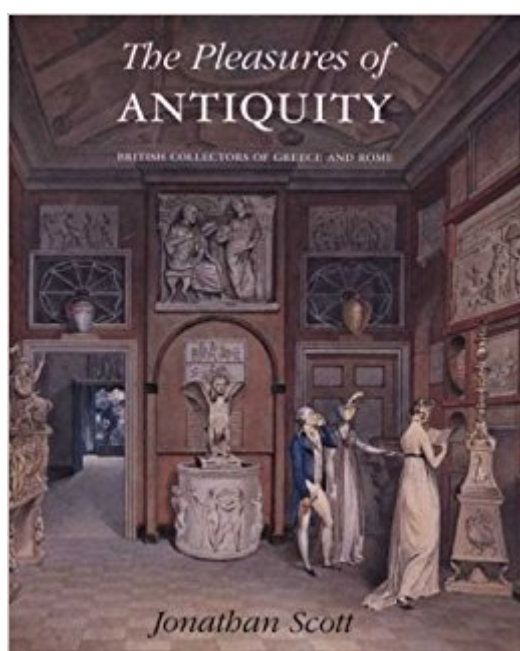


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The Pleasures Of Antiquity: British Collections Of Greece Of Rome (The Paul Mellon Centre For Studies In British Art)



Synopsis

By the nineteenth century, connoisseurs from the British Isles had assembled the richest collections of classical antiquities outside Rome. The galleries they created to house the spectacular Greek and Roman statues, ornaments, vases, bronzes, and gems were in many instances designed to be as magnificent as the artworks themselves. This delightful book examines how the great British antiquities collections were put together and displayed, from Lord Arundel's collection of marbles in the seventeenth century to the Grand Tour acquisitions of the eighteenth century and the greatest art acquisition of all time, that of the Elgin Marbles from the Acropolis. In this book, the first comprehensive history of the collecting of antiquities in Great Britain, Jonathan Scott gives portraits of the principal collectors, describes the mechanics of the art trade and collecting, and takes us to beautiful sculpture galleries that were created by such distinguished architects as Robert Adam and Jeffrey Wyattville. With a generous selection of illustrations of the interiors of collectors' houses, the book presents in unprecedented detail the story of private British antiquities collectors and their truly remarkable collections.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the modern art world, the connoisseur who collects and displays works of art sometimes seems almost as important as the artists who make them. This lavishly illustrated history covers the heroic age of British art collecting from the 17th through the 19th century, when a Grand Tour through

Italy-and occasionally Greece-studying and gathering ancient sculpture was a rite of passage for wealthy gentlemen. Export controls limited the availability of intact antiquities, so an industry sprang up to satisfy the market by assembling miscellaneous ancient fragments into complete statues, turning reproductions into "restorations" by attaching a few authentic scraps, and churning out outright forgeries, all of which were passed off as ancient masterpieces by unscrupulous dealers. The quality of these works was eclipsed by the magnificent palaces and galleries rich collectors built to house them back in Britain, veritable temples of art that still influence our ideas about the look of the classical world. Scott, the deputy chairman of London's Victoria and Albert Museum and author of *Piranesi*, makes this potentially dry subject colorful and absorbing. He covers the lives and activities of the major collectors and dealers, explores the social and economic significance of conspicuously displayed art as a symbol of wealth and refinement, and delves into the murky machinations of the art trade and the travails of excavating and collecting art in Italy and the Ottoman Empire. Often naive, taken advantage of and ridiculed, these collectors nonetheless played a major role in the evolution of modern aesthetics, and art buffs will delight in Scott's vivid portrait of their exploits. 204 b&w illustrations. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Abundantly illustrated and written with clarity and zest. . . . Authoritative and far-reaching. . . . Highly recommended. . . . -- Choice

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