

WHAT IS THIS FEELING?

At its core, art is about making the audience feel something. *Anything*. Name an emotion and there will surely be an artwork that can make you feel it. Sometimes these can be quiet emotions: a painting of an empty room like Van Gogh's *Bedroom in Arles* series (1888–9) might evoke loneliness; Monet's dreamy *Water Lilies* (1906) could have you lost in reveries; and who could fail to be dazzled, dazed and confused by Dali's *The Bather* (1928)?

Other pieces can make us feel very big feelings indeed. *Pietas* brings on intense sadness as we reflect on grief and loss – experiences which are universal, albeit unpleasant, and to which we can relate on a fundamental level. Michelangelo's grand Sistine Chapel frescoes are designed to evoke awe and wonder with their epic themes. But what about feeling a bit hot under the collar – is that also a valid response?

If you've ever walked around a museum, looked at the artworks – portraits, paintings, sculptures, whichever media you prefer – and thought, 'Wow! Absolutely would!', then this is the book for you. You can correctly identify the emotions you're feeling – well done, not everyone is able to do that! – and you clearly have exquisite taste. Good for you.

It's raining men

Think of this book as your journey around a museum with a personal guide to share all the juicy gossip, hidden histories and saucy facts about each and every artwork as you explore, with an abundance of eye-candy. As you journey through this imaginary museum, we'll be appreciating the hotties and thinking about some of the different visual forms and archetypes masculinity has taken; the sensitive poet, the pugilist soldier, the handsome heroes and the darkly desirable villains.

And if you're looking for your art history hunk the museum is, of course, the perfect place to go. Here, for the first time in history, the hotties of the art world have been carefully curated and selected for your viewing pleasure. All in one handy book. Hallelujah! When considering which handsome men to include to help you discover your art history boyfriend, just like The Weather Girls, we've got every specimen.

If you want tall, we have Michelangelo's *David* (1501–4), who measures a whopping 5m (16ft 11in). Oh my! Beach boys bathe and frolic in *Summer Scene (Bathers)* (1869–70) by Jean Frédéric Bazille. Giovanni Battista Moroni's *Tailor* (circa 1570) – whose swarthy looks, dark hair and come-to-bed eyes have enchanted many a visitor to London's National Gallery – can be enjoyed alongside the lean *Apollo Belvedere* (2nd century BCE), who displays a godlike physique softer and gentler than we might expect. Then we have the rough and the tough, the trade of Tom of Finland's sensual sketches of sailors and cyclists. No one is stronger than Hercules and, as for mean... well, is Lucifer mean, or is he just misunderstood?

But wait, there's more! We've got boys made from stone, like the *Barberini Faun* (2nd century BCE) who, from the looks of things, could possibly be stoned. Did anyone check what was in that wine? Then there's our bronze boy, Sir Hamo Thornycroft's *Mower* (1882–4), who is taking a breather while he looks around. There's even a hottie dealing with G-force! Horace Bristol's stunning *PBY Blister Gunner* (1944) has a fascinating story just waiting to be discovered. For smart dapper chaps, look no further than Hal Fischer's *Street Fashion: Forties Trash* (1977) serving vintage chic, and J.C. Leyendecker's *Scribner's for July* (1905) sets the standard for athletic masculine beauty. Then there's *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool* (1966) by iconic artist David Hockney, which might leave us wondering what happened to Peter's trunks...

There's dancers and prancers – *Shiva as Lord of Dance* (circa late 11th century) and *George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham* respectively; boys on boats *Ruby, Gold and Malachite* (1902); writers such as the gorgeous *Lord Byron* (circa 1835); and readers like *Jerry* whose gaze entrances just as much today as it did in 1931. There's even a cutie who by all rights should be half goat (I'm looking at you, *James Bidgood's Pan*).

You, discerning reader and art aficionado, will find your perfect guy, whatever your type. No rules or judgement here. Each page will bring you a fresh face and a feast of fascinating facts. Every single guy on display here is unique. There is no Same Face Syndrome, with every face being repeated over and over again; handsomeness isn't homogenous. It can be everything from a gleam in the eye to a sexy smile, or something else entirely. For this wander through the art gallery, beauty is very much in the eye of the book holder.

Guerrilla gaze

As we turn the pages together, skipping from one chapter to another and darting between artworks, we will do more than just appreciate our guys' good looks; we'll be uncovering their secret stories as well as shining an admiring light on some of their best features. Along the way, we'll also try to do our bit to right some historic wrongs.

Men are undeniably over-exposed in art. Their names adorn the walls in the labels; their deeds and misadventures are listed here, there and everywhere. When women are present they have been, in the past, often reduced to mannequins, models and muses created as objects of the viewer's gaze rather than characters in their own right. *Hotties in Art* repositions the burly, manly men of Serious Art by Serious Artists as the objects of desire instead. As radical acts of art history go, it's a start!

Our endeavour is, in a way, inspired by the work of Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous artist collective whose work has been disrupting the status quo and calling out inequalities in the art world since 1985, their goal being to 'make museums fairer'. They, and many others, want the august institutions that hold so many treasures to add context and show more: the understory, the subtext and the overlooked. All the things that truly make art that much more interesting than it can appear at first sight.

Guerrilla Girls focus on how the art world has treated women and, in its own humble way, *Hotties in Art* wants to continue that conversation by considering instead the masculine form. The art world speaks of gazes – both the artist and audience viewing the subject overlay what they are seeing with their own meanings. Art has traditionally been about the male gaze on the female body – think about depictions of Eve and Venus, those many damsels in distress and maidens in peril.

This book looks to flip the script and invites the gaze of anyone, regardless of gender, to linger over apple-cheeked Adam and Adonis, and to marvel at handsome heroes, sensual sailors and all the masculine archetypes in between. It invites you, dearest gentle reader, to objectify them. We can look at them with an analytical and appreciative eye, but also simply enjoy the view. Indeed, many of the artworks throughout this book reflect the gazes of many not-male artists, to give us a really broad spectrum of how handsome men have been perceived, seen and understood through many different lenses.

Guerrilla Girls tell us that 85 per cent of the nudes in New York's Met Museum are women; in *Hotties in Art*, barring some nymphs and cherubs, who chose to cast off their clothes, 100 per cent of our nudes are men. Hunks and hotties were not absolutely required to be nude for inclusion in this book, but a cheeky flash of flesh never hurts.

Tinker, tailor

Where else to start but with *The Tailor*, who inspired this book. Our tailor needed to show he could work with fabulous materials and he was always a cut above the competition. As you walk into his studio you can hear scissors sliding through fabric, snipping it into shape. The sound suddenly stops as he looks up from his work and notices you. Suddenly flustered, you are blushing as deep a red as his trousers. You can see he's been working hard as his beard has had time to grow in, but he still looks as neat as his stitches. No complaints here.

