials and looted. This was how the Parthenon was destroyed in the first place, possibly explaining Lord Elgin's concern for the preservation of those valuable artefacts.

On the other hand, the Parthenon Marbles included over 21 figures from the east and west pediments, 15 of 92 metope panels and 75 metres of the Parthenon Frieze. Although the Parthenon Frieze is currently the most valued object, it was, in fact, the least precious portion of the Parthenon and was perhaps carved by sculptors training their students. In fact, the collection represents more than half of the remains of the surviving sculptural decorations of the Parthenon. Furthermore, Elgin also acquired objects from other buildings of the Acropolis, including a Caryatid from the Erechtheum, 4 slabs from the Temple of Athena Nike, a number of other architectural fragments of the Parthenon, Propylaia, Erechtheum, the Temple of Athene Nike and the Treasury of Atreus.

As a result, I would like to end with what the famous critic Andrew Graham-Dixon told the BBC, "I think it's important not to judge Elgin by the standards of the present. You have to judge the man in the context of his own time."

At the time, it was common for the wealthy to collect artworks around the world, and Elgin would not have expected the huge controversy as a result of his actions. One could argue that, although acting under the charges of 'vandalism' and 'looting', Elgin tried his best to protect and preserve the artefacts, and now his actions are benefitting us - the interested tourists who have our eyes opened by the fantastic collection of the Elgin Marbles, grateful for its preservation for us to appreciate today.

The Armour by Joseph Betts

Trapped in ringlets of rugged steel.

With lacquered layers of leather,

Bound by the harsh sweat of battle.

The armour took pride of place within the cabinet,

Without regret, not caring for others.

The varnished reflection stared silently

Fixing me with a burnished glare,

Like a tiger to a deer

As if trapped in a glass box of my own.

Think what eyes would have squinted out of

That inanimate metal casing,

What wickedness had lain beneath the surface of that armour?

Mayan History: A Short Story by Cameron Eilbeck

This story is based on Lintel 24, an ancient Mayan limestone carving originating from the Mayan city of Yaxchilan. It depicts the ruler, Shield-Jaguar, holding a torch while his consort, Lady Xoc, pulls a rope studded with what are now believed to be obsidian shards through her tongue in order to conjure a vision serpent. It was found in structure 23 in Yaxchilan, where it was cut out and shipped to the British museum in 1882. It now resides in the 'Mexico' section of the British museum, along with other Mayan artefacts. The assassinations are fictional, but bloodletting was a tradition often practised by the Mayans.

In a room in the Mayan section of the British museum, a stone lintel lies illuminated on the wall. it is approximately 2:30 in the morning, and the entire museum is silent. Except this artwork is not. A quiet rhythmic chanting emanates from it, and the symbols and hieroglyphs seem to move, forming new words and pictures at a ridiculous speed. The chanting increases. The symbols become even more frantic. And the room disappears.

The year is AD 709. It is 28 October, and it is 8:30 in the evening. Smoke rises over the jungle at Yaxchilan, a city nestled amongst the trees. It is a bustling city, even at night. Points of torchlight move along the avenues and thoroughfares, and at the fringes, where the jungle starts, some lights disappear into the trees. In the centre of the city, the temples lie sacred and silent, looming hulks that tower high above the jungle canopy, and from the palaces laughter and song can be heard. A soft murmur slowly drifts from the city, the culmination of tens of thousands of voices working in harmony. In the distance, howler monkeys shriek and cry, and the jungle life lets out its own chorus. A pale moon rises above the jungle, soft rays of light shining through the canopy. In the city, the pale rays wash the stone buildings in a gentle white light. And a score of men creep through the jungle.

When they reach the city, they disperse out into the suburbs, keeping their heads down and moving purposefully towards the city centre. To the casual observer, they look like tired farmers or merchants, drifting back towards their homes; however their clothes conceal obsidian-edged blades.

They have a job to do.

In the royal palace, meanwhile, a ritual begins. Bloodletting.

On the balcony of the palace, overlooking one of the main plazas, Lord Shield-Jaguar holds a flaming torch, illuminating the scene in front of him, as Lady Xoc pulls barbed wire through her tongue. Crowds fill the plaza. The whole scene is dimly lit, making it look even more nightmarish in the flickering flames. To the average observer, it seems like torture, but it is an old tradition that establishes the power of the rulers over the people as only the most powerful people can sacrifice blood to the gods. The blood-stained rope falls into a basket full of cotton strips, staining them red. It is finished.

Lady Xoc sits back, pale and gasping for breath, and is quickly escorted back into the palace. Lord Shield-Jaguar lets out a low sigh of relief and follows his wife back into the palace.

But the bloodletting is not yet over tonight. As crowds of people move out of the plaza, away from the palace, several move towards it, travelling fast and quietly. They reach the palace and slip through a back entrance, dispatching the two guards in simultaneous strokes. They pass through the narrow, dimly lit corridors, walking with purpose towards the royal chambers. Two more guards are killed, their bodies placed soundlessly. They pass into the royal chambers. A few muffled screams ring out, then silence.

The figures stroll out of the chamber dispassionately, quickly wiping their blades clean of the blood, yet they have committed the unspeakable. They have killed gods. When the bodies are discovered early tomorrow, the city will grind to a standstill. The mourning will be on an unbelievable scale. It will be chaos. They have no remorse, but as the assassins walk out of the city, the jungle watches, judging them.

Who would do such a thing? You wait, and a face slowly appears in the gloom:

the symbols stop moving and the lintel freezes still again, the moonlit rays and the bustling city disappearing. The room falls silent again.

Two Sonnets after François Boucher's "The Rising of the Sun" and "The Setting of the Sun" by Luka Shanidze

From East

From East, Apollo rises bright and new,

Chases the dark of night back to its lands,

Summons the light of day with outstretched hands,

Both nymphs and merfolk greet him from the blue.

As Thetis aids his voyage in the sky,

He plays a joyful music on his lyre,

While nymphs around begin to dance higher

On water and the blissful heavens high.

He rides, opens the curtains of the night

And quickly makes darkness scurry away,

Until the sky appears bright for us,

When he returns to home so rest he might,

Finishes painting the picture of day,

And now the sky appears bright for us.

To West

To West, where Apollo lays down his lyre,

And greeted home by creatures of the wild,

His Thetis, nymphs, and merfolk, grown and child,

Who bathed in light and their God they admired.

Thetis awaits Apollo at his home,

Laying on darker waves next to his lyre,

That used to make the nymphs dance even higher,

And now the music's stopped and light not known.

They praise, undress, embrace Apollo so,

For in his riding quickly 'cross the sky,

Apollo opened curtains of the black,

But he rides every day and does not know

That in his riding quickly 'cross the sky,

There's always darkness chasing at his back.

Brought to you by the 4th Year Academic Scholars:

The group pictured (above) at a talk in The Wallace Collection and (right) at the British Museum.