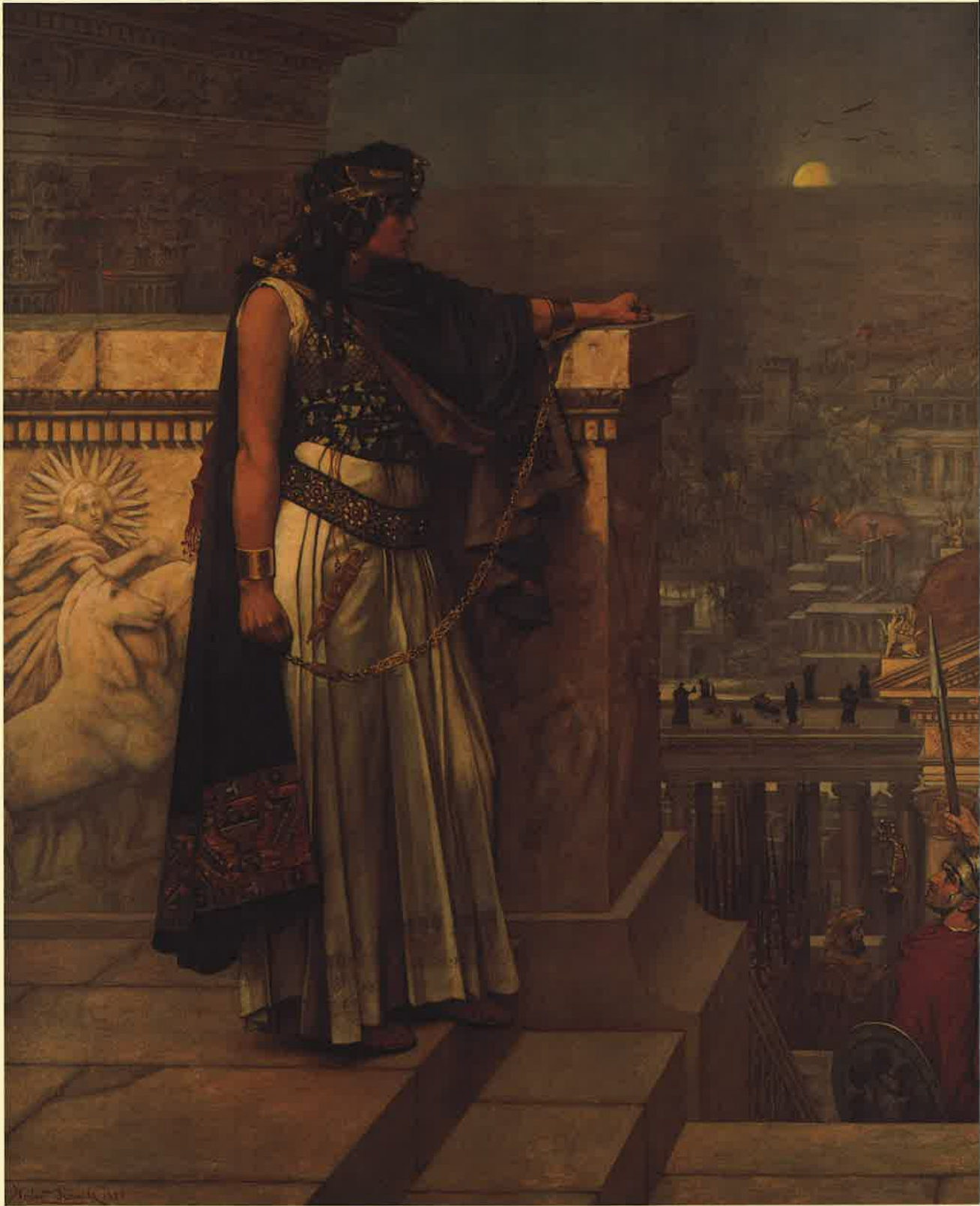


Queens & Sirens

ARCHAEOLOGY IN 19TH CENTURY ART AND DESIGN



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CURATORS: ALISON INGLIS AND JENNIFER LONG

GEELONG ART GALLERY

26 SEPTEMBER – 1 NOVEMBER 1998

Front cover:

Herbert G Schmalz

Zenobia's last look on Palmyra 1888

Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Cat no 8

FOREWORD

Queens & Sirens: Archaeology in 19th century Art and Design presents paintings, furniture, jewellery and ceramics made by artists fascinated with the great archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth century.

The acquisition of paintings by British Royal Academy artists was a major thrust of the Gallery's early collecting policy. However, little research has been undertaken on the Gallery's exceptional British painting collection, which includes a magnificent group of British pictures given to the Geelong Art Gallery by J H McPhillimy, an early trustee of the Geelong Art Gallery, and his sister in 1935–36. The genesis of *Queens & Sirens* was Jennifer Long's research on one painting from this group, Edwin Long's *A Babylonian Maid*. Jennifer's work was greatly welcomed, and we were extremely interested to learn more about the picture and its context. While the title of the painting referred to a Babylonian female, the decorative elements of her costume, the water vessel that she bears, and the background architecture, are indicative of an Egyptian setting. Further information was gathered by the Gallery's education officer, Adrian Montana, when the painting was to be featured in the Geelong Art Gallery's education kit. This resulted in the translation of the hieroglyphs carved into the column behind the figure. These include the stylised lotus flower at the base, symbolising the sun and creation; the bow-shaped Ankh, a life-giving symbol of air and water; the Sphinx with a double crown, representing the power of the sun god Horus; the vulture, representing female deities associated with the Upper Egyptian town of El-Kab; and the falcons which are the symbol of Horus and the kingship. It is the interest in and the familiarity with archaeological details that is exhibition in the work of nineteenth century artists and designers such as Long which forms the central theme of this exhibition.

I am grateful to the staff of the Art Gallery of South Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, State Gallery of New South Wales, State Library of Victoria and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology for their assistance. Special thanks must go to Professor Frank Sear of the School of Fine Arts, Classical Studies and Archaeology, The University of Melbourne for his generous assistance in identifying

archaeological sources. Dr. Elizabeth Pemberton, Dr. Ian McPhee and Terence Lane have provided invaluable advice. I would like to thank Mary Titchener, Caroline Williams and Robert Wilson for their assistance. The exhibition has been supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria – Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Ian Potter Foundation, Bendigo Bank, Verrell Insurance Brokers and Wycombe. Indemnification for this exhibition is provided by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria – Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The staging of *Queens & Sirens* coincides with the exhibition of ancient Egyptian civilisation, *Life and Death under the Pharaohs* at the National Wool Museum in Geelong. I am grateful to Andrew Moritz, Director, National Wool Museum and Annette Welkamp, Major Projects Manager, *Life and Death under the Pharaohs*, for assisting with the marketing of *Queens & Sirens* alongside the *Pharaohs*. Particular thanks must be given to Dianne Macleod for her contribution to the development of joint public and education programs. The program of public events has been sponsored by Alcoa. Thanks must also be given to the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society (Geelong District), Geelong Classic Cinema Inc, the Gallery Grasshoppers, Dr. Timothy Potts, Director, National Gallery of Victoria, Frank Sear and Charlotte Henry, School of Fine Arts, Classical Studies and Archaeology, The University of Melbourne for their contributions to this program.

Thanks are also due to the staff of the Geelong Art Gallery who have assisted with this exhibition, which has come to fruition after many years of planning: Sue Ernst, Veronica Filmer and to Susie Shears. Finally, I would like to thank the exhibition curators Alison Inglis and Jennifer Long for their research and enthusiasm for this project.

Ann Carew
Acting Director

THE PAST IS NOT A FOREIGN COUNTRY

Alison Inglis

Never before had the ancient world seemed so close, so alive, so knowable as in the nineteenth century. This was the great age of history writing and of the historical novel, with books such as Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) being eagerly devoured by the increasingly literate middle and working classes. Even in childhood, the literature of antiquity played a central role, with a Victorian schoolboy devoting more than half his lesson time to the study of the classics.¹ The nineteenth century was also the great age of archaeology, starting with the exploration of Egypt during the Napoleonic era, and continuing with the astonishing discovery of the Assyrian civilisation in the 1840s, the famous excavations at Troy and Mycenae during the decade of the 1870s and finally the discovery of Knossos on Crete in the 1890s. These events received world-wide coverage and the published accounts of the discoveries, such as Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains* (1849) and Schliemann's *Troy and its Remains* (1875) became overnight best-sellers. So great was the general public's interest and enthusiasm for the subject that leading newspapers and periodicals like the *Illustrated London News* and the *Athenaeum* published regular 'archaeology' columns for their readers.²

Nineteenth century artists and designers were not immune to the new vision of antiquity that emerged in the wake of these dramatic discoveries. For archaeological excavations were not simply exciting and topical, they also offered a different way of understanding the past; one which emphasised its humanity and physical reality. Previous centuries had tended to view history as a series of noble deeds by great men – an array of moral exemplars to be studied through the medium of literature. The abstract conception of the past was now transformed by the steady unearthing of everyday objects (including domestic utensils and furniture) and the evidence of ordinary activities such as cooking and shopping. The ancients were no longer distant and superior heroes; they had become engagingly real and understandable. This new comprehension of history stressed its visual, tactile, and sensory dimensions and was particularly appealing to contemporary artists and designers. Indeed, the study of archaeology was considered so relevant for artists that London's Slade School of Art

introduced the subject into its teaching curriculum in the 1870s, on the grounds that:

there is no more interesting study in the world than that of ancient history through its antiquities, and when we consider that, except by means of limited fragments of written history that remain to us, it is entirely through its art that we are enabled to construct the history of the ancient world, the matter becomes especially interesting to artists.³

Similarly, the great Victorian painter of antiquity, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, saw his paintings as an embodiment of this new ability to feel and sympathise with the past: 'I have always endeavoured to express in my pictures that the old Romans were human flesh and blood like ourselves, moved by the same passions and emotions.'⁴

Apart from the appeal of this living antiquity, the other most compelling reason behind the nineteenth century public's passion for archaeology was the belief that its discoveries might throw new light on the early books of the Bible. The various excavations in Egypt, Assyria and Persia were thus of particular interest as having the potential to provide 'scientific' affirmation of the authority of the Old Testament narratives. 'We have dug up Homer and Herodotus; we shall yet dig up the Bible,' optimistically declared one Victorian archaeologist.⁵ A direct result of this attitude was a transformation in the depiction of religious subjects, as artists sought to incorporate the correct archaeological accessories – as well as authentic costumes, racial types and topography – into their compositions. Indeed, the ancient Near East and the Old Testament stories became virtually synonymous in the public's mind, to the extent that a non-religious painting such as *A Babylonian Maid* (1883) (cat no 6) was immediately understood through a biblical framework of Egyptian overlords and dispossessed peoples.

