



# DIURNA

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NEWSPAPER OF THE 28TH LATIN SUMMER SCHOOL: DIES LUNAE, JANUARIUS XVII

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Welcome: The co-directors, Bob Cowan and Robert Forgács, would like to welcome you all very heartily to our second Latin Summer School via Zoom. Robert Forgács does not have a Zoom link, except for the lecture that he is giving on Wednesday, and the opening and closing ceremonies. So, if you need to contact him at other times, his email address is: [robert@forgacs.id.au](mailto:robert@forgacs.id.au)

Vale Emily Matters: Some of you may already know the very sad news that Emily Matters, who taught at two of our Latin Summer Schools, where she ran the course Teaching Latin in the Primary School, passed away suddenly in late December 2021. Emily was a very enthusiastic and inspiring Latin teacher and will be sorely missed.

Alexander Westenberg has had to withdraw from this year's Latin Summer School. We are very fortunate that Phillip Dupesovski has agreed to take over Class 2B at short notice.

The Promotional Code from Abbey's Bookshop, which amounts to 10% OFF Latin category books (excl. already discounted), by use of the promo code **NUNCESTLEGENDUM** (all caps, no gaps), is valid until 31st January, 2022 inclusive, both instore and online. The weblink is: <https://www.abbey.com.au/category/latin.do?>

Entries in the Diurna competition should be sent as soon as possible to Robert Forgács at [robert@forgacs.id.au](mailto:robert@forgacs.id.au). The successful 400-word articles will be published in the Diurna editions of Tuesday to Friday. An Abbey's Bookshop gift voucher will be sent to the winners.

Subsequent editions of Diurna will be uploaded each day on our website. Please read them.

The Zoom link for our Final Meeting at 1,30 pm on Friday January 21 is:

<https://uni-sydney.zoom.us/j/85992419488>

The main item of this Meeting will be the showing of the Academy Travel Lecture by Agnes Crawford on Nero's Domus Aurea – the emperor's Golden House – in Rome.

Don't forget that there will be two scansion classes this year – very relevant to those studying and reading poetry.

Bob Cowan will run a beginners' class at 1.30 on Tuesday, and an advanced class at 1.30 on Wednesday. The Zoom link for both classes is:

<https://uni-sydney.zoom.us/j/82491112460>

Editorial by Robert Forgács - selected, illustrated extracts from previous Diurna editorials about classical and neo-classical art: a retrospective 2013-2020

### Diurna 2013: Alexander the Great Exhibition: 2000 Years of Treasures

The Alexander the Great exhibition, shown at the Australian Museum, Sydney, contained over 400 objects ranging from Classical Antiquity through to the modern age. It covered a time span of almost 2,500 years and was the largest collection of treasures ever to come to Australia from the State Hermitage Museum of St Petersburg. The exhibition opened on November 24, 2012, and continued until April 28, 2013.

The more than 400 objects in the exhibition formed a remarkably varied collection and presented a wonderful overview of the life, times and legacy of one of the greatest kings and military leaders of antiquity. Included were architectural remains, armoury and weapons, jewellery, coins, drinking vessels and table ware, paintings, prints, drawings, tapestries, objets d'art, and posters.

Probably the most beautiful and impressive work from antiquity included was the so-called 'Gonzaga Cameo', a triple-layered sardonyx portrait of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe II, which was made at Alexandria in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The refinement and delicacy of detail shown here are quite amazing; it is clearly the work of a superb artist whose identity is unknown.



Moving to the modern era, particularly impressive was a very large tapestry from the workshop of the Flemish artist Jan Frans van der Hecke. This was woven from 1661-1695 and is based on a design by Charles Le Brun, one of the official artists at the court of Louis XIV of France. The tapestry depicts the celebrated scene of the family of King Darius of Persia kneeling before Alexander and asking for mercy after Alexander had defeated Darius in battle. Darius had fled, abandoning his family, and Alexander's gracious bestowal of clemency earned him an understandable reputation for

magnanimity. The scene is movingly depicted in a typically baroque, rhetorical fashion. The colours are exquisite and the rendering of the flowers and the shining surface of the fabrics is extremely virtuosic.



From 18<sup>th</sup> century Italy is a moderate-sized painting by Venice's greatest decorative artist of the time Giovanni Battista Tiepolo: it depicts the well-known meeting of Alexander with the philosopher Diogenes, who is shown living in extreme simplicity in a tub. Again, this is a work characterised by an impressive degree of baroque rhetoric, with a strong contrast created between the figure of the elderly philosopher lying on the ground, with his hand raised toward Alexander, and the tall, handsome, and noble figure of Alexander himself, whose admiration for Diogenes is clearly expressed in his face.



Also from the 18<sup>th</sup> century is a charming snuff box made in Paris in the 1780s which depicts the grandsons (Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine) of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great. The materials involved are gold, lapis lazuli, glass, and enamel, the production involving both chasing and painting. Though small in dimensions this is an outstanding example of the elegant decorative art of the period.



