

CIVILISATIONS

JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY AND EXPLORE THE ART OF DIFFERENT CIVILISATIONS OF THE WORLD



TUTANKHAMUN'S TREASURES: SCARAB
c. 1332–1323 BCE

This protective pendant in the form of a scarab (made of gold, lapis lazuli, amber and other stones) is one of many found in the tomb of Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, discovered in 1922. Tutankhamun was a Pharaoh of ancient Egypt from about 1332 BCE to 1323 BCE.



BYZANTINE ICON OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL
c. 10TH CENTURY

This 10th century gold and enamel Byzantine icon of St Michael is in the treasury of St Mark's Basilica, Venice. As an 'archangel', he is a leader of all angels and of the army of God. In the New Testament he successfully leads God's armies against Satan's forces.



THE SUTTON HOO HELMET
EARLY 7TH CENTURY

The Sutton Hoo helmet is widely believed to have belonged to the Anglo Saxon King Rædwald. It was discovered during the 1939 excavation of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial. Buried around 625, its elaborate decoration suggests a function almost akin to a crown.



THE SALTING CARPET
1550–1600

Made in Iran, this carpet was brought to England by the art collector G. Salting. Made of hand-knotted woollen pile, silk warp and weft and metal thread, 14 colours were used, and the borders include inscriptions taken from verses written by the 14th century poet Hafiz.



TERRACOTTA WARRIOR
c. 210–209 BCE

Discovered in 1974 in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, the Terracotta Army is made up of a large collection of terracotta sculptures depicting warriors, chariots and horses from the army of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China. It is a form of funerary art, and was buried with the emperor in 210–209 BCE.



THE TURQUOISE MOSAICS: MASK
1400–1521

Excavated in Mexico, the face on this mask is thought to represent Xuhcoatl, the Aztec God of fire. It is made of cedar wood and covered in turquoise mosaic with scattered turquoise cabochons. The eyes are mother of pearl and the teeth are made of conch shell.



MALCOLM JAGAMARRA: WANTAPIRI
2002

Karingarra painting, like some other forms of Australian aboriginal art, draws on 'dreamings' – indigenous myths that have profound social implications. The images often depict animal shapes and tracking patterns to denote activities such as walking, dreaming and hunting.



MOSQUE LAMP OF AMIR QAWSUN
c. 1329–1335

Large glass lamps of this type were commissioned by sultans and members of their court for mosques, madrasas (Qur'anic schools), and other public buildings in fourteenth century Mamluk Cairo. This example was probably intended for a mosque or tomb-hospice in Cairo.



FAYUM PAINTING
c. 120–150

This portrait of a girl comes from the Fayum oasis, a wealthy district on the left bank of the Nile south of Cairo, Egypt. It is a type of painting known as a 'Fayum mummy portrait', as most of them were recovered painted on board and wrapped up in the burial linens of ancient mummies.



BENIN PLAQUE - NIGERIA
16TH–17TH CENTURY

The Benin Plaques are a series of brass casts using the 'cire perdue' (lost wax) technique, made by the Edo people. This plaque depicts a king with four attendants. The king is elaborately dressed in a high beaded choker, necklace and beaded cap with feathers and pendants.



AI WEIWEI: CIRCLE OF ANIMALS – DRAGON HEAD
2010

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei created two versions of his *Circle of Animals*: a large (bronze) and small (gold plated) series. They are based on the twelve bronze animal heads representing the traditional Chinese zodiac in the gardens of Yuanming Yuan, an imperial retreat in Beijing used by members of the Qing Dynasty.



VINCENT VAN GOGH: SUNFLOWERS
1888

This is one of four paintings of sunflowers in thick impasto, dating from 1888. Sunflowers had a special significance for Dutch artist Van Gogh, and he intended to decorate Paul Gauguin's room with these paintings in the so-called 'Yellow House' that he rented in Arles in the South of France.



TIPU'S TIGER (MECHANICAL ORGAN)
c. 1793

Tipu's Tiger was made for Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore in South India (1782–1799), who was fascinated with mechanical toys. The almost life-size wooden semi-automaton consists of a tiger mauling a prostrate figure, most likely a British soldier of the East India company called a 'redcoat'.