The belief that the past, be it historical or scriptural, could be 'restored' or 'reanimated' through the study of archaeological remains had an enormous impact on nineteenth century painters. But to some of their audience,

it seemed that the fascination with the material reality of the ancient world was so great that it occasionally overwhelmed the picture's story. When Alma-Tadema's *The Vintage Festival* (1871) (cat no 1) was first exhibited, one critic observed that 'the only too-skilfully-painted accessories have almost the same pictorial value as the figures.'⁶ Similarly, Poynter's depiction of *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* (1890)⁷, 'with its ... wealth of quaint accessories' was found by the *Magazine of Art* to be 'a miracle of research and splendour, the very excellence in the rendering of which takes away something of the importance of the two chief actors in the scene.'⁸

The disproportionate focus on the archaeological setting can be seen to reflect, to a certain extent, the more widespread rejection of story telling and moral content which emerged in progressive art circles during the second half of the century. By the 1890s, the artist J E Hodgson could reflect that 'One element [which] has dropped out of our pictures to a great extent ... may be called the literary element. ... [A]necdote is fast disappearing from pictures, and its place is taken by careful elaboration of the aspect.' Significantly, Hodgson immediately went on to contrast this loss of narrative with the fact that:

Archaeology has also crept in largely as a source of interest; the life of the ancients is depicted with a profound knowledge of details which has been acquired by ransacking all the museums.⁹

The focus of a history painting could be seen to have shifted from the dramatic incident to the physical setting, with the composition's archaeological elements and their scholarly allusions becoming central to the image's significance. Thus, in Alma-Tadema's *Cleopatra* (1875), Poynter's *Helen* (1881) and Long's *Queen Esther* (1878), (cat nos 2, 7, 5) there is little attempt to tell the story through actions. These paintings of motionless, inward-looking women are closer to character studies, and their elaborate backgrounds and accessories provide additional insights for the well-read nineteenth century audience.

Unfortunately, the increasing influence of the philosophy of 'art for art's sake', with its emphasis on the formal qualities of line and colour, heralded the eventual demise of archaeological history painting, no matter how sophisticated its presentation. The aesthete and art critic, Oscar Wilde, best summed up the avant-garde's

impatience with the 'subject picture' and other forms of conventional academic painting, when he declared: 'All archaeological pictures that make you say, "How curious," ... all historical pictures that make you say, "How interesting," all pictures that do not immediately give you such artistic joy as to make you say, "How beautiful," are bad pictures.'¹⁰

These dismissive words cannot take away from the fact that the rise of archaeology during the nineteenth century acted as a vital creative catalyst for many artists and designers. Moreover, the public enthusiasm for these evocative recreations of antiquity endured for many years. In 1906, Long's *Queen Esther* was voted one of the National Gallery of Victoria's 'twelve best pictures', while the Geelong Art Gallery welcomed the addition of *A Babylonian Maid* in 1935.¹¹ Even today, these works still tempt us to believe that time can be defied and that art can allow us to engage imaginatively with the past – even if the past we really encounter is that of one hundred years ago.

- 1 Liversidge and Edwards, 1996 p8. For new approaches to historiography, see Strong, 1978; Bann, 1995
- 2 For the nineteenth century as a 'golden age' of archaeology, see Michaelis, 1909
- 3 Poynter, 1879, p132
- 4 Swanson, 1977, pp43-44
- 5 Sayce, 1980, p229
- 6 *Illustrated London News*, 6 May 1871, p447
- 7 E J Poynter, *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon*, 1890, oil on canvas, 234.5 x 350.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 8 'The Chronicle of Art', *Magazine of Art*, vol 12, 1890, pxxxiv
- 9 Hodgson, 1893, p263
- 10 Ellmann, 1975, p245
- 11 La Touche Armstrong, 1932, p2

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE VICTORIAN IMAGINATION

Jennifer Long

Commentators such as Stephen Bann have drawn attention to the nineteenth century European obsession with the material remains of the past. Bann characterises this attitude as an ‘investment in the historical fragment both as an object and as a *vestige of history*.’¹ Using Bann’s terms it is possible to identify a number of approaches to the use of archaeological fragments in photography, decorative arts and in particular the paintings of the late nineteenth century.

One attitude which can be identified derived from writers such as Walter Pater who looked on the artefact as an aesthetic ‘object’. Linda Dowling uses the term ‘elegant materialism’ to describe Pater’s re-writing of the archaeologist, Charles Newton’s famous account of excavations in Greece. Instead of detailed scientific observations Pater’s focus was on the potency and talismanic quality of the recovered fragments.² Artefacts stripped of their historical meaning were celebrated for their aesthetic qualities and seen as a tangible embodiment of a pure ancient spirit. The art-furniture derived from an ancient Egyptian Thebes Stool in the British Museum (see cat nos 25–28) used archaeological sources in this way – as inspiration rather than authority. Another approach used archaeology as historical evidence to give authenticity to re-created scenes. Edwin Long, Herbert Schmalz and Edward Poynter are among many artists who relied on archaeological details to give the impression of an historical truth underpinning the narrative or moral implications of the image.

A combination of these two approaches produces a third ‘exhibitionary’ use of archaeology which can be seen in works such as Alma-Tadema’s *The Vintage Festival* (cat no 1) with its careful presentation of identifiable Roman objects.³ He characteristically included well known artefacts only to partially obscure them from view with columns or dissect them with the edge of the frame. Elizabeth Prettejohn argues that the artist’s interest in disjunctions and gaps can be read as a comment on the whole process of contemporary archaeological excavation, scholarship and display. The objects ‘call attention to the partial or fragmentary nature of attempts to restore the completeness of the Roman material world.’⁴

The use of actual fragments recovered from sites and available for viewing at the British Museum, the Louvre, the South Kensington Museum and galleries throughout Europe was supplemented with secondary sources in the form of photographs and illustrated texts. Alma-Tadema, for example, had a visual archive of 5,300 items including images by Frith, Robertson and Sommer; photographers who are also included in this exhibition.⁵

From the 1850s onward, photographs became increasingly important in the popularisation of images of the ancient world in the form of excavated ruins and details of architectural fragments. The rapid development of stereotypical viewpoints and compositions had the effect of arranging and highlighting certain aspects of the archaeological material even before the artist adapted it for his own purposes; thus introducing another level of mediation between the ‘real’ object and its painted equivalent. Like the physical act of excavation itself, the act of photography separated and framed its subject until it no longer seemed to belong to the present.⁶ Naomi Shepherd points out that it was not until the late 1860s that people began to appear in photographic images of Palestine and even then they were frequently models arranged in ‘picturesque’ tableaux.⁷ Photographs of archaeological sites and views suitable for illustrating Biblical stories dominated the picture of the Middle East that was produced.

Any interpretation of the use of archaeology in narrative paintings such as Long’s *Queen Esther*, (cat no 5) and Schmalz’s *Zenobia’s last look on Palmyra* (1888) (cat no 8) must also take into account the way in which archaeology was part of a complex mapping and picturing of the region which could not be completely separated from the Imperialist ambitions of the British and other expansionist nations. A primary motivation for the British intervention in the Middle East was the desire to retain control of the trade routes to India, and to increase access to Africa. Throughout the course of the nineteenth century, Western powers manoeuvred to gain political and commercial advantage in the region.⁸

The representations of Queen Esther and Queen Zenobia contain elements which can be understood in the light of both Imperialism and Orientalism in the sense that they are used by twentieth century scholars, such as Said and Nochlin.⁹ These writers have identified, among other prejudices directed towards Islamic nations, an artistic construction of the East as female, exotic, irrational and submissive. Each of these Queenly scenes can be read to a certain extent as a meeting of East and West in which the East is represented by women who, despite their heroism, are ultimately subservient. In this context, it is interesting to note that the nature of the relationship between these heroines and the patriarchal structure which they challenge is embodied in the archaeological detail in the background of each work. It is the archaeology which holds the key to the narrative.

For example, in *Queen Esther*, the carved image in the doorway depicting a King defeating a monster is based upon a door relief at Persepolis in ancient Persia. Esther, the virtuous and obedient Queen of King Ahasuerus, is preparing to persuade the powerful King not to murder the Jewish minority to which her family belongs. The entire background relief is decorated with warriors and forcefully conveys the implacable nature of this regime. The King-Monster relief in the doorway through which Esther must pass bears a final threatening message for those who question the authority of the King: the penalty is death.

In the painting, *Zenobia’s last look on Palmyra* by Schmalz, the narrative focuses on the harshness and brutality of the Roman Empire in decline. The Warrior Queen has been captured by the Emperor Aurelian who is taking her as a trophy to Rome. The ancient city of Palmyra is being destroyed as a punishment for her attack on the authority of the Empire. Initially our sympathies are engaged by the figure of the chained woman but again, it is the archaeological fragment directly behind Zenobia which embodies the essence of the narrative. This fragment, the so-called *Helios Metope* from Troy, would have been instantly recognised by the British public, who had seen it with the rest of Schliemann’s Trojan treasures when they were exhibited in London in the late 1870s. The metope’s association with the city of Troy becomes a reminder of an earlier defeat of the East by the West. Palmyra, like Troy, is burning. The shadow cast by the sinking sun across both Queen Zenobia and the relief confirms that her reign is over.

It is the journey of fragments, such as the *Helios Metope*, from its excavation in 1875 to its inclusion in a work such as *Zenobia* in 1890, which emphasises the complex way in which archaeology was inserted into a wider historical sensibility. The metope is a good example of the theme of this exhibition. In its voyage from Troy to the Art Gallery of South Australia the object has accumulated additional meaning through the process of collection, exhibition and reproduction. Finally it has been re-contextualised within the framework of the painting by Schmalz where it is aligned with narratives and themes which place it firmly in the nineteenth century.

1 Bann, 1990, p105

2 Dowling, 1988, pp209-227

3 Liversidge and Edwards, 1996, p68

4 Liversidge and Edwards, 1996, p136-137

5 Becker et al, 1997, p112

6 Maszak 1996, p28

7 Shepherd, 1987, p189-90

8 Vaczek and Buckland, 1981, p38

9 Said, 1995; Nochlin, 1983

CATALOGUE OF WORKS

Alison Inglis and Jennifer Long

PAINTINGS

- 1 **LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA (1836–1912)**
The Vintage Festival 1871 [PLATE 1]
 oil on panel
 51.0 x 119.0 cm
 Signed and dated l.l. 'Alma-Tadema 1871'
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Purchased 1888

The Victorian artist, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, was famous for his depictions of antiquity. The artist was an enthusiastic scholar of archaeology and architecture and his paintings reveal an astonishing technical facility which allowed him to convincingly recreate the daily life of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. The work in this exhibition is a replica of Alma-Tadema's larger, original version of *The Vintage Festival* (1870).¹

This painting demonstrates the artist's obsession with the world of material objects, a characteristic which was singled out by his biographer, Helen Zimmern, in her discussion of this work:

The picture is a striking example of Tadema's power ... the marble shines, and the bronzes, the musical instruments, the wine kegs, the garlands, the thousand and one accessories gleam and sparkle in this bright, clear day-light. Alma-Tadema's archaeological knowledge is admittedly unrivalled, and we may be quite certain that every detail is scientifically accurate. This artist, indeed, not unfrequently bestows care upon his accessories to the detriment of his human beings... In this work they are distinctly useful in helping us to realise the true meaning of the whole.²

Recent literature on Alma-Tadema has explored his creative use of archaeological sources, pointing out that 'he combines objects from different periods and from different parts of the classical world ... enlarging or reducing motifs ... deliberately manipulating his material for aesthetic or symbolic purposes.'³

For example, in *The Vintage Festival*, the choice of objects and inscriptions clearly indicate the setting to be the provincial city of Pompeii. But the presence of a statue of the Emperor Augustus, combined with the lavish Corinthian columns and frieze, subtly convey the broader theme of Roman Imperial splendour, with even a hint of decadence.