When Giovanni Battista Moroni painted this tall drink of water in the late 16th century, portraits largely depicted nobility or those who had risen through the ranks of the church. Artworks of ordinary artisans working away were virtually unheard of. Moroni, though, treats *The Tailor* with the reverence one would expect for an aristocrat. The young man wields his scissors – the symbol of his trade, skill and power – in the same way a monarch might hold a sceptre, or a soldier their sword. Intriguingly his belt has a loop for a sword and yet he is sans sword, favouring his blade of choice: his shears. He's proud of his work, and understandably so. It's clear that he's a sartorial success; his ruby ring glinting and hinting at a booming business. His beard tells us that he's booked, busy and blessed; it's positively scruffy by the standards of the time, showing us he had appointments from sunrise to sundown with no time for a trim at the barbers.

Voluminous legwear aside, *The Tailor* looks like he could be gracing catwalks, fashion magazines or your Instagram feed, yet people have been admiring him for hundreds of years. In the 1670s art enthusiast Marco Boschini wrote:

*Quel d'un Sartor, sì belo, e sì ben fato,
Che'l parla più de qual se sia Avvocato;
L'hà in man la forfe, e vù el vedè a tagiar.*

Or, in English:

*That of a tailor, so handsome and so well made,
That he speaks more than any lawyer;
He has the scissors in his hand, and you see him cutting.*

Fashion forward

J.C. Leyendecker is perhaps the most influential artist you've never heard of – a key illustrator at a time when illustration was the visual medium of communication with the masses. He defined the fashionable American male, influencing how men were portrayed in the fashion world, and was the inspiration for Barbie's Ken, J. Crew and the Abercrombie & Fitch aesthetic. The best part? He modelled the ideal American man after his boyfriend and muse Charles Beach, who was also his manager. Leyendecker favoured the athletic type and loved a guy with good legs, muscular thighs and a great bum.

He was a fan of an oiled moustache and bathed his models in candlelight to give them a glow. He coupled accuracy with exaggeration to capture the models' best features in the most flattering ways. His artistic eye draws our attention and focuses our gaze on whatever product he's been hired to promote, but he always allows the viewer a chance to linger on the dashing model.

His shirt collars (Arrow brand, specifically) make us hot under our own collars, and he even manages to make socks and thermal undies desirable. Projecting health, wealth and impeccable taste, the Leyendecker man had a sailor or soldier aesthetic, which was not too far away from the exaggerated extremes of Tom of Finland's scandalous sketches (see page 63).

Masculinity was a sharp suit and smart office wear, as well as form-fitting athletic gear. These tropes can be seen playing out in the way other image-makers also used fashion to form masculine ideals.

Fast forward to the 1970s when Hal Fischer created the *Gay Semiotics* photo series, which wryly deconstructed and decoded shared sartorial ciphers, dissecting the meanings behind street fashion and its depiction in the media. Here clothes very much make the man and mark him as a member of the tribe. Many of Fischer's models in this series were his friends and acquaintances wearing their signature looks. Fischer was reflecting the world around him: 'This was my world at the time, which I'm sharing, and that's a kind of liberation in itself, and it was without consequences. There may have been a naiveté there, but the work reflects the world I was part of at that time, and I'm celebrating that.'

It is celebration, certainly, as well as a tongue-in-cheek documentary approach, and that humour hasn't been lost in translation, with Hal saying

'I see people looking at those pictures now and they're laughing at them. They can see so much of the 1970s in the work, but the fact that the humour in the work is still there and still packs a punch, that means a lot. I think people see an integrity and a certain authenticity there. In those pictures I'm talking about me, and people see that.'

This look calls back to the 1940s, very Leyendecker-esque, perhaps the model is taking a break from posing in a full suit and needs some fresh air. Just as scientific in approach and composition as Leyendecker, in some photos in the series Hal is very direct about where we should be looking as well as explaining the intricate layers of meaning in what is worn. 'I learned about signifiers,' Fischer said, 'and realized that they are going on all around me.' Next time you're in a gallery, keep your eyes peeled: what signifiers can you see in the art, the audience? Is your art history boyfriend trying to get your attention? Do we need to draw an arrow?

Favourite fit

Fashion is more than looking good; it's a way to show power, too. Cast your eyes over *George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham* on page 20, the favourite of James I and VI (same king, two kingdoms: England and Scotland. Things were a little bit complicated before the Act of Union 1707, hence the *United Kingdom*). George is dressed in the ceremonial robes and insignia of the Order of the Garter, the highest order of knighthood. Membership to this exclusive band is granted at the sole discretion of the monarch. It's a really big deal.

William Larkin's image dates from around 1616, when George was invested as a Knight of the Garter. It marks the point where his career as James' favourite was taking off like a rocket.

But how did the king meet his knight in shining silks? It was two years prior, in August 1614 when James first set eyes on his beloved George, who had secured a prestigious gig as James' cupbearer (for other fortunate cupbearers, see *Bright Young Things* on pages 78–97). George was dressed to the nines, to the tens even! This event was carefully staged, with those keen to curry favour with the king scheming to win his approval by helping him meet his new favourite. Nothing was left to chance and one such schemer, Sir John Graham, dressed George up to flatter his enviable athletic physique in just the way that James liked. As a cupbearer, George

had to serve and entertain the guest of honour. Entertaining is always much easier if you can serve a look at the same time. And, my word, this painting proves that George knew how to serve a look!

And what a looker George was. Words such as 'delicate,' 'handsome' and 'beautiful' were used liberally when people spoke of George Villiers, according to accounts from the Royal Court. Even his most heated rivals conceded he was a hunk and a hottie, and one observer heralded him as 'The most handsome-bodied man in all of England.'

But George was much more than just a pretty face. He could use those long king-catching legs of his to cut a rug, and indeed was known to lift James out of a foul mood by dancing at feasts and masques. George was a jock too – he enjoyed fencing, and we can see his sword in Larkin's artwork. Being allowed to bear arms was another sign of privilege and prestige at this time.

George commissioned portraits of himself to show off his status and demonstrate that he belonged in the upper echelons. As a collector and commissioner, he could mould his image to make it fit his requirements at the time. The striking depiction we are enjoying here was created by artists from the studio who had previously painted a portrait of James' heir. In using this studio, George is sending a message about cementing his close, personal, even familial place at court. Those bright white tights show off his shapely legs, even if their proportions are a bit off...