STATUE OF SNAKE GOD NAGA
12TH CENTURY

This is a sculpture of the seven-headed Hindu snake god Naga at the Cambodian temple of Angkor Wat. According to legend, the Naga were a reptilian race of beings under the King Kasyapa who possessed a large kingdom in the Pacific Ocean region.



DUTCH FLOWER HOLDER
1685–1700

Inspired by Chinese porcelain, this flower holder has dragon handles and fifteen spouts. Made of tin-glazed earthenware with a painted decoration of Chinese flowers and ornament in cobalt blue, it is attributed to a factory in Delft.



POT-BELLIED DRINKING JUG
c. 1500

Pot-bellied drinking jugs were common in Iran and Central Asia in the period 1400–1500. They were made in a wide variety of materials, including jade and precious metals. This silver jug was probably made in Istanbul at the end of the 15th century.



SHIVA AS LORD OF DANCE (NATARAJA)
c. 11TH CENTURY

This medieval bronze statue from India celebrates the Hindu God Shiva. It combines in a single image Shiva's roles as creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, and conveys the Indian conception of the never-ending cycle of time.



FRIDA KAHLO: SELF-PORTRAIT ALONG THE BORDER
1934

The Mexican artist Frida Kahlo painted this self-portrait against the border between Mexico and United States, while in Detroit in 1934. She wears a pink dress and stands between symbols of both cultures, including an Aztec pyramid and Mexican and North American landscapes.



GRIZZLY CLAW NECKLACE
1845

This necklace which belonged to the Iowa Chief 'The White Cloud' is made of grizzly bear claws, otter pelt and glass beads. It was repatriated from the Detroit Institute of Arts to the Iowa tribes of Kansas and Nebraska, and is now displayed at The Iowa Tribal Office and Museum.



OLMEC HEAD
1200–400 BCE

The Olmec colossal heads consist of at least seventeen monumental stone representations of human heads sculpted from large basalt boulders, found on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. They are thought to represent Olmec rulers of ancient Mesoamerica. This head is at La Venta museum-park, Villahermosa, Mexico.



TIBETAN BUDDHA
11TH–12TH CENTURY

This early Tibetan statue of Buddha is made of gilt copper. It shows Buddha meditating on his path toward Enlightenment. He gestures towards the earth with his right hand, an allusion to his defeat of the serpent Maya, who tried to interrupt his meditation.



DŌTAKU (BRONZE BELL)
1ST–2ND CENTURY

Dōtaku were bells used in Japan for about 400 years, and buried, singly, in pairs, and in large groups. They were occasionally buried with bronze mirrors and weapons in isolated locations, often on hilltops. They were included in rites to ensure a community's agricultural fertility.



FONSECA BUST
2ND CENTURY

Known as the Fonseca Bust, this sculpture depicts an aristocratic woman from the period of the Flavian dynasty in Rome, in the late 1st to the 2nd century A.D. The woman's finely sculpted features are accentuated by her tall, elaborate hairstyle.

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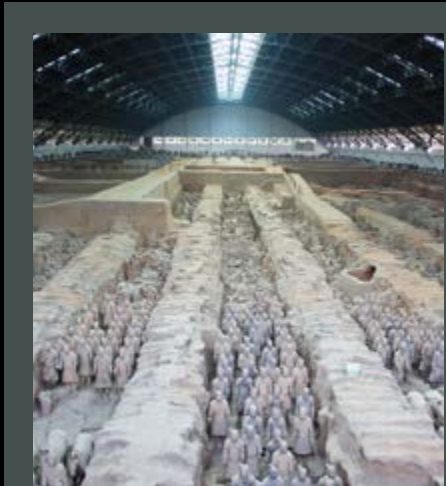
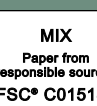
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THE TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

The organisation of the different pits followed a hierarchical organisation. Pit 1 contained the main army of more than 6,000 figures. It included 11 corridors, most of which were more than 3 metres wide and paved with small bricks, and had wooden ceilings covered with clay and reed mats. Pit 2 contained cavalry and infantry units and war chariots, and probably held the military guard. Pit 3 was the command post, containing high ranking officers and a war chariot. Pit 4 was found empty, perhaps unfinished.