An examination of the various objects in the composition shows that they contribute to the painting's meaning on a number of levels, both locating the setting in a particular time and place, and also reinforcing the theme of Bacchanalian festivity.⁴

NOTES TO THE KEY (fig 1)

- 1: A large marble volute-krater embellished with scenes of Bacchic revelry.
 2: A statue of the Emperor Augustus, the so-called *Prima Porta Augustus*, erected in Rome in 20 BC.⁵
 3: The words on the marble floor – 'M. OLCONIUS. M. F' – are based on a famous inscription in the Theatre at Pompeii referring to Marcus Holconius Rufus, a member of the city's prominent Holconii family. The original inscription was reproduced in many nineteenth century books on Pompeii.⁶
 4: A large terracotta vessel for holding wine; numerous surviving examples in Pompeii.
 5: The musicians are playing double flutes or *tibiae*, which are tied around their heads with a leather band or *capistrum*. The

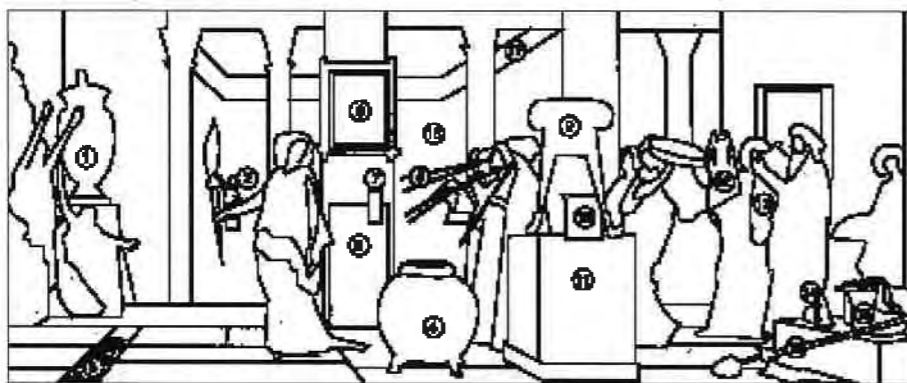


FIG 1
 Key to
 Lawrence Alma-Tadema
The Vintage Festival 1871
 Cat. no. 1
 (Key compiled with
 the generous assistance
 of Prof Frank Sear)

FIG 2

2 Amphorae from T. Dyer, *Pompeii: Its history, building and antiquities*, London 1867, p416

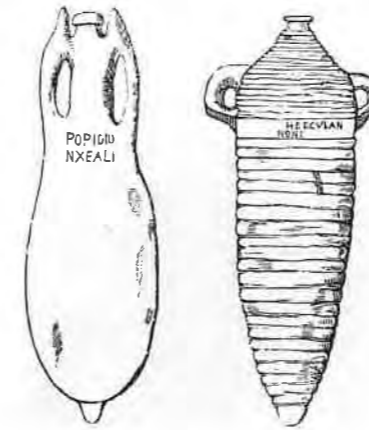


FIG 3

Lawrence Alma-Tadema
Cleopatra 1875
 Cat no 2

choice of female musicians was doubtless inspired by the famous depiction of a woman playing on a double flute in the Pompeian House of Marcus Lucretius.⁷

6: The painting is copied from the picture of *Hercules and Omphale*, which was originally in the House of Marcus Lucretius and later moved to the Naples Museum.

7: A curious metal votive offering, intended to assist in curing a diseased leg.⁸

8: This incongruous element has been described as 'an aesthetic Japanese-like screen'.⁹ Alma-Tadema sometimes introduced deliberate anachronisms into his compositions for the amusement of the *cognoscenti*.

9: A typical Pompeian bronze tripod with clawed feet.

10: A silver bucket or *situla*, for dedicatory wine.

11: A marble altar to Bacchus decorated with a dancing maenad and satyr.

12: An amphora of wine, inscribed 'POPIDIO NXEALI', based on original in the House of the Faun. Both 12 and 13 were well known through reproduction (fig 2).¹⁰

13: An amphora of wine, based upon an original vessel.

14: A silver drinking vessel or *rhyton*, in the shape of a stag's head; original in Naples Museum.

15: A silver pouring vessel or *askos*, an enlargement of the original in Naples Museum.

16: A long staff surmounted by a pine cone or *thyrsus*, traditionally carried by Bacchus and his followers.

17: The Cipollino marble columns, Corinthian capitals and frieze of heraldic sphinxes are adapted from examples of Roman monumental architecture such as the Forum of Trajan.

18: The interior decoration is derived from 'Third Style' Pompeian wall painting.

- 2 **LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA (1836–1912)**
Cleopatra 1875
 oil on canvas later mounted on hardboard
 Original frame inscribed with hieroglyphs,
 'Ruler of Two Lands Cleopatra Queen'
 54.6 x 66.7 oval
 Signed l.l. 'L Alma Tadema op CXLVI'
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir Herbert Thompson 1920

Alma-Tadema's small profile portrait of Queen Cleopatra represents a departure from his earlier reconstructions of ancient Egyptian life, which teemed with archaeological details. The gold snake bracelet and the hieroglyphic inscription on the frame are the only overtly Egyptian elements in this deceptively simple painting. The viewer's knowledge of this famous queen, however, invests the accessories with a symbolic dimension: the pearl ear-ring alludes to Cleopatra's legendary extravagance, while the snake armlet foreshadows her tragic death.

Several contemporary critics questioned Alma-Tadema's depiction of this celebrated royal beauty, but his biographer, Helen Zimmern, justified his characterisation on archaeological grounds, arguing that the portrait was based upon an authentic likeness of Cleopatra's ancestor, the Ptolemaic queen, Berenice.¹¹



FIG 4
King killing a Monster, Persepolis
from G Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Eastern World*,
London 1862, Vol 4, p313

- 3 **LUIGI BAZZANI** (1836–1927)
The Pottery Shop, Pompeii 1883
oil on wood
55.9 x 38.1 cm
Signed and dated l.l., red paint
'Luigi Bazzani / ROMA 1883'
Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Bequest of Mr and Mrs William Milne, 1914

For the nineteenth century public, Pompeii held an extraordinary fascination as a city in which the past could be directly experienced. The increasingly systematic excavations of the 1860s undertaken by the Italian archaeologist, Giuseppe Fiorelli placed a new emphasis on the restoration of buildings and entire streetscapes.¹²

Luigi Bazzani established a considerable reputation as a painter of Graeco-Roman genre subjects.¹³ His depiction of a Pompeian pottery shop reflects the growing appreciation for scenes of ordinary life – with careful attention paid to such mundane but authentic details as the painted electoral notices on the wall and the small terracotta 'shop sign' above the opening. The probable source for Bazzani's pottery would be the collection of antique vases in the Naples Museum. Unfortunately, this led to some chronological

inconsistencies with ancient black and red figure Greek vases from fourth century BC appearing alongside first century AD Pompeian amphorae and lamps.

- 4 **NICCOLO CECCONI** (1835–?)
Pompeian Bath (c1889)
oil on canvas
104 x 155 cm
Signed l.r. 'Niccolo Cecconi'
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1891

The Pompeian Bath is regarded as one of the most important works by the Florentine portrait and genre painter, Niccolo Cecconi.¹⁴ The choice of subject obviously provided an opportunity for the artist to display his skill in depicting the nude. Nevertheless, the painting also reveals the considerable knowledge of Roman bathing customs gained from archaeological excavations. The painted walls and frieze of mythological sea-creatures are similar to the decoration in several Pompeian baths, while the furniture is equally appropriate to the setting.¹⁵ Even the black servant can be identified as a *balneatrix* – the female slave in attendance at a public bath. To a nineteenth century audience, the mildly erotic subject matter gained a certain respectability from this scholarly underpinning. Moreover, much of its meaning resided in the poignant contrast between the light hearted image and the viewer's knowledge of Pompeii's imminent fiery doom.

- 5 **EDWIN LONG** (1829–1891)
Queen Esther 1878 [PLATE 2]
oil on canvas in original frame,
213.5 x 170.3 cm
Signed and dated l.l. 'Edwin Long 1878'
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Commissioned 1878. Purchased 1879

This work is a replica of the painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1879 entitled *Esther*, "And so will I go in unto the King", etc. *Esther IV*, 16.

Like Alma-Tadema, Waterhouse and Poynter, Long introduced carefully researched archaeological details into his historical and biblical paintings. His images of the ancient East reveal his use of the resources of the British Museum, the Louvre and the many source books which reproduced the monuments and details of recent excavations. In 1877, the National Gallery of Victoria's representative A T Thomson commissioned Long to execute a copy of an unfinished painting of *Queen Esther* which he had seen in

the artist's studio. Thomson wrote to Melbourne emphasising the artist's use of authentic sources:

The scene is laid in one of the courts of "Shushan the Palace", its elaborate Persian architecture constituting the background of the picture ... the details are gathered from various authorities but principally from Rawlinson's 'Ancient Monarchies' Vol 3 (sic). The colours of the hangings and the pavement are taken from the 1st Book of Esther v 6, the most ancient of architectural descriptions extant.¹⁶

Thomson's letter goes on to describe the physical appearance of the models and offers a psychological profile of Esther's character, which bears a strong resemblance to the mid-Victorian ideal of virtuous womanhood: 'she displays a quiet energy of character which leaves no room to doubt her ability to sustain the terrible ordeal ... she is gentle and innocent as well as generous and resolute'.¹⁷

Thomson's reading of the painting echoes the critical reception of the first version at the 1879 Royal Academy exhibition. The elaborate Persian setting was appreciated as a believable stage set in which the drama could unfold – as the *Art Journal* commented, 'the wall of the apartment, figured and foliated and inscribed in cuneiform, has such a semblance of archaeological truth that we fancy ourselves of Esther's party'.¹⁸

The story of Queen Esther attracted much interest in the nineteenth century because of its supposed historical insights into the contemporary excavations at Persepolis. Long used details from Persian relief sculpture as a motif in the design of the frame.

- 6 **EDWIN LONG** (1829–1891)
A Babylonian Maid 1883 [PLATE 3]
oil on canvas in original frame
122.0 x 81.5 cm
Signed with monogram and dated l.l. '18 EL 83'
Collection: Geelong Art Gallery
Gift of J M McPhillimy and his sister Miss Louise McPhillimy, 1935

A Babylonian Maid is a typical example of historical genre painting in which archaeological detail is added to an imaginary scene. The work's title identifies the subject as a Babylonian maiden, but her jewellery and the carved hieroglyphs on the column behind are unmistakably Egyptian. This image would have been easily decipherable to a Victorian audience, who were well-versed in Old Testament accounts of Egyptian domination. The maiden could thus be understood as either a captive or a concubine. *A Babylonian Maid* relates to a number of Egyptian and Biblical paintings

completed by Long in the 1880s, especially the two three-quarter length images of the daughters of Saul, *Merab* and *Michal* which also were completed in 1883.¹⁹

- 7 **EDWARD J POYNTER** (1836–1919)
Helen 1881 [PLATE 4]
oil on canvas in original frame
91.5 x 71.1 cm
Signed and dated l.r. 'EJP 1/8/81'
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1968

Poynter's image of Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman of the ancient world, provoked some debate when it was first exhibited at the 1881 Royal Academy. Several critics condemned the artist for presuming to dignify an 'expressionless' half-length model with the title *Helen*; others admired the fine painting of her features and the 'close and learned realism' of the costume.²⁰ But the most overtly 'archaeological' element of the composition – her elaborate pieces of gold jewellery – received little comment. This is probably because Poynter's necklace bore no resemblance to the recently discovered ancient jewellery (the so-called 'Treasure of Priam') excavated by Schliemann at Troy in 1873. These Trojan ornaments were well known to London audiences, having been exhibited at South Kensington from 1877 to 1880.²¹

Helen's necklace is not based on any known model; it was designed by the artist himself. As Geoffrey Munn's recent research has indicated, Poynter was familiar with the *Treasure of Priam*, but 'did not think the jewellery

FIG 5
E POYNTER (designer) and CARLO GIULIANO (maker)
A necklace in silver gilt and green hardstone beads,
c1880s, Wartski, London.



heroic enough for his purposes'. Instead, the artist commissioned the London jeweller, Carlo Giuliano (1831–1835), to make the necklace according to his specifications.²²

The work provides an interesting example of aesthetic considerations overruling the claims of archaeological authenticity. This artistic license may have been encouraged by the fact that the painting of Helen was not only an imaginative history subject but also a disguised portrait of the contemporary beauty, Mrs Lillie Langtry.²³ Poynter's flattering allusion may have been prompted by the recent publication of Oscar Wilde's poem, *The New Helen*, dedicated to Mrs Langtry in 1879.