Lastly, from the decade of the 1820s or 1830s is a large decorative mantle clock, known as the Vigil of Alexander the Great, after a model by the French artist Louis Stanislas Lenoir-Raviro. This work in bronze has been cast, embossed and gilded, and has a striking, idealised figure of Alexander astride the clock – an apt reflection of his seemingly timeless and enduring reputation and greatness.



**Diurna 2016: Masterpieces from the Hermitage: The Legacy of Catherine the Great.**

This collection from the State Hermitage Museum, which was on display for several months at the National Gallery of Victoria, began with a series of engraved gems, many of which depicted classical figures/subjects. All of these cameos were created between the 1740s and the 1780s and were of very high quality, coming from workshops in Russia, England, France and Italy. Among the most beautiful 17<sup>th</sup> century paintings was the *Italian Landscape* by the celebrated Claude Lorrain (1648). As so often in this artist's work, he has depicted an idyllic, pastoral, Vergilian scene with classically-dressed figures in the foreground.



The only English painting to illustrate classical subject matter was Reynolds's extremely charming and playful *Cupid untying the Zone of Venus* (1788), a strikingly relaxed, rather sensual work for this artist.



**Diurna 2016: The Greats: Masterpieces from the National Galleries of Scotland** was on display at the Art Gallery of NSW early in 2016. The Catherine the Great exhibition shown at the NGA around the same time was devoted to works of art from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, whereas the Scottish exhibition covered a much wider period, from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the outstanding works with classical subject matter were two paintings from 16<sup>th</sup> century Venice: firstly, Titian's celebrated *Venus rising from the sea*—*Venus Anadyomene* (c.1520-30), in which the goddess is shown nude in three-quarter length, wringing the sea-water from her hair, with next to her a tiny scallop shell, representing the larger one on which she was, according to legend, blown ashore at Paphos in Cyprus. This painting is partly influenced by Pliny the Elder's description of the ancient Greek artist Apelles's treatment of the same subject, as well as by classical statues of the goddess.



 NATIONAL GALLERIES SCOTLAND  
Venus Rising from the Sea ('Venus Anadyomene'), 1520, Titian (Tiziano Vecellio)  
Creative Commons - CC BY NC

Van Dyck's richly-coloured and bravura *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* (c.1620-21) is one of the artist's finest religious works, and shows the Roman officer Sebastian, who had secretly converted to Christianity, being tied to a tree in preparation for his transfixing with arrows. His very pale skin contrasts strongly with the skin tones of the other

figures, emphasising his refinement and nobility, in contrast to their coarseness. The red curtain which falls across the right-hand side of the painting gives it a decided theatrical quality:



**Diurna 2017: Versailles: the Treasures from the Palace:--the reigns of Louis XIV (1661-1715), Louis XV (1715-1774) and Louis XVI (1774-1792)**

This wonderful exhibition, which was also on display at the NGA in Canberra, was as rich in classical references and content as you would expect, given the centrality of classical culture to European civilisation during the 17th and 18th centuries - the period covered by the exhibition. It began with the reign of Louis XIV, 'le roi soleil' (sun king), and naturally included several beautiful depictions of Apollo, his titular deity; there was a very lovely anonymous depiction in lead of Apollo's head surrounded by the rays of the sun; it dates from 1660-1680. In addition, there is a superb bust of the young Louis by the sculptor Varin or Warin, which depicts the king in antique costume with the same head of Apollo, surrounded by the same sun rays, on his breast-plate. This bust was clearly modelled on ancient Roman imperial sculptures. Then, there was a gold-plated and marble profile portrait of the ageing king, dating from 1704, by Antoine Benoist or Benoit, done in imitation of classical medals and coins.





In the 1680s Louis commissioned more than 100 large and 50 small bronze statues to be cast for the gardens at Versailles and for the special collection rooms of the palace. The Swiss sculptor Jean-Balthasar Keller was represented in this collection by two magnificent large statues, which were designed for the terrace of the Orangerie in 1687: a copy of the Medici Venus, and an original statue of Adonis or a Young Athlete created as a counterpart to the celebrated statue of Venus.



A large marble vase commissioned for the Salle des Miroirs (Hall of Mirrors) at Versailles, which was on display in this exhibition, is the work of the Italian carver Giovanni-Antonio Tedeschi. It was carried out between 1686 and 1687, and is decorated with abstract classical designs. Amazingly, it is made from antique yellow marble, which had been discovered in the gardens of the Mattei family vineyard in Rome in 1685 and bought by the director of Académie de France in the Eternal City specifically for Louis XIV.



The largest and most impressive statue from the reign of Louis XIV was undoubtedly the marble statue of Latona and her children by Gaspard Marsy, dating from 1668-70. It was designed as the centre piece of the Latona fountain in the gardens at Versailles and was the heaviest and most difficult item to air-freight to Australia. It was the first major undertaking in Carrara marble at Versailles, and when completed was placed prominently along the main axis of the gardens. The statue featured in this exhibition is the original work of art, which was replaced by a replica in the gardens in 1980, in order to protect the original from weathering. It is a work of great expressive beauty and was placed in a simulated garden-fountain setting at the NGA.