THE TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

Discovered in 1974 in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, the Terracotta Army is made up of an extraordinary collection of terracotta sculptures depicting warriors, chariots and horses from the army of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China.

Buried with the Emperor in 210 BCE, these armies were believed to protect him in his afterlife. The Terracotta Army is thought to be part of a much larger necropolis covering an area of around 98 square miles. Some non-military figures were also found in other pits, including acrobats, musicians and officials. It is estimated that across the three pits containing the army, there were 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses. The scale is remarkable: so far, archaeologists and scientists using remote sensing radar have estimated a compound of almost 38 square miles.

BRIEF HISTORY

A pit full of terracotta warriors was first discovered in March 1974 by farmers digging for water in an area full of underground springs. Over the centuries, reports had mentioned finding terracotta fragments, including bits of roofing tiles and masonry. Digging revealed that the necropolis covered a very large area around the mausoleum of the first Emperor, and included a pyramidal tomb, offices, stables and an imperial park. The warriors stood guard to the east of the tomb, which was sealed and remains unopened due to concerns about preservation. Archaeologists have also found evidence of later graves from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries around the site. Most of the original figures originally held weapons such as swords, crossbows and shields. Some were found, but many were looted or rotted away. Archaeologists have suggested that some terracotta acrobats and bronze figures of ducks, swans, and cranes uncovered at the royal tomb

complex may show evidence of Greek influence. One theory is that inspiration may have come from foreign artists who travelled from Hellenised areas of Western Asia, arriving in China 1,500 years before Marco Polo; they could have trained and influenced the local craftsmen who created the statuary in the emperor's tomb.

ISSUES OF INTEREST

Many other subjects were also buried at the site. Archaeologists have discovered mass graves that are believed to hold the remains of craftsmen and workers, and even criminals in chains; they are presumed to include those who died during the three decades it took to build the mausoleum. Another major construction project begun during the reign of Emperor Qin Shi Huang was the Great Wall of China, designed to project China from 'barbarian' invasions from the north. Today, the mausoleum complex of the Terracotta Army is one of the most popular tourist destinations in China, and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2009 the British Museum held an exhibition 'The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army'. It included 12 warriors and 120 objects from the mausoleum. It was one of the museum's most successful exhibitions since the Tutankhamun show in 1972. To accommodate demand the Museum extended opening hours to midnight on some nights.



MAMLUK DISH, C. 1345–1360, EGYPT OR SYRIA

The dish illustrates how Mamluk artists, using innovative techniques and designs, transformed an object with a utilitarian function into a sophisticated work of art. This animated dish 'speaks' to the drinker in a way which is imaginative and delightful. Drinking from the dish reveals more of the poem inside, and the poem urges the drinker to continue drinking. Using the dish, the viewer admires up close the object's craftsmanship, as well as the precious materials of the inlaid inscription.

MAMLUK DISH

This dish is a splendid example of the art of metalwork that flourished during the Mamluk Sultanate. It takes the form of a 'phiale', a shallow dish with a protrusion at the middle which makes it easier to hold.

The dish (about 29 centimetres in diameter) is brass, and the Arabic is text created out of inlaid silver and gold. Its particular shape, a phiale or patera, was popular in ancient Greece, where it was closely associated with the religious practice of pouring out offerings of wine or other liquids. The circular inscription is a poem written in the voice of the dish itself: in it, the dish addresses the person who owns it, offering its blessings and well wishes for prosperity, good fortune and happiness, while also encouraging its owner to drink. Mamluk works of art were often, like this one, richly decorated with calligraphy, although the emphasis on the beauty of stylised and ornamental Arabic script is typical of Islamic art generally. This interest points to the importance of the written word in Islamic culture.