8 HERBERT GUSTAVE SCHMALZ (1856–1935)
Zenobia's last look on Palmyra 1888 [SEE FRONT COVER]
 oil on canvas
 183.5 x 153.7 cm
 Signed and dated l.l. 'Herbert Schmalz 1888'
 Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
 Purchased 1890

In 1890, the *South Australian Register* published an enthusiastic account of the large historical painting by Herbert Schmalz showing Queen Zenobia, the defeated ruler of ancient Palmyra, gazing upon her city's destruction. The reviewer leaves little doubt as to where the audience's sympathy should lie – with the vanquished monarch rather

than the victorious Romans. Moreover, the artist's careful rendering of Zenobia's rich garments and ornaments ensured that discussion focused on her appearance as an exotic woman as well as a noble adversary.

There is the mute eloquence of despair in her attitude expressed in the hard yet womanly profile, the set earnest gaze, ... and in the muscular force of the left hand clenched on the flat top of the stone balustrade ... immediately below are ... the disciplined Roman soldiery of the vindictive Emperor Aurelian, who conquered and humiliated this beautiful and noble, unfortunate sovereign... Her golden fetters ... are forgotten as she looks in noble grief over her fair city, yet they serve to accentuate her degradation from her high estate and bear painful testimony to her disastrous fate. In the picture the dark bronze-like complexion is admirably treated, the richness of the costume, the oriental splendour of the jewellery and the delicate texture of the robes are singularly well wrought.²⁴

In a famous encounter between Oscar Wilde and Herbert Schmalz, the critic was to have the final word: 'But, my dear Schmalz ...why [choose a subject from] so far back? You know, where archaeology begins, art ceases'.²⁵



PLATE 1
 LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA
The Vintage Festival 1871
 Cat no 1

FIG 6
 Helios Metope from Troy, from H Schliemann,
Troy and its remains, London, 1875, p32