Poolboy

David Hockney is one of the most beloved British painters. His exhibitions often have queues around the block, and his pieces sell for eye-watering sums. David's work is known for its vibrant colours, with his California pool paintings being perennial favourites, and one of the most recognizable pieces was inspired by his boyfriend.

Hockney met his model, muse and boyfriend Peter Schlesinger at a summer art class at UCLA. David liked to portray Peter posing by their pool, usually in a state of undress. David's desire for Peter is clear – in an interview he described Peter as 'a young, very sexy, attractive boy... the sexy boy of your fantasy.'

Jerry, Paul Cadmus (1931)

This painting should probably be framed with specialist reinforced glass to contain the unstoppable force of the sex appeal emanating from Jerry's dreamy eyes. Those who work in close proximity to *Jerry* have to be very careful not to fall in love with him.

Sylvia found her muse with Paul. 'She told me that she wanted to paint me as I was her type – whatever that meant. We lived about two blocks apart and I started modelling for her three to five times a week. Posing nude was nothing back then, whereas, for a man today, I bet it's difficult. She talked all the time, asked lots of questions and we found we had a lot of things in common. Sylvia used to say that she never understood why women were painted completely nude but there was always a convenient fig leaf in front of the man. She wanted to rectify that.' The resulting artwork is now a museum piece, but that wasn't always the case: 'This painting was hanging on her wall forever, right above the sofa!'

Paul now likes this painting, but he felt vulnerable looking at it for a long time. As the very wise Moira Rose from *Schitt's Creek* once said: 'Then allow me to offer you some advice: Take a thousand naked pictures of yourself now. You may currently think, "Oh, I'm too spooky," or, "Nobody wants to see these tiny boobies." But, believe me, one day you will look at those photos with much kinder eyes and say, "Dear God, I was a beautiful thing!"' Or, better yet, let an artist immortalize you.

This brings us to Paul Cadmus' *Jerry*, an incredibly intimate work, and not just because of the directness and intensity of the gaze staring out from the canvas. The sheer closeness and tightness of the view hints at the physical intimacy and familiarity between the artist and his model. *Jerry* is Jared French, a fellow artist who collaborated with Paul on other artistic projects.

Tear yourself away from *Jerry*'s dreamy eyes and you'll notice the rumpled bedsheets – it doesn't take much to imagine the bedroom activities that dishevelled them so. Moving further down, there's a book with a cool blue/green cover contrasting with the warm tones of *Jerry*'s fingers and exposed torso. The book is James Joyce's *Ulysses*; here Cadmus is being cheeky. *Ulysses* was deemed an obscenity and was banned at the time of painting because it was feared it could endanger public morals (if you haven't already, read it yourself to find out why). *Jerry* reading it with that seductive smirk suggests that he's been enjoying all sorts of forbidden and illicit activities. Lucky *Jerry*.

Much like Joyce's *Ulysses*, Cadmus' work has also drawn controversy. It's clear what he enjoys about painting his models, and despite his work's obvious merit, Cadmus fell out of fashion in the art world – some historians think this was due to the rise of Abstract Expressionism, as well as old fashioned homophobia. Luckily for us, his work has been regaining attention and recognition since it was rediscovered in the 1970s.

Satan keeps getting hotter (and this is a problem)

Imagine you're in charge of getting a message out there, and you want that message to be easily understood by everyone. The most effective way to do this is to give the people something to look at. In 1842 sculptor Joseph Geefs created 'one of the most disturbing works' in his *L'ange du Mal* – Angel of Evil – according to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Belgium. The creature was beautiful. Too beautiful. Unhealthily beautiful according to contemporary critics. He was a distraction to those coming to pray. And who knows, he may even have tempted them to evil, sinful, lustful thoughts. He was installed in St Paul's Cathedral in Liège, Belgium in 1843 and had to be hastily removed, lest his beautiful face corrupted the faithful. Cathedral authorities declared he was 'too sublime', and the local press delighted in scandalizing the town with reports that the 'pretty penitent girls' were distracted by his handsome, albeit somewhat androgynous, features.

He was too beautiful to destroy so he was sent off to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels. Curators weren't entirely sure what to make of him, but what was the cathedral to do in the meantime? There was a gaping void that needed filling.

Enter Joseph's older brother Guillaume, who was already working on some other pieces for the cathedral. He knew the project and his pulpit piece was around the theme of 'The Triumph of Religion Over the Genius of Evil,' so what could possibly go wrong?

Guillaume 100 per cent nailed the brief; *Le Génie du Mal* (literally, Genius of Evil) radiates the demonic. He's unnatural, otherworldly and arrestingly uncanny. It's no wonder that this genie gained another name: the Lucifer of Liège.

Let's put Guillaume's Luciferic figure under the microscope, examine him and ask the question that's on everyone's mind: is he sexier and more seductive than his fraternal fiend?

His wings are more lizard-like than Joseph's version. His thick curly hair conceals a couple of small horns, his hand reaches around to the back of his head, emphasising his downward look. It's a pose that is loaded with emotion: is he feeling defensive? Regretful? Remorseful? Is it an itchy scalp or does he simply know his angles?

Casting our gaze further downwards, we see a torso rippling with muscles – enviable pecs and defined obliques draw our eyes even lower, to

the exquisitely folded drapery gathered in Lucifer's lap. We notice that his hand is bound in iron and chained; we follow the chain down, link by link, to see an ankle chained too. Another reminder that our angel has well and truly fallen is the claw-like toenails.

Dropped on the floor by the taloned feet is further evidence of the demon's damnation; an apple, the fruit of forbidden knowledge with which Lucifer tempted Eve. Isn't it interesting that the very first sin was a woman eating? Beside it is another hint as to the figure's possible identity: a fallen morning star. We look back up at the face. There's a tear. We want to reach out, wipe it away and tell him everything will be okay.

Joseph's angel may have distracted the girls, like the cookie-cutter pin-ups of Non-Threatening Boys, but Guillaume's invokes much more complex feelings. Incredibly, some art historians believe that the brothers used the same model for their respective angels.

Jesus keeps getting hotter (and this is also a problem)

Duncan Grant was an artist who loved to portray the human body in all its beauty and glory, even when it should be wracked in pain. Case in point, *The Victory of Calvary* (or *The Crucifixion*) at St Michaels and All Angels Church in Berwick, East Sussex. The church was a hop, skip and a jump away from Charleston, the farmhouse where Duncan lived with fellow Bloomsbury geometry aficionado, Vanessa Bell. According to writer Dorothy Parker their social circle 'lived in squares... and loved in triangles,' (and rhomboids, and all sorts of polygons).