BRIEF HISTORY

This brass dish was made in the Mamluk Sultanate, which ruled Egypt, Syria and Palestine from their capital city of Cairo between the 13th and the early 16th centuries. The Mamluks produced refined ceramics, textiles, carpets, glass and metalware which were highly prized in many parts of the world. The Sultanate first came to prominence by pushing back the powerful armies of the European Crusaders arriving from the West, as well as the Mongols from the East, who had overrun much of Asia and the Middle East. They were then able to profit from their strategic position at the crossroads of Africa, Asia and Europe, as Cairo became the largest city in the medieval world and one of the most significant hubs of global trade. This dish exemplifies how Mamluk craftsmanship brought together many different visual traditions, as can be read in the geometric patterns and designs created out of animal and floral motifs. For example, at the centre of the object are lotus flower designs which had originated in China, but reached the

Middle East during the period of Mongol conquest. It reveals how a broad cross-fertilisation of designs and motifs took place in the realm of luxury goods which were highly valued and easily transportable: metalware, ceramics, and silk textiles.

ISSUES OF INTEREST

This brass dish exemplifies the wealth that the Mamluks derived from trade, particularly in spices and silk textiles. Exquisitely-crafted metal dishes were not only valued in the Sultanate itself, but also given as diplomatic gifts, or prized by collectors in many different parts of the world. Mamluk brass dishes were, for example popular in Italy, which was an important trading partner of the Sultanate. In the 14th and 15th centuries, Italian artists even mimicked their shapes and designs in the haloes they painted on the heads of holy figures, which often look like Mamluk brass bowls and are sometimes inscribed with imitation-Arabic script. In this way, Mamluk objects of great beauty and technical sophistication crossed cultural, religious and geographic borders.

DID YOU KNOW?

The name Mamluk derives from the Arabic word for slave or servant, since the Mamluk dynasty was founded by slave soldiers who took control of the army and government. The Mamluk Sultanate, with access to both the Mediterranean and the Indian Oceans, was one of the wealthiest and most cultured trading empires in the world until the Ottomans conquered it in 1517.



HAND COLOURED ENGRAVING PUBLISHED IN 1855

Tipu Sultan (1750–1799), eldest son of Sultan Hyder Ali of Mysore and ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore (coronation 1782). He deployed newly developed rockets against advances of British forces and their allies in their 1792 and 1799 Sieges of Srirangapatna, where he met his death.

TIPU'S TIGER

Tipu, nicknamed the 'Tiger of Mysore', was Sultan of Mysore in South India from 1782–99. He was fascinated with mechanical toys, and is also known to have been obsessed with tigers and used them as a personal emblem.

'Tipu's Tiger' is a near life-size mechanical toy, consisting of a painted wood tiger in the act of devouring what is most likely a 'redcoat', as the British soldiers of the East India Company in India were called. When the crank handle of the automaton is turned the pumps and bellows of the internal pipe-organ simulate the growls of the tiger and cries of the victim. The mechanical part of Tipu's Tiger was most likely made by a European watch maker employed at Tipu's court, while the body of the automaton is of Indian provenance. The painted wooden shell of both figures may draw on South Indian traditions of Hindu religious sculpture. Tigers and tiger stripes were part of the decoration of Tipu Sultan's possessions and appeared on his throne, coinage, swords and guns.

BRIEF HISTORY

By the later eighteenth century the British were extending their rule of India, with the British East India Company aggressively seeking to expand their trade. Tipu's Tiger relates to four Anglo-Mysore wars fought in South India between The East India Company and the House of Mysore in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The House of Mysore was allied with the French, and the British sided with the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad in their struggle over control of southern India.