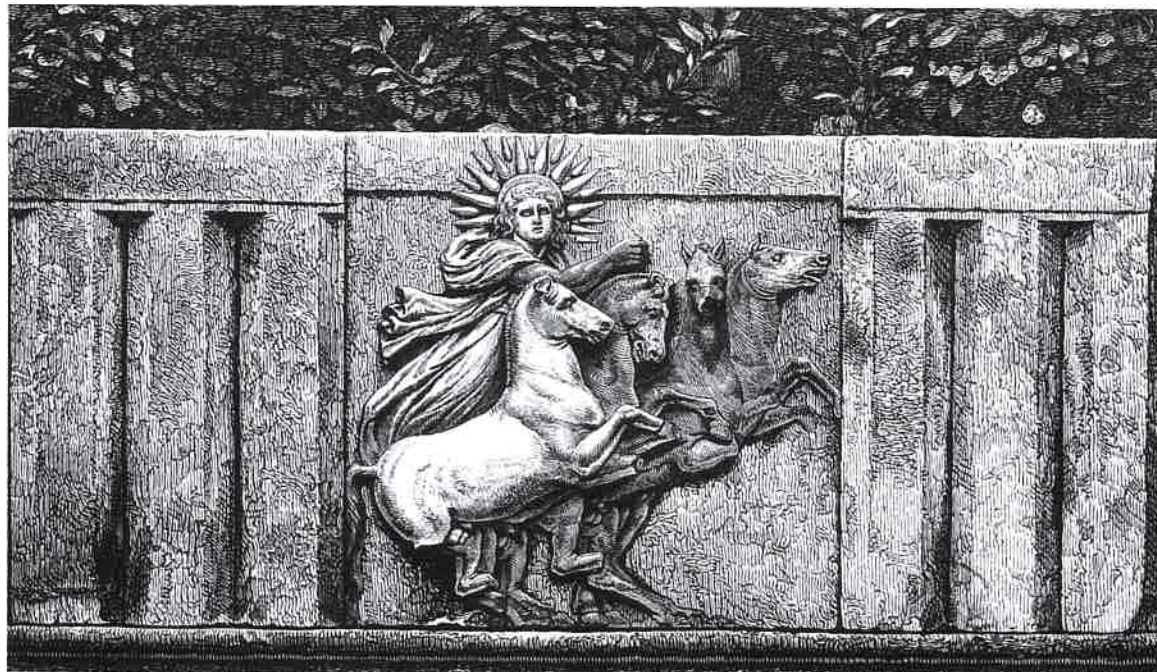


PLATE 2
EDWIN LONG
Queen Esther 1878
Cat no 5

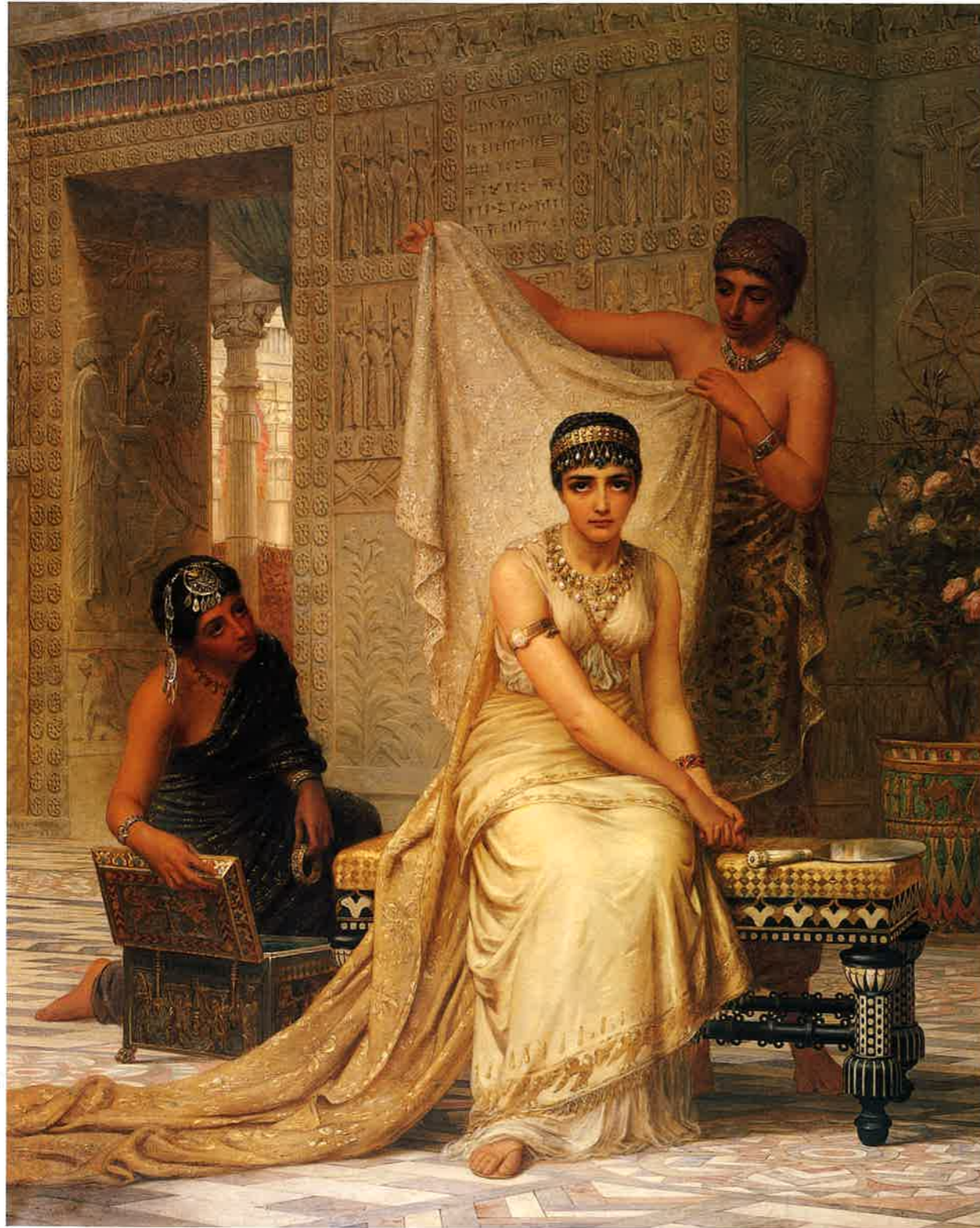


PLATE 3
EDWIN LONG
A Babylonian Maid 1883
Cat no 6

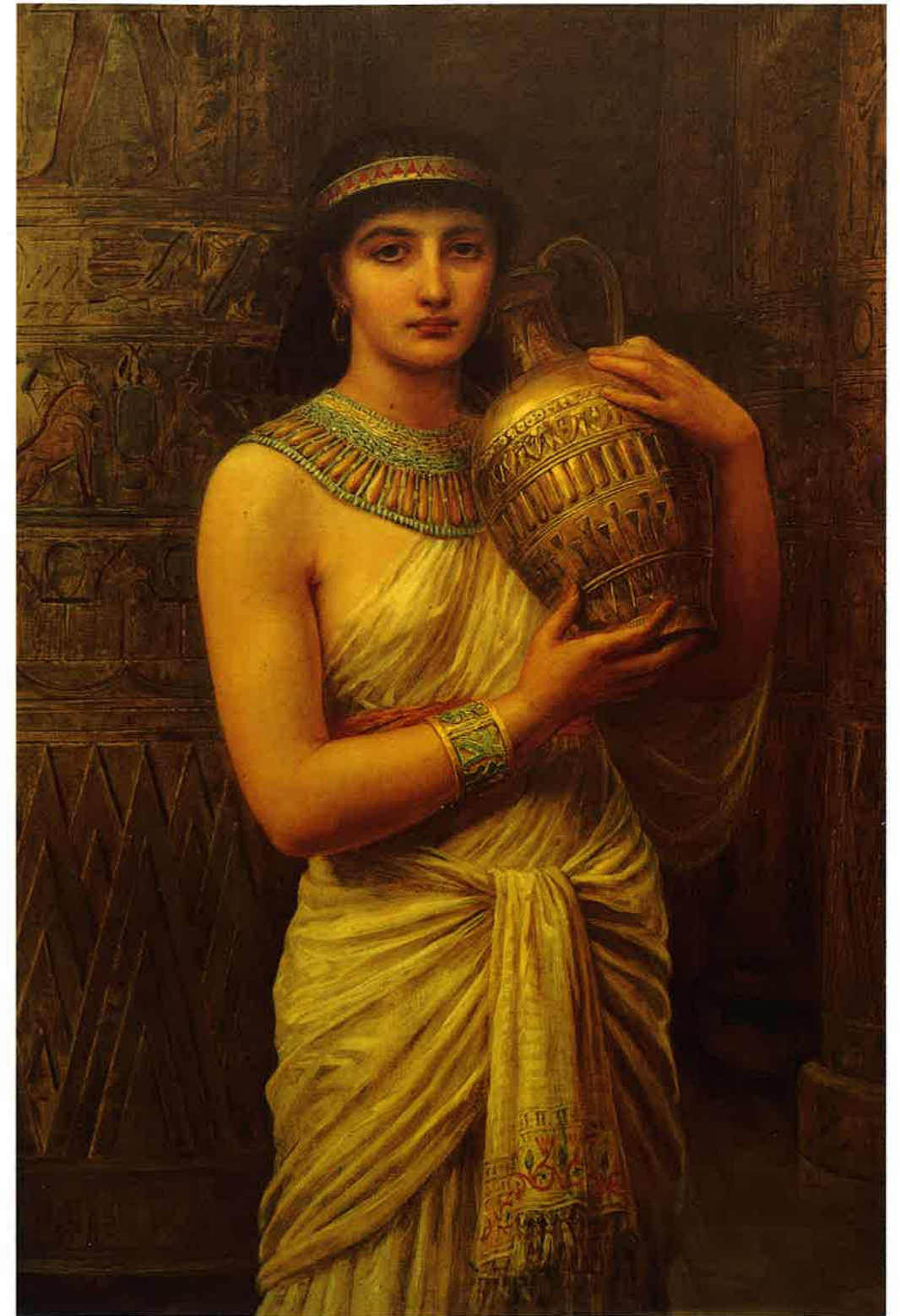


PLATE 4
EDWARD J POYNTER
Helen 1881
Cat no 7

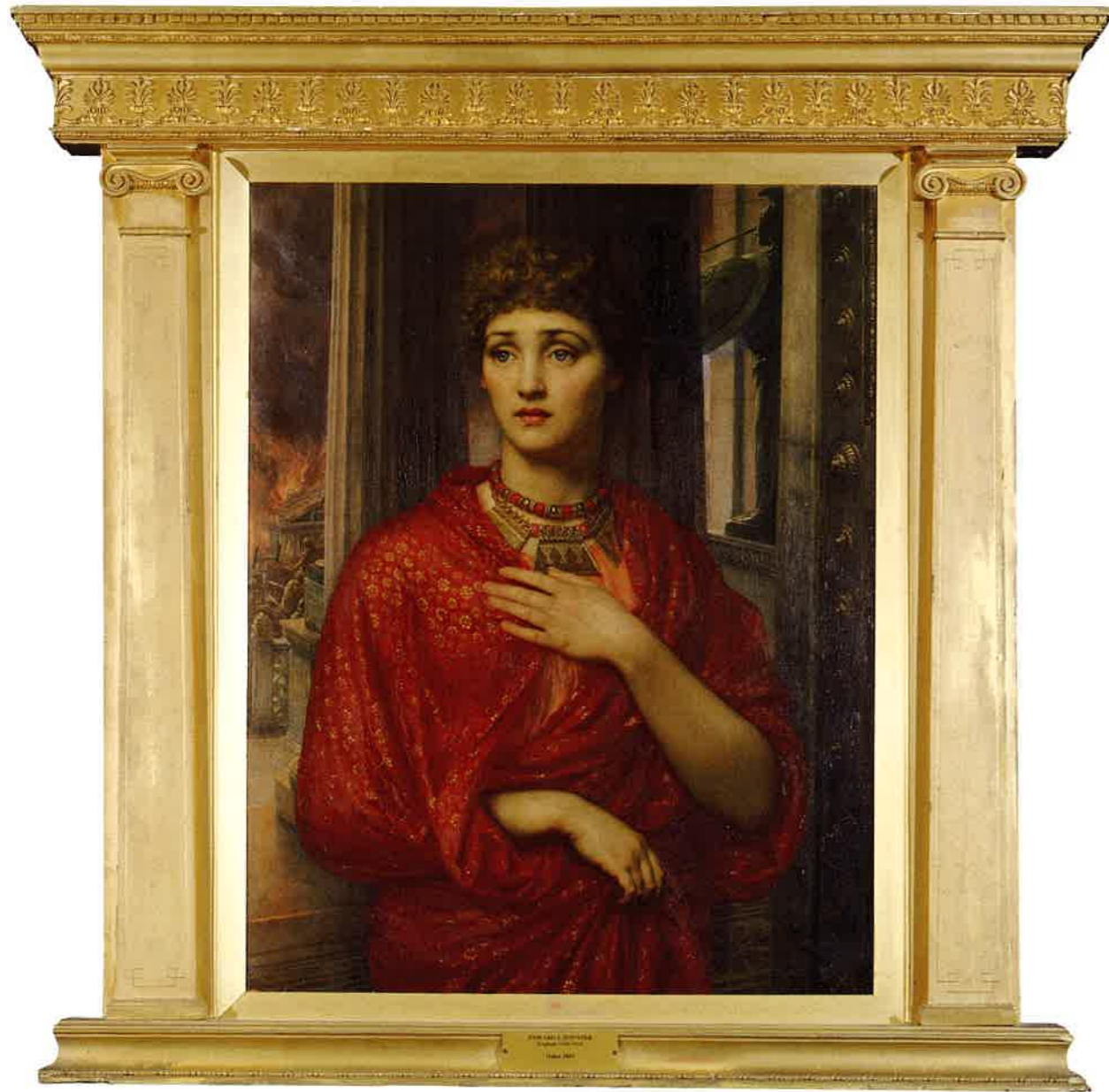


PLATE 5
J W WATERHOUSE
Ulysses and The Sirens 1891
Cat no 9

PLATE 6
LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA (designer)
Armchair 1884-87
Cat no 24



PLATE 7
WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT (designer)
Chair c1860
Cat no 26



PLATE 8
 UNKNOWN DESIGNER, in the style of John Brogden
 Pendant cr86o
 Cat no 38

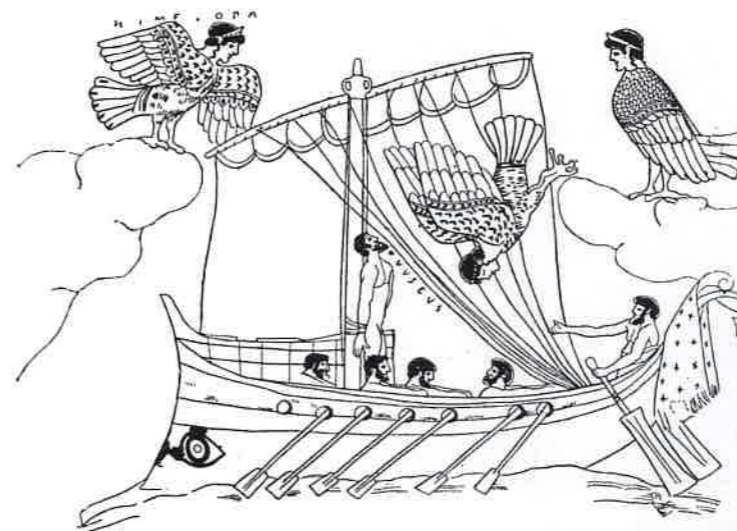


FIG 7
Odysseus and the Sirens
 (from a vase in the British Museum
 BM 1843. 11-3. 31 [E440])
 from J Harrison, 'The Myth of Odysseus
 and the Sirens' in *Magazine of Art* 1883,
 p135 plate IV

9 J W WATERHOUSE (1849-1917)
Ulysses and The Sirens [PLATE 4]
 oil on canvas
 100.0 x 201.7 cm
 Signed and dated l.r. 'J W Waterhouse / 1891'
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Purchased 1891

John Waterhouse's painting of *Ulysses and the Sirens* attracted considerable attention when first exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1891. This was due to the artist's decision to depict the sirens as bird-women rather than as nymphs or mermaids. As the critic, M H Spielmann, remarked: 'It is hard to give up our idea of womanly sirens; but Mr Waterhouse has the support of the evidence of classic vases, while we must not forget that it was the voices and not the figures of the one-time winged nymphs that enchanted the unhappy passers-by.'²⁶

The iconographic source for this image was a famous vase in the British Museum, which the artist may have seen illustrated in an 1883 article on 'The Myth of Odysseus and the Sirens' by the classical scholar, Jane Harrison. Harrison's subsequent study of Pre-Homeric Greek religion, published in 1890, replaced the idea of serene Olympian beings with a dark, irrational universe.²⁷ Waterhouse's sharp-taloned bird-women reflect this harsher, more malevolent conception of ancient myth. Waterhouse compresses into the borrowed image the concept of the sirens as dangerous music. There is a musical repetition in the sameness of their beauty and their arrangement in the air is like a musical score.

Waterhouse uses a second archaeological reference in an equally suggestive way. Dr Elizabeth Pemberton has recently identified the painting on the interior of Ulysses'

ship as 'Herakles Wrestling with Triton'. The image is taken from an Athenian black-figure cup,²⁸ which Waterhouse may have seen during his regular travels in Italy or encountered in publications. Pemberton argues that the relevance of the legend of Herakles and Triton to the Ulysses narrative is twofold:

Herakles, the greatest of all Greek heroes, is a model worthy of emulation for the wandering Ulysses. More important is his defeat of Triton, the son of the sea god Poseidon, who is Ulysses' greatest enemy. It is Poseidon who is determined to prevent Ulysses from returning home. Triton's ability to calm the ocean with his trumpet contrasts with the destructive power of the siren's song. The image is one of hope for Ulysses, an inspired addition by Waterhouse.²⁹

WATERCOLOURS

10 HECTOR HARCAU (19th century)
The Hall of Columns
 watercolour in original frame
 45.0 x 32.0 (sight)
 Inscription on reverse: 'Hall of Columns by
 Hector Harcau. X-Tadema Collection'
 Collection: Amy Lindsay



FIG 8
JOHN MARTIN
**Joshua commanding the sun
to stand still** 1827
Cat no 11

PRINTS

- 11 JOHN MARTIN (1789–1854)
Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still 1827
mezzotint
plate 54.7 x 76.56 cm; comp 43.4 x 68.2 cm
Signed and dated below image, printed, 'PAINTED AND ENGRAVED BY JOHN MARTIN London Published May 9 1827 by Mr Martin 30 Allsops Buildings New Road (a coat of arms is engraved in the centre of this dedication)'
Inscribed l.r. pencil, 'John Martin K.I.B. 1789–1854'
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Felton Bequest 1927
- 12 JOHN MARTIN (1789–1854)
The Fall of Nineveh 1829
mezzotint
plate 67.3 x 91.3 cm; comp 53.7 x 81.0 cm
Signed and dated within image 'J Martin 1829'
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1960

John Martin achieved great popular acclaim in the 1820s with a series of paintings (later reproduced as prints) depicting cataclysmic events from antiquity and the Bible. His earliest success, *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still*, illustrates the Old Testament account of Joshua's defeat of his enemies. In the later image of *The Fall of Nineveh*, Martin shows King Sardanapalus preparing to immolate himself in the face of the advancing Persian army. Not surprisingly, this dramatic presentation considerably influenced contemporary productions of Byron's play, *Sardanapalus* during the 1830s.³⁰

The epic nature of these works separates them from the human scale and individual focus of later painters, such as

Alma-Tadema, Long and Poynter. But all four artists used the latest archaeological knowledge to imaginatively complete a nineteenth century vision of the past. Martin's works were often accompanied by pamphlets justifying the size of the buildings or his choice of architectural style. He drew on traditional literary sources (Herodotus and the Bible) as well as modern scholarship such as Denon's *Description d' Egypt* (1809–1828) and *Pompeiana* (1817–1832) of Gell and Gandy.³¹ Spectacular panoramas at London's Egyptian Hall and recent finds, such as the head of Rameses II at the British Museum, were also sources of inspiration.³²