Duncan and Vanessa, as part of the Bloomsbury Group, were all about challenging conventions. The church refurb was commissioned by Bishop Bell, who wanted to revive the tradition of decorating places of worship with murals. In a letter between the Bishop and another artist, Frederick Etchells, things could proceed for this '... experiment because to all intents and purposes it is a modern church.'

And so Duncan and Vanessa set to work. In a letter to Jane Bussy dated 13th June 1941, Vanessa Bell lets her friend know how the project is coming along, saying, 'We have got as far as doing sketches, which have met with approval on the whole, though D's Christ was thought a bit too attractive and my Virgin a bit frivolous. Still, that is easily changed, and on the whole, we accept every suggestion and read our Bibles diligently.'

'D', of course, is Duncan Grant, whose Christ figures continued to be attractive, and with models like Edward la Bas and Paul Roche, both longtime muses, models and objects of Duncan's desires and affection, this feels inevitable. Paul and Edward both posed for Duncan's depictions of Christ; Edward for Berwick and Paul in 1961 for Lincoln Cathedral.

Paul met Duncan by chance when their eyes met for a fleeting moment as they crossed Piccadilly Circus. Paul gave Duncan a sense of vitality and freshness, which shines though in the work they collaborated on. Paul said of the Lincoln project, 'The Dean... was a puritan and believed that all of Duncan's work should be condemned because it showed too much love of the human body – especially the male body and especially my body – so that chapel became like a small room for putting rubbish in... The chapel was eventually restored perfectly.' Good news!

Christs on crosses, broadly, fall into two categories: tortured and gangrenous, or filled with an ecclesiastical ecstasy. Duncan's work, naturally, fell into the latter category. His Christ emphasizes the joy of eternal life and salvation – The Good News is good. The Berwick Crucifixion shows no sign of pain. Rather, the figure has a much more positive expression. Duncan Grant drew from life, and he bound his buddy Edward up to an easel to achieve the effect he wanted.

What did Edward make of being bound? In a letter to Duncan dated 2nd July 1943 he wrote, 'I did enjoy the weekend, you've no idea how much: to see again how life can really be lived [...] The church paintings grow in my mind in calmness and power.'

Model god

Whether we are dealing with the devil, or indeed a figure more divine, one thing has become abundantly clear; getting the model just right – for example by binding him to an easel to nail that 'just crucified' look or enhancing all of his devilish good looks to stir complex feelings – is key.

John Singer Sargent met Thomas McKeller while Sargent was staying at the Hotel Vendome in Boston where Thomas worked as an elevator operator. Thomas modelled for Sargent and that chance meeting elevated McKeller to the upper echelons of godhood; he became known as the Boston Apollo – named for a god whose remit included (but was in no way limited to) inspiration and the arts. Truly, their meeting feels like a miracle.

Thomas didn't only model for Sargent's Apollo and Adonis figures, but for his depictions of the goddesses Aphrodite and Artemis as well. It must have been a lot of pressure to have to help the artist represent so much, and Thomas said of his modelling, 'Atlas, with the world on his shoulders, this was my body'.

Sargent's *Nude Study of Thomas E. McKeller* (1917) is unfinished; Thomas' body is on full display and the blurry background hints at what he may become. The blue background includes a flurry of feathers, hinting at an angelic destiny for this figure. Artist Steve Locke, who worked with Boston Museum of Fine Arts on this image suggests that in creating this, Sargent created 'a painting he made for himself.' He goes further to suggest another divine identity for Thomas; Cupid, the god of love. (For another intriguing Sargent figure, see *Doctor Pozzi at Home* on page 102.)

Am I in deep water?

Hear me out here: Triton is a not-at-all weird crush. Whether we are thinking of the bearded, trident-wielding patriarch in the 1989 Disney classic *The Little Mermaid* or the muscled merman in the mosaic on page 38, there's something about him that speaks to us. All that swimming has developed his delts and shoulders into a masterpiece of musculature. Looking at the mosaic reminds me, I really must start swimming again...

Triton is more than just a mound of sea-sculpted muscles; he's a generous soul, too, offering the riches of the sea on a silver clam shell. And let's not forget about his living situation: who can resist someone who, according to legend, lives in a golden palace? Even if he does still live with mum (sea goddess Amphitrite) and dad (Poseidon).

Then there is the trumpet playing, a typical feature of Triton. It might be a dealbreaker. According to the stories, Triton could toot on his horn to calm the waves or whip them up into frenzy. A musician is certainly an appealing prospect, but ultimately it all boils down to his skill with his instrument.

Tails and scales may not be your cup of tea, which is fine – we all have our own preferences. It's not uncommon for gods to have shapeshifting powers – Zeus himself changed form a number of times to snare a romantic rendezvous with the object of his affections – however Triton consistently maintains his fish-human hybrid body. The mosaic on

pages 38–39, found at the Baths of Ocrinum and pieced together in the 2nd century BCE, portrays Triton as the type of hunk you'd find at a beach resort in the Med, with sunkissed skin and a torso of dreams. Sometimes, Triton drifts more seaward in his colouring, at various points being described as green, teal, turquoise... all sorts of shades of greeny blue, or is it a bluey green? Epidermal verdigris aside, he occasionally presents with shoulders bearing barnacles. Does this make him a more achievable crush? After that dip in the sea, we need some fire to warm us up...

I am legión

'Awake, arise or be for ever fallen!' read a quotation on the exhibition label for *Satan Summoning his Legions*. The line is from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, an epic poem about Satan, the angel who fell and lost the paradise of Heaven, then tempted humans to lose their own paradise: Eden.

The body of Sir Thomas Lawrence's Satan is modelled on that of boxer John Jackson, and the face on actor John Philip Kemble. When Lawrence asked Kemble's sister, actress Sarah 'tragedy personified' Siddon, what John thought, she reported that he'd told her, 'It was not natural.' Lawrence probed further and 'asked Mrs Siddons if she agreed in his decision. "Certainly," she said, "if in painting from Milton it is the natural you look for."'

The choice of boxer as a model implies that Satan is ready for a fight. It's unusual to consider a pugilist for the Prince of Darkness; he's usually depicted as more subtle – as a trickster, a manipulator, a lithe figure calling to mind his turn as a serpent in the Garden of Eden. This bruiser is the buffest devil we've seen.

Satan is seen summoning his legions to seek revenge after they had been cast into Hell by Almighty God. It's an image full of rebellion, rage and righteous anger. The eyes flash. The weapons and armour gleam, glow and glint in reflected hellfire. Everything else swirls in shadow. Nothing else matters, only the call. Will you answer it?