**Diurna 2018: Rembrandt and the Dutch Golden Age at the Art Gallery of NSW:  
Classical and Neo-Latin Content**

The exhibition with this title, held at the Art Gallery of NSW from late 2017 to early 2018, consisted of 76 paintings and etchings from the outstanding collection of the beautiful Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. The Dutch Golden was the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when

Holland, having only recently gained its independence from Spanish-Habsburg domination, emerged as a great mercantile and naval power in Europe. The form of Christianity followed by most of the Dutch at this time was Calvinist, but this religious commitment was accompanied by an intellectual freedom, an interest in scientific experiment and in colonial expansion, a general affluence and such a high standard of living and cleanliness among its citizens that it was the envy of many of its more conservative Catholic neighbours. In this forward-looking social climate, it might be expected that interest in the Classical past and in Neo-Latin as a mode of expression would be limited. This, however, was not the case. Although Classical content and the use of Neo-Latin in works of art is not to the fore in this particular exhibition, it is still there and is worthy of comment.

Among the still-life paintings included were two that show a degree of classical or Neo-Latin content. Pieter Claesz's *Vanitas still life with the Spinario* of 1628, as the title makes clear, includes a depiction of the famous and beautiful ancient Roman statue known *Lo Spinario* – The Boy with the Thorn - which dates from the first century BC or AD and is now in the Palatine Museum in Rome.



The inclusion of this classical statue in the painting helps to conjure up the atmosphere of an artist's studio, while its antiquity also serves to reflect on the transience of life and beauty, and the passing of time. Jan Davidsz de Heem's *Still Life with books* contains a sheet of paper in the lower left-hand corner which is balanced precariously and

virtuosically on the edge of a table. Only the final word of this document can be deciphered, and appropriately it is the Latin word 'finis' – 'the end'.



### Diurna 2020: Ancient Rome, Latin and St Petersburg: Some Reflections

St Petersburg, Russia's 'window onto the West' in the words of its founder, Tsar Peter the Great, was established from 1703 onwards. Although the Romans did not venture north of the Rhine and Danube (or not very far north), the influence of Ancient Roman culture and Neo-Classical culture is strongly in evidence in St Petersburg. Firstly, there is the Hermitage Museum, which has an excellent and very impressive collection of antiquities, as already noted, including the mosaic of a boy accompanied by fruit and fish and inscribed with the word 'Iunius' (June):



Then there are the great palaces - The Winter Palace (which is where the Hermitage Museum is situated), Peterhof on the Gulf of Finland, and the Catherine Palace at Tsarskoye Selo and Pavlovsk Palace, which is not far away - all have their share of beautiful neo-classical sculptures typical of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The celebrated cascade fountain, adorned with classical deities, at Peterhof looks particularly beautiful in the snow which was still falling in St Petersburg shortly before Easter, when the photo was taken:



Latin began to be studied in Russia from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, under the increasing influence of Western culture, especially as transmitted through Poland. Those studying at Russian Orthodox seminaries (which were only founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) were obliged to use many textbooks written in Latin. Latin also featured prominently in secular education, in the elite Grammar Schools modelled on German *Lateinschulen* (Latin Schools). Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin, attended such a school, which still exists, close to the Catherine Palace at Tsarskoye Selo, and has a statue of a contemplative Pushkin in its grounds:



Given his immense talent and linguistic ability, it is not surprising that he wrote a very lovely, free adaptation of Horace's celebrated final Ode from Book III, 'Exegi monumentum', which in A. Z. Foreman's translation into English begins:

I've reared a monument not built by human hands,  
The public path to it cannot be overgrown.  
With insubmissive head far loftier it stands  
Than Alexander's columned stone.

No, I shall not all die. My soul in hallowed berth  
Of art shall brave decay and from my dust take wing.  
And I shall be renowned while on this mortal earth  
A single poet lives to sing.

Study of Latin and the cultivation of Neo-Classical culture was one of the victims of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Communism. Being associated with elitism and Imperialism, both went out of favour, although departments of Classics continued to exist, and still exist, in Russia. Similarly, the study and use of the French language, which were an extremely important part of the aristocratic way of life in Russia during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, were swept aside under Communism. However, since the end of the dominance of that ideology, it is clear that the visual culture inspired by classical ideals and treating classical subject matter is once more highly valued, and there has been much restoration of this heritage in St Petersburg. Latin inscriptions can also still be seen in the city, as on the equestrian statue of Peter the Great erected on the banks of the Neva by his successor Catherine the Great: the simple Latin text reads: *Petro Primo, Catherina Secunda, MDCCLXXXII* (To Peter the first, from Catherine the Second, 1782):