- 13 after EDWARD J POYNTER (1836–1919)
The Queen of Sheba's Visit to King Solomon 1894
etching and photogravure after E J Poynter, R A *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* 1890
63.8 x 86.7 cm
Inscribed below image and printed 'executed and published by Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd London Paris Berlin New York and Montreal Publishers to their Majesties the King and Queen and their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales', 'THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT TO KING SOLOMON/ From the original picture belonging to the National Art Gallery of New South Wales to the Trustees of which this plate is respectfully dedicated'
Collection: Alison Inglis

Four years after the completion of Poynter's monumental painting, *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* (1890), a large reproductive print of the work was published in 1894. Of particular interest to the contemporary critics was the accuracy with which the artist had reconstructed the setting of this fabled confrontation. A pamphlet written to accompany the painting's exhibition

emphasised that Poynter had drawn upon the *Book of Kings* to sketch out the interior of Solomon's palace. But this brief Biblical account only mentioned general features, such as the stone foundations, the pillars and beams of cedar, the gold and brass decoration, and the King's great ivory throne flanked by twelve lions. The artist supplemented this written material with physical evidence culled from the recent archaeological discoveries in Syria, Assyria and Persia, which ranged from architectural ornament to furniture and artefacts. For all other elements, the artist drew upon his own formidable scholarship and imagination. As one contemporary critic observed, the painting's subject 'is above all things pictorial, and modern archaeology has at least given scope for a great deal of plausible guessing as to what "Solomon in all his glory" was really like.'³³

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 14 FRANCIS FRITH (1822–1898)
Gateway of Ptolemy Euergetes I, Karnac (B C 245)
albumen photograph
23.1 x 18.6 cm
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria
Presented by E Thompson Esq
- 15 FRANCIS FRITH (1822–1898)
Entrance to the Great Temple, Luxor 1857
albumen photograph
16.4 x 23.2 cm
Signed, dated and numbered in negative l.r.
'Frith E No 33/1857'
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria
Presented by E Thompson Esq
- 16 FRANCIS FRITH (1822–1898)
The great fallen Colossus Osivide pillows the Memnonium
albumen photograph
15.2 x 22.8 cm
Signed and numbered in negative l.l. 'Frith E No 58'
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria
Presented by E Thompson Esq
- 17 MAY MOORE (1881–1931)
Francesco Zeni in a scene from Melba's Opera 1911
gelatin silver print
19.9 x 13.3 cm
Collection: State Library of Victoria
May and Mina Moore Collection
Gift of Mrs M Manders 1977
- 18 JAMES ROBERTSON (fl 1830–1865)
Erectheum Caraytides Athens (1857)
salted paper photograph; plate no 17 from the album,
Photographs of Spain, Greece, Turkey and Malta, 1857–60
31.0 x 25.7cm
- 19 JAMES ROBERTSON (fl 1830–1865)
Erectheum Athens (1857)
albumen photograph; plate no 16 from the album,
Photographs of Spain, Greece, Turkey and Malta, 1857–60
22.7 x 29.7 cm
printed for and published by the Architectural
Photographic Association
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria
Purchased 1860
- 20 GIORGIO SOMMER (1834–1914)
Bakers Oven and Mills Pompeii c1860
albumen print; sheet 27 from *Album of 126 albumen paper prints of Ceylon Egypt Italy and France*, compiled 1882–3 by Henry Coathupe-Mais (1827–1902)
sheet 45.4 x 57.0 cm; comp 28.6 x 38.2 cm
Signed l.r., printed 'G Sommer – Napoli'
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria
- 21 GIORGIO SOMMER (1834–1914)
House of Cornelius Rufus Pompeii c1860
albumen print; sheet 37 from *Album of 126 albumen paper prints of Ceylon Egypt Italy and France*, compiled 1882–3 by Henry Coathupe-Mais (1827–1902)
sheet 45.4 x 57.0 cm; comp 28.5 x 38.4cm
printed on photograph l.r. 'G Sommer – Napoli'
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria
- 22 UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER
Four images from Pompeii comprising House of Marcus Lucretius 1864; House of Diomedes; House of Oleonio; House of Orphee
albumen print; sheet 38 from *Album of 126 albumen paper prints of Ceylon Egypt Italy and France*, compiled 1882–3 by Henry Coathupe-Mais (1827–1902)
sheet 45.4 x 57.0 cm
Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria

23 UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER
**Four images from Pompeii comprising
 Dog 1878; Woman 1868; Interior of the temple
 of Mercury; Bed**

albumen print; sheet 41 from Album of 126 albumen paper
 prints of Ceylon Egypt Italy and France, compiled 1882–3 by
 Henry Coathupe-Mais (1827–1902)
 each sheet 45.4 x 57.0 cm
 Collection: LaTrobe Picture Collection,
 State Library of Victoria

FURNITURE

24 LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA, designer (1836–1912)
 Johnstone Norman and Co, manufacturer, London
Armchair (1884–1887) [PLATE 5]

sandalwood and ebony case inlaid with cedar
 and boxwood encrusted with ivory coral and mother-
 of-pearl
 90.2 x 57.3 cm
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Purchased 1981

This magnificent chair was designed by Lawrence
 Alma-Tadema for the American millionaire and patron of
 the arts, Henry Gurdon Marquand (1819–1902). In 1884,
 Marquand commissioned Alma-Tadema to decorate the
 music room of his New York mansion in the ‘Graeco-
 Roman’ style. An important part of this project was the
 suite of furniture – including couches, chairs, stools, a
 cabinet and tables – which was executed in a range of exotic
 woods and inlays by the firm of Messrs Johnstone, Norman
 and Co, of London.

Alma-Tadema’s furniture fuses elements from a variety
 of classical and historical styles. Terence Lane has pointed
 out that the armchairs were intended primarily to be seen
 from behind, with the result that attention was focused on
 their backs: ‘these became the vehicle for an extravagant
 display of scrolling and spiralling plant forms, executed in
 ivory and boxwood, drawn from South Italian vases.’³⁴

The armchair’s distinctive red-brown, black and white
 colour scheme has been compared to ‘Etruscan’ vases.
 Other possible sources for the overall design include ‘an
 antique porphyry bathing chair from the Vatican Museum, a
 photograph of which exist[ed] in Alma-Tadema’s reference
 collection’ (fig 9).³⁵ Ultimately, however, the chair was not
 intended as an historical reproduction but represented an
 imaginative expression of the Graeco-Roman spirit. As one
 contemporary critic declared: ‘To find furniture of equal
 beauty and intelligence of design and equal choiceness of

material and workmanship, we should have to combine the
 palmy days of Greek art with the luxury of the Roman Empire
 at its best period of taste.’³⁶

25 THOMAS HOPE, designer (1769–1831)
A pair of Pole Screens (early 19th century)
 carved rosewood with gilt ornament
 151.2 x 29.5 cm
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Felton Bequest 1953

Thomas Hope is recognised as one of the most
 important figures in the development of the English Regency
 style, and especially, in the promotion of an archaeological
 taste for the antique. His theories on interior design were
 popularised by his book, *Household Furniture and Interior
 Decoration*. Executed from *Designs by Thomas Hope* (1807).

Hope first designed ‘antique’ pole fire-screens for his
 famous Duchess Street residence and they are shown in situ
 in his *Household Furniture* (plate six) (fig 12).³⁷ The pole fire-
 screens are decidedly Roman in spirit, with Jove’s ‘Fulmen’
 adorning the surface of the shield-shaped screens.³⁸ Hope
 always emphasised the classical sources of his motifs and
 contemporary reviewers drew attention to the archaeological
 character of the Duchess Street interiors. The furnishings

FIG 9
Porphyry bathing chair in the Vatican Museum
 photograph from Alma-Tadema’s collection,
 University of Birmingham (XI, 7975)



FIG 11
 THOMAS HOPE (designer)
A pair of Pole Screens (early 19th century)
 Cat no 25

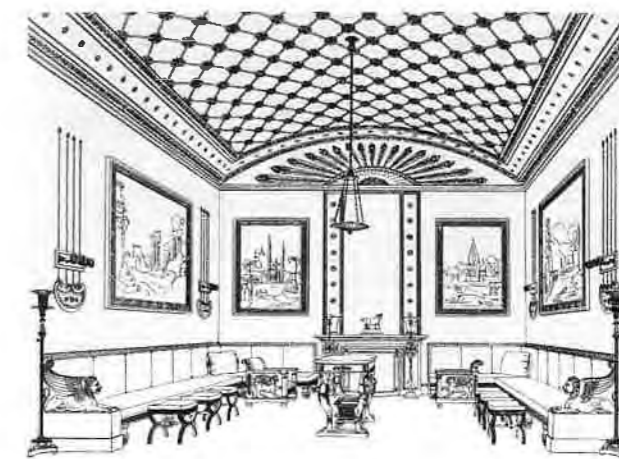
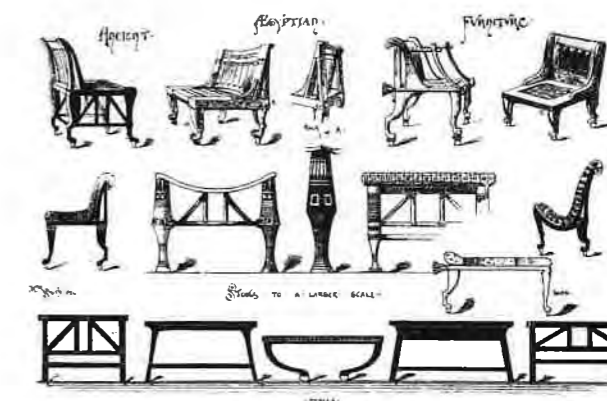


FIG 12
 THOMAS HOPE
Household furniture and interior decoration (1807)
 (plate six)

26 WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT, designer (1827–1910)
 Gillow & Co, manufacturer, Lancaster
Chair c1860 [PLATE 6]
 ebonised wood, cane
 84.0h x 48.5w x 49.3 cm d
 Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
 Gift of an anonymous donor, 1983

The Pre-Raphaelite artist, William Holman Hunt, first
 attempted furniture design in the 1850s. He later wrote of
 this experiment:

FIG 13
 J MOYR SMITH ‘Aegyptian furniture’
 in *Building News*, 17 December 1875



were not replicas, however, so much as creative reinventions,
 with the translation from ancient original to modern copy
 usually involving changes in scale and materials – for
 example, stone or bronze being transformed into wood or
 painted marble.³⁹ Furthermore, as Terence Lane has
 observed, when no antique precedent existed for a
 contemporary object such as a fire-screen, then ‘considerable
 ingenuity was exercised in the concoction of a convincing
 substitute.’⁴⁰

In the case of the pole fire-screen, Hope adopted the
 metaphor of antique weaponry: the screen was based on a
 Roman soldier’s shield, the pole a javelin. But this
 imaginative solution proved quite controversial, with some
 critics welcoming ‘the idea ... that a warrior has suspended
 his shield on a spear, and placed it to defend female
 beauty,’⁴¹ while others queried its archaeological accuracy.
 One scholar, for example, complained that ‘the artist has by
 mistake made the spear like a modern tilting spear’.⁴²



FIG 14
LIBERTY & CO
Stool 1884 (c1900)
Cat no 27

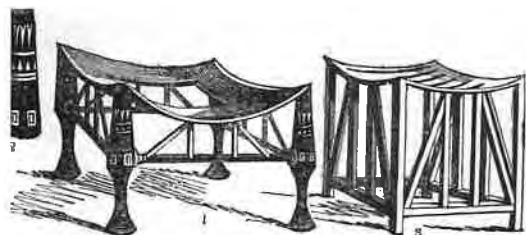
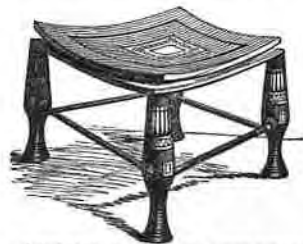


Fig. 1. Stool in Mr. Salt's Collection, of ebony inlaid with ivory.
2. Shows the inlaid parts of the legs.
3. Of ordinary construction, in the same collection.