As striking as the painting is, some critics weren't fans. One had quite a fun take on the whole endeavour, describing the piece as depicting 'a mad German baker, dancing naked in a conflagration of his own treacle.' Lawrence had a heated rivalry with another artist, Fuseli, who also exhibited

a satanic figure. Fuseli saw Lawrence's legion summoner and quipped that it was 'a damned thing certainly, but not the Devil.'

Paintings are preserved with varnish, which can brown with age. Art historian Michael Levey said that 'No amount of darkened varnish and discoloured paint can conceal the imperious pose of Satan's naked, muscular figure.' Anything that darkens the shadows around Satan will only make him glow and glare with even greater incandescence.

Paris in the spring

Moving on to a more heavenly hunk, here we have Paris, who boasts some divine lineage – he can claim descent from a plethora of local river gods as well as big daddy Zeus himself. He may not be semi-divine like Hercules, but he's heavenly to look at and he did set the Trojan War in motion. His motivation? Love, of course. Aphrodite promised him the love of the most beautiful woman in the world if he awarded her a golden apple.

Aphrodite got her apple (a Golden Delicious, surely) and Paris won Helen. Unfortunately Helen was already married, and so we get the biggest crossover event in all heroic narratives (sorry, not sorry *Avengers: Doomsday*).

Paris was a different type of hero to the ones in *Holding Out for a Hero* (see page 114). He had few feats to his name, no fantastical physique and lacked the smarts to avoid a war. He was no great shakes with a sword but bang on with a bow: he shot the arrow which took down Achilles, hitting a bullseye in his Achilles' heel, which makes him a villain or a hero depending on which side you're cheering for. Complicated characters are far more compelling than bland cookie-cutter creations.

Poet Dares of Phrygia paints Paris as 'fair, tall and brave. His eyes were very beautiful, his hair soft and blond, his mouth charming, and his voice pleasant. He was swift and eager to take command.' Desmarais nails this in his painting; his Paris is every inch the pin-up Dares the Phrygian describes. We'll take it on faith that he has a nice voice. Desmarais' Paris is very carefully constructed, every feature and detail is designed to show off the artist's skills, knowledge and application of technique.

Desmarais painted Paris while he was still studying at the Académie de France in Rome. He was on a scholarship, so his work had to be excellent every time. Students were required to complete tasks, for

example painting the human figure, and then have their work critiqued by the all-powerful Académie. Desmarais' spotlight falls on Paris, whose body incorporates all sorts of tricky and complicated twists and leans, but we also get the flowing drapery, an exquisite landscape and a very good dog; it is easy to see why Desmarais was one of the bright young stars at school.

Desmarais chose to stay in Rome rather than return home to – where else – Paris, which at this point was in the midst of revolution. Circumstances lend a poignant edge to this painting – Paris is choosing between his love and his homeland, and Desmarais is facing a similar dilemma.

Wiped out

After a day walking around museums, you've earned a sit down. Take a load off and have a seat next to the *Barberini Faun*. If he can stop manspreading (faunspreading?), there will be plenty of space.

The *Barberini Faun* is one of those pieces that has been reproduced over and over again. Casts and copies can be found in museums and galleries all over the world. Curators really want us to be able to see this seductive sculpture. We don't know who the original artist was, but two Italian artists – the pleasingly alliterative Giuseppe Giorgetti alongside Lorenzo Ottoni – worked on repairing and restoring the faun in the 1600s. Art historians think that their work added an erotic charge to the already very sexy statue.

But why was the statue in need of repair? In 537, Rome was under siege by the Goths, the collection of Germanic tribes who often found themselves at odds with the Roman Empire. As a means of defence, Romans found themselves resorting to all sorts of tactics – the historian Procopius tells us that Romans hurled statues from Hadrian's Mausoleum upon the invaders.

Three guesses where the faun was displayed? That's right, he adorned Hadrian's eternal resting place. Beautiful and beardless, the faun seems to be Hadrian's type (for more about Hadrian's taste in hunks, read about Antinous on page 82). The faun has also been known as the Drunken Satyr, but considering what he went through, he's likely nursing a hefty blow to the head rather than a heavy hangover.

The faun lay in the mausoleum's moat for over 1,000 years before being discovered in the 1620s. By this point, the building had become the

Castel Sant'Angelo, its contents either lost or scattered to other locations. Hadrian himself is thought to be resting in St Peter's Basilica now.

It's not unusual to have questions about ancient artwork, but the *Barberini Faun* asks more questions than the experts have answers to. Is he a Roman copy of a Greek original, as so much Roman art is? Is he an original Roman creation? Could he hail from further afield? The marble he's crafted from does seem to hail from Asia after all.

Questions aside, we can appreciate him on a purely aesthetic level. He's put himself on display, inviting us to cast our eyes all over him. What's your favourite detail? For me, it's the cheeky little tail – and if you're fond of a cheeky little tail too, check out the Minotaur on page 123.

Barberini Faun, original artist unknown (2nd century BCE), repaired by Giuseppe Giorgetti and Lorenzo Ottoni (1600s). Whether drunk or exhausted, the faun exudes an undeniable sensuality in such a bold and shocking way that you might hear an audible gasp as unsuspecting visitors stumble across him in the museum.



Love is a battlefield

Our focus here isn't on battle and bloodshed; it's on the end result of all that intense training, hard work and discipline that goes into making sure our soldier boys are, as the Parachute Regiment's motto goes, *utrinque paratus* – you know, ready for anything.

We are young. Love is, as they say, a battlefield, and to successfully navigate a battlefield you need to hone a set of very specific skills. All this work results in some highly skilled soldiers conquering the land as well as sailors mastering waves and airmen soaring through the skies – and has the added bonus of honed bodies at peak performance, which can be very pleasant to look at, objectively speaking of course.

One can't help admiring those physiques that can handle the most extreme situations. We can admire and applaud the strength, endurance and mental fortitude it takes to overcome those tough challenges. There's an irresistible glint in the eye of a guy whose motto is Who Dares Wins. Who knows, they might even win your heart.

Combat clobber

And we haven't even mentioned the uniforms yet. There's something so very alluring about a well-attired guy, which we explored in depth in Boyfriend Material on page 10. From the old flash of red to modern day combat fatigues and dress uniforms, we can't help but swoon for a man in uniform. Looking even further back in time to greaves, helmets and some judiciously placed modesty fur, military fashion hasn't always been the most practical, but it certainly looks good. Heck, there's one officer coming up whose uniform consists solely of a pair of headphones. Not that we're complaining.