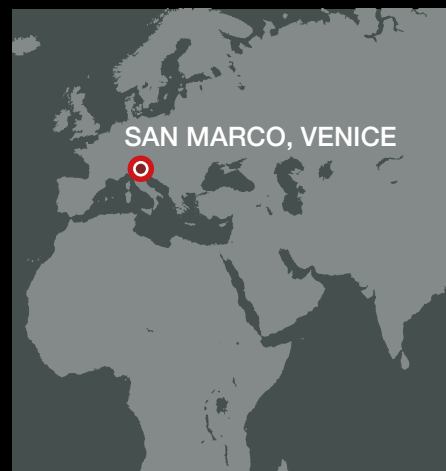
The wars ended with the defeat of the House of Mysore and the death of Tipu Sultan on the battlefield in 1799. His possessions were looted and divided up between soldiers, and Tipu's Tiger was shipped to East India House in London. It became one of the Company's most popular exhibits and was moved to the V&A Museum in 1880. For its British audience, this redcoat-eating tiger became, ironically, a trophy of the military and symbolic defeat of the idiosyncratic sultan and a subjugated people.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tipu's Tiger is one of the most popular objects in the V&A Museum, London. For centuries it has intrigued Western writers, including John Keats who described it in his poem *The Cap and Bells* as "a play-thing of the Emperor's choice ... a Man-Tiger-Organ". Some have claimed that it is another valuable object pilloaged from Indian culture by the British that should be returned to its home.

ISSUES OF INTEREST

This is a vivid hybrid object that can tell us much about the clash of British and Indian cultures during imperial rule, and some of the anti-British feelings provoked by that colonial era. It also raises ethical issues about who should 'own' and display objects looted from colonial societies. It is related to a group of caricatures commissioned by Tipu and painted on walls in Mysore, showing European and often British figures being attacked by tigers or elephants, or being executed or tortured in other ways. Experts often differ in their interpretations of exactly what it was used for and who is being represented; for example, the figure is clearly in European costume, but some experts differ as to whether this is a (British redcoat) soldier or a civilian. This is also an object that brings together skills and craft specialisations from across different cultures, and deploys mechanical features (organ and moving arm) that were popular in toys made during this period in Europe, India and beyond.



BASILICA OF SAN MARCO, VENICE ITALY

The Basilica of San Marco in Venice is one of Italy's most famous churches. It is located next to the Doge's palace in the Piazza San Marco, two opulent buildings which testified to Venice's wealth and power at the city's ceremonial entry point. Venice was the centre of a vast commercial network accessed by the sea, and a place where objects, goods, and ideas from many different parts of the world came together. The city itself is literally built on water, and is made up of over one hundred islands connected by bridges and separated by canals. It is known for its distinctive tradition of art and architecture, and as a centre of glass production.

SAN MARCO MOSAICS

This mosaic is found above the far left portal of the basilica of San Marco in Venice. It illustrates the basilica of San Marco itself, the splendid chapel of the Doge located next to the Doge's palace on Piazza San Marco, Venice's spiritual and ceremonial core.

There are over 4,500 square metres of mosaic in the church of San Marco in Venice, Italy, each created out of thousands of tiny pieces of reflective glass, gold and coloured marble. They were added over many centuries, mostly between the years 1200 and 1500. The example shown above, illustrating the entry of St. Mark's body into the basilica, dates to c.1270–5, and it represents the church as it would have appeared at that time. The image offers an extraordinary view of the church's decorative mosaics, high domes, and coloured marbles, as well as the four bronze statues of horses set in an upper gallery.

BRIEF HISTORY

The narrative event that is depicted in this scene took place in the ninth century. It shows the moment when the body of the Apostle St. Mark was brought to the Chapel of the Doge, after two merchants had stolen it from Alexandria in Egypt and smuggled it into Venice. Two priests carry St Mark's remains through the basilica's central portal, as aristocrats and dignitaries witness the important event. The Doge, Venice's elected ruler, appears on the right, dressed in purple, gold and red.

In the eleventh century, the Venetians built a new Doge's chapel as a more glorious place of burial and worship; the basilica of San Marco, which still stands today. The transfer of St Mark's remains across the Mediterranean to Venice in the ninth century, and the grand re-construction of San Marco in the eleventh, reflect the city's rapid rise to dominance in the Mediterranean in this era. As Venice grew more powerful, the city saw the great Greek-speaking Byzantine capital of

Constantinople (now Istanbul) as its closest rival. The church of San Marco built in the eleventh century closely followed Byzantine architectural models, for example, in its cruciform plan and its five domes.