No. 164.



No. 164 a. A stool with leather cushion in Mr. Salt's Collection.

FIG 15
G Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*,
[1837] Vol II 1862, p197

In furnishing my new house I was determined, as far as possible, to eschew the vulgar furniture of the day. Articles for constant practical use were somewhat regulated by necessity ... but a more independent effort was the designing of a chair based on the character of an Egyptian Stool in the British Museum to serve as a permanent piece of beautiful furniture.⁴³

Hunt first designed two Egyptian-inspired chairs in 1856–57 following his visit to the Middle East in search of material for his Biblical paintings. The artist based his design upon the distinctive silhouette of an ancient Thebes stool in the British Museum, to which he added a chair-back decorated with lotus motifs.

Hunt's chair inspired similar furniture designs by several of his artist friends and variants appear in a number of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and drawings. Commercial versions also appeared on the market, such as this ebonised chair by Gillow and Co of c1860, which lacked the exotic ornament but retained the elegant formal design.

- 27 LIBERTY & CO
Stool 1884 (c1900)
mahogany and beech
35.5 x 44.3 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Purchased 1986

During the later nineteenth century, the convention-alised ornament and 'honest' construction of ancient Egyptian furniture attracted the attention of many reformist designers, architects and artists, including Holman Hunt, E W Godwin and Adolf Loos (fig 13). A much-copied example was the famous Thebes stool in the British Museum,⁴⁴ which was widely known through texts such as J G Wilkinson's influential *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837). (fig 15)

Recent scholars have pointed to the assimilation of Egyptian motifs and outlines into the 'art furniture' of the Aesthetic Movement during the 1880s.⁴⁵ For instance, Liberty and Co patented a design based on the Thebes stool in 1884 as one of the first products of their new Furnishing and Decorating Studio, established under Leonard Wyburd.⁴⁶ The firm had branches in Paris and Berlin, and the stool became popular throughout Europe. This particular example once belonged to Mr Bertram Killingsworth, who was the Accountant and then Secretary of Liberty & Co prior to World War II.

- 28 UNKNOWN MAKER
after Thebes Stool (c1900)
wood
37.5 x 38.0 cm
Collection: Caroline Williams Mora

- 29 UNKNOWN MAKER
after E W GODWIN (1833–1886)
Coffee or Occasional Table (c1880s)
ebonised wood and gold leaf
66.0h x 43.0w x 43.0 cm d
Private Collection

This elegant ebonised table with its strong emphasis on formal design is typical of the Aesthetic Movement. Only the faintest echo of the original Egyptian source is discernible in the angle of the lattice bracing. The table is a copy of a popular coffee table by the art-architect, E W Godwin. In his book, *Art Furniture* (1877), E W Godwin complained that his designs were becoming so popular

as to be copied by others in the trade but have unfortunately been travestied even caricatured in the process. A marked example of this is the square coffee table ... The lines and dimensions of the different parts of what seems to be a very simple bit of furniture constitute its beauty and its art – if it has any. But I have seen the lines changed, the proportions altered, until that which I regard as beauty became to me an offence and an eyesore.⁴⁷

DECORATIVE ARTS

- 30 BATTAM & SON (fl 1830–1870s)
Copy of an Athenian Red-Figure Column Krater (c1850s)
earthenware
39.3h x 35.8w x 29.5 cm d
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Presented by Capt Andrew Clarke RE, 1862
- 31 BATTAM & SON (fl 1830–1870s)
Copy of a Campanian Red-figure Hydria (c1850s)
earthenware
42h x 37w x 31.1 cm d
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Presented by Capt Andrew Clarke R E, 1862

These impressive copies of red-figure vases were produced by the London firm of Battam & Son, which was famous for its imitations of 'Etruscan' vases.⁴⁸ At the Great Exhibition of 1851, their wares were praised as 'imitations .. of rare excellence; in many cases indeed, they cannot be distinguished, except upon minute scrutiny, from the original.'⁴⁹ The emphasis upon archaeological accuracy even extended to issues of display, with the company's stall at the exhibition taking the form of a 'fac-simile of an Etruscan Tomb, [with] the various niches containing their urns.'⁵⁰

The Victorians inherited the eighteenth century's enthusiasm for ancient Greek pottery, which they too regarded as exemplars of good art and design. Moreover, the success of Wedgwood's Etruscan-inspired wares had underlined the economic benefits to be gained from introducing artists and designers to collections of ancient ceramics.

These two vases belonged to 'a fine group of imitation Etruscan vases' donated to Melbourne's Public Art Gallery by Captain Andrew Clarke in 1862 expressly 'to encourage the manufacture of pottery and the finer kinds of the ceramic ware' in the colony.⁵¹ The large Athenian Red-Figure Column-Krater illustrates the Death of Procris, and is an exact replica of an original Attic vase by the Hephaistos Painter, dated c440–430 BC, in the British Museum.⁵² The other vase, a hydria, has been identified as a copy of a Campanian red-figure example which was once in the Hamilton collection but is now lost. The nineteenth century designer probably would have known this vase from Tischbein's famous engravings of the collection (vol III, plate 40).

- 32 attributed A HAYS, designer (fl 1865–1880s)
W T Copeland & Sons Ltd, manufacturer
Vase in the form of an Assyrian Head 1868
porcelain, 13.9h x 6.1w x 8.3 cm d
Signed reverse base, impressed 'COPELAND/1/3'
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Purchased 1981

The Assyrian vase reflects the enormous impact of Layard's archaeological discoveries on British designers and decorative artists. Paul Atterbury claims that the features of the Assyrian head are based on 'one of the figures guarding the Palace portals' in the collection of the British Museum. In another version of this vase, dated 1882, the plinth is impressed with the letters: 'NIMROD'.⁶⁰

- 33 A HAYS, designer (fl 1865–1880s)
W T Copeland & Sons Ltd, manufacturer
Sardanapalus 662BC 1881
porcelain
height 30.6 cm
Signed reverse base, impressed 'COPELAND F 81'
Collection: Dr Robert Wilson

This splendid porcelain statuette belongs to a set of eight parian figures and ornaments inspired by objects in the Assyrian Sculpture Galleries at the British Museum. The pieces were modelled by A Hays, an employee in the Museum's Oriental Department, who had ready access to these recently excavated objects.

The figures of Sardanapalus and his Queen were first issued in January 1865, when a notice in the *Illustrated London News* announced that:

A pair of statuettes, from the figures of Sardanapalus and his Queen, in one of the Assyrian bas-reliefs, now in the British Museum, have been modelled by Mr A Hays, of Hans Place, and executed in porcelain. They are a faithful version of the original.⁶¹

The scholar, H C Rawlinson, was one of the first to associate the early Assyrian King, Ashurnasirpal I, with the historical and literary figure, 'Sardanapalus the Great'.⁶² This identification was widespread during the Victorian period, with various mid-century theatrical productions of Byron's *Sardanapalus* featuring stage sets inspired by the British Museum's Assyrian collection.⁶³

- 34 MINTON & CO
Mermaid Jug 1868
parian ware white and celadon ceramic
height 18.5 cm
Collection: Dr Robert Wilson

This fanciful reworking of a Pompeian ewer or askos was one of a number of Minton ornamental wares inspired by antique and Renaissance models. The askos' distinctive shape was retained, but the austerity of the original has been transformed by the addition of the mermaid handle. In an article on the Naples Museum collection, the *Art Journal* emphasised the value of Pompeian objects like the askos as 'singularly graceful and beautiful souvenirs of a brilliant epoch, admirable as models of design, and possessing a perennial charm for all who can appreciate pure and harmonious form, even though the objects themselves are only those of daily and common life'.⁵⁸

During the period 1850s–1880s, Minton and Company produced the *Mermaid Jug* in a majolica version as well as celadon tinted and glazed parian ware.⁵⁹

- 35 SILBER AND FLEMING, LONDON
Etched glass bowl with lid c1882
glass acid etched with Egyptian motifs
with metalwork lid
15.5 x 12.5 cm
Collection: Dr Robert Wilson

This etched glass bowl, decorated with stylised motifs of sphinxes and lotus plants, was part of an Egyptian service, commercially produced by the firm of Silber and Fleming during the 1880s. The Egyptian service appeared in the firm's catalogues for the years c1882–1884, and included table glass, two decanters, a jug, a vase and finger bowl.⁵⁶ The Egyptian theme is thought to have been inspired by London's *Cleopatra's Needle*, which was erected on the Victoria Embankment in 1878. This ancient obelisk was flanked by a pair of Egyptian-revival bronze sphinxes, installed in 1880.⁵⁷

- 36 WEDGWOOD
Vase and cover c1815
stoneware (basalt)
(a) 27.8h x 11.1w x 11.0 cm d
(b) 3.6h x 3.5 cm d; overall height: 28.0 cm
Signed reverse base, impressed 'WEDGWOOD'
Inscribed reverse base, red paint '279'
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Mr Keith M Deutscher, Founder, Benefactor 1993

The decoration on this shield-shaped vase is executed in Wedgwood's 'encaustic technique' of matt red and white. This attempt to duplicate the appearance of ancient Greek red-figure wares was not limited to the colour scheme but also extended to the subject matter. The figure of the draped youth with a staff and strigil is derived from one of the vases in the celebrated Hamilton collection – which would have been known to Wedgwood through the publications of d'Hancarville.⁵³

- 37 WEDGWOOD
Canopic vase (19th century)
stoneware (green jasper dip)
15.7h x 13.3 cm d; 11.8h x 11.3 cm d;
overall height: 26.2 cm
Signed reverse base, impressed 'WEDGWOOD
(with a semi-circle)'
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Mrs Norma Deutscher, Governor, 1993

This vase is modelled after an ancient Egyptian Canopic jar, with a cover in the form of a head in Egyptian headdress. The white cover with green details is set on a green-dipped body with white reliefs of hieroglyphs and the signs of the Zodiac. Stylised plant forms and a row of triangles extend the variety of the ornamental motifs.⁵⁴

The Canopic vase shape was first introduced during the Wedgwood and Bentley period (c1768–80), and drew upon a design in B de Montfaucon's influential *L'Antiquité Expliquée* (1719–24). The 'hieroglyphs' on the vase are purely decorative, reflecting the fact that 'Wedgwood's designs [were] based on the work of compilers who had not visited Egypt themselves.'⁵⁵ The vase's popularity ensured that it was reissued throughout the nineteenth century.