Military garb sends a message; the person donning it can survive and thrive in difficult environments and challenging situations, and/or wants to enhance a death-defying reputation while embodying a spirit of bravado. Sometimes it's about being hard, tough and intimidating, although inevitably all this hyper-masculine energy leans so heavily into its tropes of big muscles and specialist gear that it overshoots and ends up in camp. You be the judge of that.

Our brave boys, gallant generals and fine fellows certainly look good both in and out of uniform, no matter which uniform it is. Somewhere deep down, we are comforted by the thought that they are always prepared, and can be ready to respond to orders and defend us at a moment's notice. Could a soldier boy be the dream boyfriend? With the right encouragement they are never late for an event, they polish all the shoes and they listen to your communicated needs, wants and desires.

So, while they are away fighting the good fight and adorning the walls of museums and galleries all over the world, let's keep the home fires burning 'til the boys come home.

All at sea

Our next marvellous military man is a sailor, or *An Ordinary Telegraphist* if we're being specific. If there's one thing we know about the armed forces, it's that hierarchy is everything, so being specific is a very good thing indeed. 'What is an Ordinary Telegraphist?' you may ask. 'Surely this handsome chap is an extraordinary tele-whatsit, just look at him!' An Ordinary Telegraphist was a junior position in the Royal Navy. During World War I and World War II they were tasked with operating radio equipment, sending and receiving vital communications using morse code. When you're looking for a relationship, good communication skills are key, so if you're into sexy sailors, make sure the message gets through.

Although this painting is sometimes known as *The Sailor*, his rank and position tell us exactly what kind of seaman we are dealing with. Tearing your eyes away from those cheekbones and that jawline and taking in the rest of him, you can see our telegraphist's radio communicator badge adorning his right arm (it has two red wings and a lightning bolt). Always look for the details, they reveal all sorts of things!

Our signal-sending sailor was painted by Henry Marvell Carr, who worked in both portraiture and landscapes; in the 1940s he was hired to be part of the War Artists' Advisory Committee, an initiative spear-headed by cultural supremo Sir Kenneth Clark. Its aim was simple: create a comprehensive record of the UK during the war. This not only kept jobbing artists employed, it also helped to communicate the effects of war in a way that words just can't capture.

It sounds like Carr knew exactly what he had in mind for his depiction of a marvellous matelot, and Maurice's strong look perfectly fits the heroic mood that the artist was trying to create. Maurice becomes more than a simple sailor; he becomes a symbol of something much bigger, almost mythic in his pose and stance and manner. He wouldn't look out of place among our heroes of myth and legend on pages 114–133.

Maurice can now be found in Greenwich, London, at the National Maritime Museum. He was first displayed in 1946 in the Navy League's Naval Art Exhibition. Not only was he an important part of the exhibition, but he was the poster boy too! Maurice returned to London to see his face plastered all over advertising billboards, which, according to the man himself, was 'astonishing!'

Drop dead gaul-geous

When called upon to defend their homelands, soldiers are summoned from the hillside, called in from the glens, mustered from the moors and generally gathered from all over the place to fight invading forces. Hills, glens, moors and fens are exactly the types of landscape in which a fighter like our *Dying Gaul* might have been found. Although he's a statue made by Roman hands, there are tell-tale signs he hails from elsewhere.

First is his lack of armour – Gauls, and other Celtic peoples, signalled their strength and bravery, and their gods' favour, by going into battle without full armour. It was a real-life manifestation of the heroic nudity explored in other chapters (see *Holding Out for a Hero* on pages 114–133). They did, however, wear torcs, which are distinctive pieces of neckwear. Their hair was also very different to that of their conscientiously coiffed Roman opponents; Gauls wore their hair in a shaggier style and on their faces that recurring favourite, a rakish little moustache.

While it's clear that this Celtic chappie isn't a Roman soldier, it took art historians a while to work him out. Esteemed art critic, historian and enthusiast Joann Winklemann thought he might have been a wounded gladiator, but there's nothing glad about this chap.

The marble version here is a Roman statue; he is, once again, a Roman copy of a Greek original. A phrase you're likely very, very familiar with by now. You may be wondering, did the Romans make anything original? The answer is... perhaps! See the *Barberini Faun* on page 45. In a

fun moment of connection, the Gaul's right arm was restored and repaired by none other than Michelangelo, the Renaissance artist of *David* fame (see page 128).

If the *Dying Gaul* was based on a Greek statue, what's the story there? The OG version of this adorned the triumphal monument of King Attalos over in Pergamon, in modern-day Türkiye. Gaulish and Celtic identity is complicated, and although to modern imagination it is connected to northern Europe – thank you *Asterix and Obelix* – especially modern-day France, Britain and Ireland, there were Celtic and Gaulish people in Anatolia (a region of modern-day Türkiye). They were known as Galatians, and lived in the region from around 300 BCE.

The Gauls were a constant thorn in Rome's side, with various rebellions, uprisings and general resistance to Roman rule. Despite this being a statue that celebrates victory over a fallen foe, the artist treats the wounded warrior with respect. There is dignity in this defeated person. The mighty Romans could have dismissed a lot of elements of Gaulish culture as ridiculous, but they didn't. Instead, game recognized game, as the young people say, and the Romans recognized the Gauls as brave and worthy adversaries.

This man is also really, really attractive. No one had to be that kind to a vanquished foe! Our *Dying Gaul* has captured imaginations for centuries and was even mentioned by tortured poet Lord Byron in his smash hit 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage':

'I see before me the Gladiator lie
He leans upon his hand – his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his drooped head sinks gradually low –
And through his side, the last drops, ebbing slow.'

Hold my helmet

The *Dying Gaul* is a cousin, of sorts, to this Germanic soldier. Although separated by 2,000 years or so, with the Gaul statue dating to the 200s BCE and our fur-adorned fighter painted in 1902, these two can be seen as distant cousins. Schindler's warrior is known as *Germanischer Krieger mit Helm* – or *Germanic Warrior with Helmet*, if your German is a bit rusty. Tribes of Gaulish people lived throughout mainland Europe, including the bits we now call Germany, Austria and even Switzerland and Czechia.

Like another German artist, Arthur Kampf, whose versatile Vaudeville performer can be found on page 147, Schindler often looked to the past, to Greece, Roman and Biblical topics for inspiration. Schindler's work has also been described as being a bit Art Nouveau, at times. Art Nouveau often incorporated organic flowing lines, natural textures like fur and feathers and, of course, beautiful seductive bodies.

Our Germanic warrior's hair is under more control than our other gallant Gaul – he looks more like he's from the 1900s than an ancient warrior – but Schindler's attention to detail is what sells this fantasy. With the glinting copper tones of his ornate arm cuff and the details on the decorated bronze battle axe, the swirling teals and turquoises of oxidisation tell us which era we are in before we even get to the titular helmet.