ISSUES OF INTEREST

In 1203–4 the Venetians took their rivalry with the Byzantines much further: having agreed to assist in a Crusade to the Holy Land, they stopped along the way at the Byzantine capital of Constantinople and sacked it. The Venetians robbed the richest city in Europe and the former capital of the Roman Empire of many of its artistic treasures, melting down bronze statues and stripping marble off of churches. They then decorated San Marco with splendid materials and objects brought back to Venice, including the four bronze horses, which were looted from Constantinople's hippodrome, or horsesharing track. The mosaic thus illustrates Venice's most magnificent church after the recent addition of splendid objects won overseas.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mosaic are made up of thousands of tiny pieces called 'tesserae'. Glass tesserae mixed with gold leaf reflect the surrounding light, creating evocative, constantly changing effects. Shimmering golden mosaics which magnify light and colour are, like the reflections of light on water, typical of Venice's transient beauty.



BRASS PLAQUE, 16TH OR 17TH CENTURY

In Western art history, this brass plaque would be called a high relief sculpture, which is a three-dimensional sculpture with an integral flat back, rather than a freestanding sculpture. The scene depicted appears to evoke the ritual and practices of the palace it once decorated.

BENIN PLAQUES

The brass plaque below left is one of several collectively known as the Benin Bronzes, created by the Edo people from the 13th century onwards. It shows a palace door supported by pillars, and above it a roof made of simulated wooden shingles, and on top of that a snake, probably a python, the king of snakes.

To either side of the doorway are armed guards and two naked pages holding fans. All four wear simulated bead headdresses probably intended to evoke coral, which was one of the materials associated with Benin royalty, along with brass and ivory. The heavily-collared features and scarification marks above the eyes are characteristic of Benin, as are the floral decorations. At the top of the doorway are two small leopards, attributes of kingship in Benin society. The wooden pillars supporting the palace buildings at Benin City were originally decorated with sculpted brass plaques like this one.

BRIEF HISTORY

Portuguese explorers probably reached the coast of the kingdom of Benin (now part of modern Nigeria) in the 1470s. Before this date, it was completely unknown to Europeans, because it was not on the caravan routes across the Sahara. The first Portuguese visited Benin City in 1482–6, but the climate there was too unhealthy for Europeans. Brass sculpture was closely associated with the ruler or 'Oba', and there is no evidence that it was ever exported, but spoons, oilpans (horns) and salt cellars in carved ivory were made in Benin for the European market and shipped to Europe along with pepper, gold and ivory tusks. Some of the salt cellars include representations of Portuguese explorers and their costumes, jewellery and weapons.

Benin was ruthlessly conquered by the British in 1897, and British rule imposed. During the sack of Benin city, hundreds of brass plaques were discovered in a storehouse and were brought back to England along with other artworks. Many

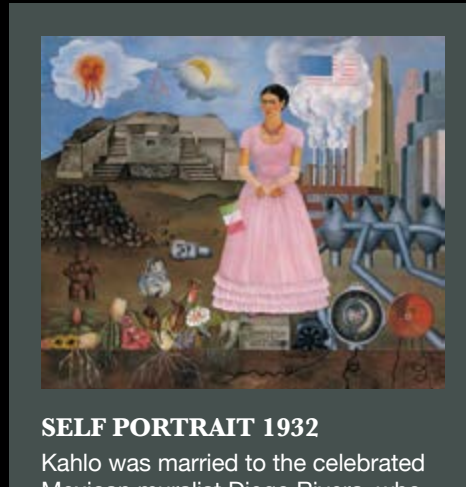
were subsequently sold, but the largest collection was acquired by the British Museum. Europeans expecting 'primitive' art were taken aback by the level of technical and artistic sophistication of this work in brass.