JEWELLERY

- 38 UNKNOWN MAKER
in the style of JOHN BRODGEN
Pendant c1860
gold setting with an ancient Babylonian haematite seal
of the 19th c B C
5.4 x 3.6 cm
Collection: Mary Titchener Jewels

- 39 ANTONIO CARLI (1830–1870)
Pendant c1870
gold pendant in the form of a roman lamp decorated with filigree on an Etruscan-inspired mesh chain with three colour gold fitting chain
0.8h x 3.3w x 2.0 cm d; chain 57cm
Collection: Mary Titchener Jewels

- 40 UNKNOWN MAKER
Brooch c1920
blue Egyptian faience scarab in gold setting, wings encrusted with diamonds, rubies and emeralds
1.2 x 4.2 cm
Collection: Mary Titchener Jewels

- 41 UNKNOWN MAKER (Dutch)
Neo-Etruscan necklace c1860
gold
45.0 cm
Collection: Mary Titchener Jewels

- 42 UNKNOWN MAKER (English)
Brooch c1870
pale pink coral scarab in gold setting with applied wirework
3.0 x 1.5 cm
Private Collection

- 43 UNKNOWN MAKER
boxed by Garrard, London
**Etruscan style scarab pendant inset
in border of ram's head** c1885
labradorite cameo carved in form of scarab,
gold and diamonds
6.0 x 3.0 cm
Collection: Mary Titchener Jewels

The association between archaeology and jewellery design was a particularly close one in the mid-nineteenth century when the fashion for antique jewellery was at its height. Closely associated with this revival was the Italian firm of Castellani, which was highly respected for their antiquarian and technical knowledge. In 1861, Alessandro Castellani lectured to the Archaeological Institute, and later published a pamphlet on ancient jewellery finishes and joining techniques.⁶⁴ In 1863, the architect-designer, William Burges praised Castellani for his role in reviving archaeological designs, declaring 'everybody must thank the Roman goldsmith for at last giving the nineteenth century some

jewellery that nobody need be ashamed to wear. At the present time every goldsmith's shop in London displays "Etruscan jewellery".⁶⁵

Other important jewellers producing similar work were the London-based firms of Carlo Guiliano (c1831–1895), John Brogden (fl1842–1885) and Robert Phillips (1810–1881).⁶⁶ Some of Guiliano's most impressive pieces incorporated ancient Egyptian scarabs and faience into contemporary settings. Phillips was commissioned by Layard, the famous archaeologist, to create a necklace from twelve Babylonian seals brought back from Nineveh. Brogden also incorporated original Egyptian and Assyrian artefacts into his settings.

Of all the fragments of the ancient world, jewellery was the most readily translatable into contemporary experience. In this exhibition, Long, Poynter and Schmalz all rely on jewellery and costume to suggest authenticity despite the fact that many of their pieces are imaginative evocations of ancient designs rather than copies of ancient originals.

CASTS

- 44 UNKNOWN MAKER
The Assyrian Frieze – King Ashurnasirpal II hunting lions, Assyrian palace relief
 plaster
 89.0 x 131.0 cm
 Collection: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

The Assyrian or so-called 'Nimroud Collection' of friezes was acquired by the Melbourne Public Library in 1860.⁶⁷ It formed part of a substantial collection of casts that had been specifically acquired to illustrate 'the historic development of art.'⁶⁸ This ambitious plan can be compared to other systematic collections of casts being established in Europe at that time. As Peter Connor has demonstrated, these collections can be divided into two groups, one associated with 'universities and with a disciplined programme of instruction in classical archaeology;' the other, related to 'training in art and design and the education of public taste.'⁶⁹

- 45 UNKNOWN MAKER
Plaque after the Helios Metope (19th century)
 plaster in oak frame glazed
 68.0h x 68.0w x 11.0 cm d
 Private Collection

MISCELLANEOUS

- 46 UNKNOWN MAKER
Inkstand in the form of a Sarcophagus (early 19th century)
 Siena marble
 10.4h x 27.1w x 10.0 cm d; 7.5h x 10.2w x 5.8 cm d;
 2.4 x 5.7 cm d
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Gift of Colonel Smith before 1865

- 47 UNKNOWN MAKER
Miniature of the Temple of Vespasian the God in the Forum at Rome, on black marble plinth (early 19th century)
 rosso antico and black marble
 36.3h x 12.30w x 12.30 cm d
 Inscribed in gold lettering, 'ESTITVER'
 Collection: Caroline Williams Mora

This curious marble inkstand and the model of a ruined Temple from the Roman Forum⁷⁰ are typical of the 'antique' souvenirs specially manufactured during the nineteenth century to meet the demands of the burgeoning tourist market.

An inventory of the National Gallery of Victoria for 1871 included two 'Sarcophagi in Sienna(sic) marble, from Rome' and a marble miniature of the Tomb of Scipio. All three works were catalogued under the heading: 'Models and Curiosities'.⁷¹

- 48 **Pieces of tessellated pavement, from Italica (ancient Seville)**
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Gift of Sir Redmond Barry, 1877

- 49 **Tesserae from Pompeii**
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Gift of Sir Redmond Barry, 1877

- 50 **Three small bricks from Roman mines**
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Gift of Sir Redmond Barry, 1877

- 51 **Chickpeas, charred remnants found in the burnt portion of the ancient city of Troy in 1879**
 Collection: National Gallery of Victoria
 Gift of Mr Soturos Domeyer, 1889

- 52 NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA
Stockbook D 1A (Antiquities)
 manuscript

Collection: National Gallery of Victoria

Though small, these historical specimens were charged with the significance of the great archaeological excavations being undertaken in Europe and the Middle East. Charles Dickens mockingly described one middle class home in *Little Dorrit*, as being stuffed full of 'antiquities from Central Italy, ... bits of mummy from Egypt (and perhaps Birmingham); ... morsels of tessellated pavement from Herculaneum and Pompeii.'⁷²

All four items entered the National Gallery of Victoria's collection during the period 1875 to 1890, and were categorised under the special heading 'Antiquities'. The ancient Roman examples were presented by the President of Trustees, Sir Redmond Barry, who was a passionate advocate of the classical tradition.⁷³ The 'Charred Chickpeas from Troy' had an even more illustrious provenance, being described in the Gallery's Stockbook as: 'found in the burnt portion of the ancient city of Troy in 1879 [and] Presented by Mr Soturos Domeyer, overseer to Dr Schliemann.'⁷⁴

CATALOGUE ENDNOTES

- 1 *The Vintage Festival*, oil on canvas, 77 x 177 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg. The National Gallery of Victoria's version was produced for the purpose of engraving.
- 2 Zimmern, 1886, pp14–15
- 3 Becker et al, 1996, p15
- 4 Unless otherwise indicated, the following list of objects was identified by Prof Frank Sear, The University of Melbourne
- 5 Identified and discussed in Becker et al, 1996, p160
- 6 For example, Dyer, 1875, p206
- 7 Illustrated in Dyer, 1875, p206: *Flute-player, from a painting at Pompeii*
- 8 Identified in Ash, 1989, plate 4
- 9 Free, 1975, p14
- 10 Dyer, 1875, reproduced p416
- 11 Zimmern, 1886, p19. Berenice's features were based on a bust in the Naples Museum. A version is in the National Gallery of Victoria (bronze, 69.7 x 36.6 cm, purchased 1982.)
- 12 Descoedres et al, 1994, pp44–47
- 13 Williard, 1900, p583
- 14 Waldmann, 1984, np
- 15 See chapter on Pompeian baths in Dyer, 1875, pp153–187
- 16 Letter dated 10 May 1878, Correspondence from A T Thomson and Sir James McCulloch, PRO Victoria Laverton 4363 unit 8 letter 7.
- 17 A T Thomson Letter 10 May 1878, PRO Victoria Laverton 4363 unit 8 letter 7
- 18 *Art Journal*, 1879, p127
- 19 Bills 1998, pp 137–139
- 20 *Portfolio*, 1881, p103; *Times*, 6 June 1881, p4
- 21 Traill, 1996, p205
- 22 Gere and Munn, 1989, p82
- 23 *Times*, 6 June 1881, p4
- 24 *South Australian Register*, 10 November, 1890, p6
- 25 Ellmann, 1975, p245
- 26 Spielmann, 1891, p.220
- 27 Harrison, 1883, pp133–136; Turner, 1981, p123
- 28 in *Tarquinius*, published in *Notizie degli Scavi* in 1880
- 29 Information kindly provided by Dr Elizabeth Pemberton, The University of Melbourne
- 30 Meisel, 1983, p174
- 31 Denon, 1809–1828; Gell and Gandy, 1817–32
- 32 See Feaver, 1975
- 33 *Times*, 17 May 1890, p17
- 34 [National Gallery of Victoria], 1981, p18
- 35 Treuherz, in Becker et al, 1996, p50
- 36 Moyr Smith, 1887, p95
- 37 The pole firescreen also illustrated separately (*Household Furniture*, plate 18, fig2), revealing minor discrepancies between the exhibited piece and the published design.
- 38 The Fulmen is generally 'a double cone of flame, with lightning on each side, or frequently with wings.' Mollett, 1994, p147
- 39 Collard, 1995, pp 55–56, 91
- 40 Lane, 1980, p69
- 41 Watkin, 1968, pp216–17
- 42 Francis Douce, cited in Thornton and Watkin, 1987, p166
- 43 Beevers, 1983, p84
- 44 Egyptian Stool, XVIII Dynasty (c1552–1314 or 1295 B C), British Museum EA2472 See Humbert et al, 1994, p341
- 45 Beevers, 1983, p86
- 46 Calloway, 1992, pp74–76
- 47 Aslin, 1986, pp27–28
- 48 The vases were not, of course, Etruscan but Greek – albeit excavated in Italy
- 49 Gloag, 1970, p18
- 50 Gloag, 1970, p247
- 51 *Report of the Trustees*, 1871, p69. Both vases illustrated in the *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Art and Industry*, Dublin 1853, p15
- 52 BM E477. Information kindly provided by Dr Ian McPhee, Latrobe University
- 53 Legge, 1995, p56. P d'Hancarville, *Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Honble Wm Hamilton ...*, Naples, (1766–67) vol 1, plate 74
- 54 Information kindly provided by Margaret Legge, National Gallery of Victoria
- 55 Connor, 1983, p21; Legge, 1995, p62
- 56 Silber and Fleming, *The Silber and Fleming Glass and China Book*, [1882], p124
- 57 Curl, 1994, pp199–200; Humbert et al, 1994, p475
- 58 Wallis, 1889, p315
- 59 Information kindly provided by Dr Robert Wilson
- 60 Atterbury, 1989, fig 569
- 61 'Fine Arts', *Illustrated London News*, 2 January 1865 p74
- 62 Jenkins, 1992, p164
- 63 Meisel, 1984, pp181–82
- 64 Munn, 1984, p35
- 65 Burges, 1863, p406
- 66 For Guiliano, Brogden and Phillips, see Munn, 1984; Bury, 1990, (vol II, 1862–1910)
- 67 *Report of the Trustees*, 1871, p43
- 68 Galbally, 1988, p30
- 69 Connor, 1989, p211
- 70 Information kindly provided by Prof Frank Sear
- 71 *Report of the Trustees*, 1871, p33
- 72 quoted in Pemble, 1988, p6
- 73 see Galbally 1988
- 74 Stockbook Number One, National Gallery of Victoria, n.d., p30

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Queens & Sirens

Archaeology in 19th Century Art and Design

Geelong Art Gallery

26 September until 1 November 1998

Exhibition curators: Alison Inglis and Jennifer Long

Catalogue published by Geelong Art Gallery

Little Malop Street, Geelong, Victoria, 3220

August 1998 ISBN 1 875237 24 0

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Acknowledgments

Alison Inglis and Jennifer Long would like to thank the Acting Director, Ann Carew, the Registrar, Veronica Filmer and the Development Officer, Sue Ernst for their support in the realisation of this project. They would also like to acknowledge the following people who have provided so much generous assistance and advice: Mr Laurie Benson, Ms Sonia Dean, Mr Michæl Galimany, Mr Gerard Hayes, Mr Terence Lane, Ms Margaret Legge, Ms Dianne McLeod, Dr Ian McPhee, Ms Caroline Williams Mora, Ms Wendy Nichol, Dr Elizabeth Pemberton, Assoc Prof A Sagona, Prof Frank Sear, Ms Susie Shears, Ms Mary Titchener, Mr Angus Trumble, Mr Michael Watson, Mr Robert Wilson, and Ms Irena Zdanowicz

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Catalogue design:

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Colour Reproduction and Printing:

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