The image is full of contrasts. *The Germanic Warrior* is present, his Centurion counterpart is absent; the Roman helm is silver and gold while the ornamentation on the warrior are warmer tones. The cold

Schindler simply tells us that the unnamed warrior and the helmet are 'with' each other, leaving it up to the viewer to fill in the gaps of the story. The held headpiece looks like it has been discarded, which suggests we are seeing the aftermath of an epic struggle or bloody battle. However, the helmet is still gleaming and, even though it lacks a wearer, there are no signs of wear, tear or damage. Not even a little dent. The warrior's body likewise has no signs of battle. No blood, no mud. He appears to be fresh from something, but is it the fight? Unlikely.

Instead, there's a curiosity here. He's scrutinizing the silver headpiece and treating the helmet with respect, holding it carefully and examining it. It is possible he's contemplating his foe and finding a moment of connection, or he could be assessing why someone would need something like this. If the battle had gone the other way, the Roman could be admiring this young man's battle axe instead.

Up, up and away

What on earth is going on in the photograph here? At first sight, this photo seems unreal. A moment of frenzied fantasy carefully staged and posed to appeal to hungry, desiring eyes like something from a top shelf magazine or an internet search with incognito mode activated. But no, that's not what we are looking at.

We are looking at a gunner, the one who operates the weapons on a military aircraft, who was on a rescue mission during World War II. He was trying to save a pilot who had been shot down in battle against Japanese forces at Rabaul Harbour in present-day Papua New Guinea. The airman was in the water, temporarily blind and helpless, and under enemy fire. Of course, he needed a hero!

The gunner stripped, discarding his flight suit and boots before diving into the sea to save the wounded Marine and bringing him aboard. All the while, battle raged around them. The gallant gunner has to be back at his post pronto. There was no time to dry off and dress. The picture was taken by photographer Horace Bristol and published in *LIFE* magazine. In 1941 Bristol was recruited to the US Naval Aviation Photographic Unit to document the realities of World War II. Disappointingly, not all of the views were quite as breathtaking as this.

Love is a durable fire in the mind

One of the prettiest gentlemen in all of history, Sir Walter Raleigh is included here because he was a soldier, but he had many, many strings to his bow. He was also a statesman, writer, poet and explorer, and it was he who declared that 'Love is a durable fire in the mind.'

He was one of Queen Elizabeth I's favourites, and it is plain to see why. Not that 'plain' has ever been used to describe Walt. He's easy on the eye, and for a while was completely committed to shoring up the power of the English throne and ingratiating himself with the Virgin Queen.

Walter knew that the best ticket to The Good Life was to keep the most powerful woman in the world happy, but he threw away all that grace and favour for love. Walter dared to marry Elizabeth Throckmorton without the Queen's permission and for this heinous act, he earned her ire and was thrown into the Tower of London.

El Dorado-no

After Elizabeth came James I and VI (confusingly the same person). James, who was partial to a pretty face – see *George Villiers* on page 20 – disliked Sir Walter. In 1617, Walter tried his usual trick of attempting to win grace and favour with the monarch, this time by promising El Dorado, the fabled Meso-American City of Gold. Alas, Walter returned empty handed.

Sir Walter had also been involved in a skirmish with the Spanish, which led to a diplomatic disaster. James had no choice but to sentence Walter, once again, to The Tower of London before he met his sticky end in 1618. Walter's final words to the executioner were: 'What dost thou fear? Strike, man, strike!' He was, as you can tell, quite the character!

The unknown artist who painted this 1588 portrait is one of the few that capture Walter's likeness at the height of his powers. The shiny sea-grit was seen as a symbol of purity and wealth, as well as a favourite bedazzling decoration of Queen Elizabeth I. Walter is bedecked in gleaming pearls, a nod to his queen and a reminder of his skills at sea, but rather than going completely over the top he has opted for a simple design. There is still a slash of fur for a taste of luxurious texture.

His colour scheme also speaks to simplicity, using muted tones and black and white. The colours may be limited but the scheming is still present. Black and white were favourite colours of Elizabeth's – the monarch loved a monochromatic moment.

Although in many ways this portrait shows off Walter's best features, it signals his subservience too. His cloak is a stunning sunburst, but it is prominent to remind us of a story that has now passed into legend, of how he placed his cloak over a puddle for the queen so her dainty feet wouldn't be sullied by the touch of mud.

There are signs of Elizabeth's favour for sure, but also many more that he was hers, willing to ebb and flow on the tide of her affection. Walter alluded to her as his moon goddess and in response, she called him 'Water', a pun so subtle and painless that one might miss it, but a sign that she called the shots.

Ahoj there sailor!

Tom of Finland is one of the most influential artists whose name you might never have heard, because it's not his real name. If you went to Finland and asked for Tom, there would be around 32,000 people who might respond with a friendly 'Hei'. Touko Laaksonen is the name Tom went by in his everyday life, and considering the type of art he produced, it was probably very sensible to employ an alter ego.

Tom was known for his ground-breaking and fearless representation of the masculine form. His pencils stretched the body to extremes, with muscles pumped to the max and tight clothes that barely cover or contain them. And this is entirely the point. The figures are so imbued with sensual energy, they are practically bursting at the seams and emphasize everything the audience is desperate to see. Even when the figures are fully clothed, it seems there's only mere moments before the uniforms will be discarded as passion takes over. And that's when clothes are included at all... Tom knew what he was doing with a pencil to provide his audience with a tantalizing view and leave them wanting, nay, *needing* more more more!

Touko trained in advertising, just like J.C. Leyendecker (see page 16). Their hunks certainly sit in conversation with each other; the athleticism, the creation of the archetype – both are selling something. While Leyendecker's art was selling respectable clothes and fancy collars, Tom's collars were leather, studded and wipe clean. Both offer up a fantasy of idealized masculinity. Tom was a prolific artist, cranking out over 3,500 illustrations over a 40-year career. That's nearly 100 a year. His poor arm.

In 1939, Touko moved to Helsinki for art school. School certainly proved to be an education for Touko, as during this time he discovered the different archetypes of men that we can see in his work, including the ones we see time and again; police officers, construction workers and sailors. So many sailors. It makes sense; Helsinki is a port town after all.

Laaksonen started drawing professionally in 1956, submitting cartoons to *Physique Pictorial* magazine, with illustrations appearing from the spring 1957 issue. Muscle mags depicted bodies taken to the very limits of what a human body can achieve and these bulging body builders were the perfect backdrop for Tom's hyper-masculine muscle men.