ISSUES OF INTEREST

Although often referred to as 'Benin bronzes', Benin sculptures were made not of bronze (copper mixed with tin) but of brass (copper mixed with zinc). They were cast using the 'lost wax' method. The sculpture is modelled in wax over a clay core. The wax is then melted out through vents, leaving a cavity into which molten bronze or brass is then poured, replacing the original wax image. Once the metal has cooled, the outer coating is removed and the surface of the cast can be smoothed and refined. Casting was also a speciality in neighbouring life to the west of Benin. After the arrival of the Portuguese, brass was supplied from Europe in the form of manillas or bracelets, which were used as a trading currency.

DID YOU KNOW?

Modern Benin is much further west than the original kingdom depicted in 1897. In 2016, students demanded the repatriation of a brass cock from Benin in the Hall of Jesus College Cambridge, where it served as a symbol of the founder of the College, Bishop Alicko of Eby. There have been frequent calls for the brass cock repatriation to modern Nigeria.



SELF PORTRAIT 1932

Kahlo was married to the celebrated Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, who, during their lifetime, was far more famous than her, so much so that the Museum of Modern Art gave its second one-man show to him not long after it opened in 1929. Kahlo painted this self-portrait when she was in Detroit accompanying Rivera as he was painting a series of murals at the Institute of Arts for the Ford Foundation. His reputation as the foremost painter of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) brought him to the attention of North American patrons, who paid him to travel north of the border and decorate their corporate headquarters.

FRIDA KAHLO SELF PORTRAIT

Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States was produced by the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo while she was in Detroit in 1932.

She has depicted herself standing on a flagstone just right of centre in a pink colonial dress, as opposed to the indigenous costume that she usually wore. She is wearing a pre-Columbian necklace, and in her left hand she holds the national flag, and in her right a cigarette. To her left is Mexico with an Aztec pyramid, and below, a pile of rubble and two female sculptures made of clay and a carved skull. The plants and flowers in the foreground have roots that we see embedded in the earth and link the Mexican landscape to the North American one to the right of her self-portrait. In the process of moving from one to the other, the roots turn into electrical cables that power a loudspeaker, a searchlight and a generator. Above these are a series of industrial air-conditioning ducts with skyscrapers to the right. Smoke is billowing from the four factory chimneys, and this blurs the United States flag.

BRIEF HISTORY

Kahlo went to the United States in the early 1930s, when Mexico was an object of particular fascination for North American intellectuals. The Depression decade was bookended by major shows devoted to Mexican art at the Metropolitan Museum in 1930 and the Museum of Modern Art in 1940, both in New York. Many North Americans in this period idealised Mexico's pre-industrial culture, and saw it as superior to the more technologically advanced North American one which had crashed and burned with the Wall Street Crash of 1929. It was easy to read the sort of oppositions in the painting: nature versus manufacture, humanity versus mechanisation, magic versus science, life versus death, pleasure versus work, dream versus reality, etc. In this way the painting emphasises stereotyped dichotomies between Mexico and the United States, the past and the present, and the primitive and the modern. This opposition between an archaic pre-Columbian culture and an impersonal Ford

factory modernity are inscribed in the figure of the artist: colonial dress versus indigenous necklace, Mexican flag versus a modern, and, by association, Western cigarette.

ISSUES OF INTEREST

The painting also has a contemporary relevance, in that the border between the two countries was put under a vivid spotlight with the election of Donald Trump in early November 2016. A 2015 survey found that 58 percent of Republican voters believed that Latino immigrants had had a negative impact upon North American society, and Trump tapped into this sentiment by promising to build a wall between the two countries, with the Mexican people forced to pick up the tab. It is therefore ironic that, during the 2016 election campaign between Trump and Clinton, that Kahlo's painting travelled from its private collection in New York to the Philadelphia Museum of Art for the exhibition *Painting a Revolution: Mexican Modernism, 1910–1950* that ran from 25 October 2016 to 8 January 2017.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kahlo's fame and celebrity status outside of Mexico only really grew in the 1980s, in the wake of second generation feminism and postcolonialism, and in the last two decades her work has featured in many international exhibitions. Today, if her husband Diego Rivera is mentioned at all, it is usually as the husband of his far more famous wife.