If you're not expecting it, Tom's work can be shocking. Even if you know exactly what kind of well-worn but brilliantly shined leather boots you're stepping into, one can still be taken aback from time to time. Shocking

as the sailors, leather-clad bikers and other men might be, at the heart of his work, Tom celebrates pleasure and denies shame – not unlike beloved British artist Beryl Cook and her ladies out on the town (see page 107).

We may be shocked by the sailors. We may be mesmerized by the muscles and we might be wondering whether it's even possible any of the figures in Tom's work could actually exist. Some of Tom's art does really push the boundaries and the men he drew could be seen as bulky brutes but, as one critic noted, 'No matter how physically imposing, all Tom's men were happy, their faces open, warm and welcoming.' There is sometimes a sense of danger – bad boys can be alluring (our Dark Desires are explored on page 28) – but the sailors in Tom's work are all affectionate.

The army trains its boys to Be the Best, and you have witnessed some of the very best indeed in this chapter. If you worry that your beloved sailor boy might have a different lover in every port, you might be happier with one of the US Marines, who are *semper fidelis* (always faithful).

Prepare to swoon as we spend some time getting to know the tortured poets immortalized in art, whatever their medium. Our writers may be pretty to look at, but there's a good chance they're walking disasters when it comes to relationships. They may be well-versed in putting the best words in the best order, but, as we fall head over heels, I can't help wondering: are they just saying what they think we want to hear? With their emotions so close to the surface – close enough for those feelings to make contact with ink and paper – in the time it takes us to read their missives, they may have moved on to an entirely new muse.

Sing muses, sing of the god of poetry

You know who I blame? The OG poet: Greek god Apollo. Apollo, the god of poetry, sunshine, music, healing, prophecy... the list goes on. He was a busy boy. That's fine though, he was always dropping his responsibilities in his pursuit of love and romance, chasing his conquests until they were inevitably transformed into some variation of flora (laurel tree, cypress, hyacinth... perhaps we should add 'unofficial god of gardening' to his already impressive divine CV) and he was off after the next one. Apollo is the OG tortured poet.

Fine Phoebus Apollo may have been a disaster relationship-wise, but he is stunning to behold. One of the most breathtaking representations of the god of poetry is the *Apollo Belvedere* (see page 67). The oldest version we see here – a Roman copy of a Greek original – is in the Vatican Museum, but copies exist in museums and galleries all over the world, and even a garden centre or two as well.

Described by art historians as 'the highest ideal of art,' the *Apollo Belvedere* embodies a 'noble simplicity and calm grandeur.' Easy qualities to have when you're a god! Apollo's godliness draws us in, his handsome face a prologue to his lean torso. We are like moths enthralled by a divine flame, but all the while the calmness and serenity of his demeanour keeps him at a distance. For once, he's staying in his lane, unbothered, cool as a classical cucumber or, as one art historian put it: 'Neither blood vessels nor sinews heat and stir his body.' He's certainly not blushing at the attention.

Classical artists prided themselves on their perfect proportionality, especially when it came to depictions of the gods, who were supposed to be flawless specimens, at least physically. Perfect proportionality doesn't

necessarily mean that everything fits a golden ratio. Rather, it means that there is some subtle manipulation going on, some distortions, enlargements and elongations, but not where you might expect. Take a closer look at his legs and thighs; they are much longer than they should be. Artists play with proportions a lot, and we'll explore this again with *David* (see page 128) and *Discobolus* (see page 148).

Mad, bad and dangerous to know

George Gordon, Lord Byron is one of the most famous poets of all time. He was, in so many ways, as much of a disaster as his patron god. The typical tortured poet, Byron described his university days as 'the most romantic period' of his life, all the while causing chaos by bringing a pet bear to campus after being denied his dog. He's *that* guy. Look what they made him do!

Byron knew the power of cultivating an image and was one of the most depicted figures of his era. Over 40 professional pieces of him were commissioned, with the most prominent artists of the time taking on the task of revealing a new, as yet unseen, facet of the famous poet. In the painting on page 71, his piercing blue eyes shine out of the canvas, and he is deep in thought with his lips pursed ever so slightly, making the viewer wonder what words may come tumbling out of his mouth.

Byron is shown in his trademark pose, wearing a traditional Albanian outfit. The outfit is a nod to his travels to the country and a wink to his poem 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage'. One of Byron's contemporaries, Leigh Hunt, described the portrait as 'by far the best that has appeared; I mean the best of him at his best time of life, and the most like him in features as well as expression.' While another critic thought he looked 'barbered 10 times o'er.' Critics: you can't please them all.

Byron was dubbed 'mad, bad and dangerous to know' by his ex, Lady Caroline Lamb – he said of her that she was 'the cleverest most agreeable, absurd, amiable, perplexing, dangerous fascinating little being that lives now or ought to have lived 2,000 years ago.' Poets: never short of an adjective. Caroline's description followed Byron all his life and beyond, while he spoke of himself as 'such a strange mélange of good and evil that it would be difficult to describe me.' Caroline won the war of the words and needless to say they were never, ever, ever getting back together.

Still, you know you'd be in for a hell of a ride if you managed to snag a date with this museum hottie. Unlike some tortured poets, Byron wasn't after a passive listener to fawn over his genius. He liked his partners to be unconventional; they were linguists, writers, social reformers and mathematic prodigies.

A fearless poet with a reputation for having bad blood with rivals and exes – this is an archetype that speaks to us across eras. Taylor has her Swifties; Beyonce her Beyhive. Byron? He had his Byromaniacs. Unhinged fandoms are nothing new. Byron's greatest hits were 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' which tells tales inspired by Byrons' own jaunts around Europe; and 'Don Juan,' a poem full of amorous encounters. After they hit the bookshelves, Bryon said he 'awoke one morning to find himself famous.'

Everyone wanted a piece of him, and the latest technological advances made it easy for unscrupulous types to pump out pirated copies of his work on the new mechanized presses. With his words beyond his control, Byron took great pains to keep a tight leash on his image. He is often depicted with his head turned to the right, gazing deep into the middle distance; always a three-quarter view, always holding something back from the viewer. Byron knew the power of his features, his pose as potent as his poetry. If his readers insisted on conflating him with the subjects of his books, he knew it was best to look as heroic as possible to feed the fantasy.

When an image didn't reach Byron's almost impossibly high standards, he made his ire known. A proposed etching for a publication made Byron look ordinary, all ideas of mystery and romance gone. He wrote to his publisher, John Murray, saying: 'I have a very strong objection to the engraving of the portrait and request that it may on no account be prefixed, but let all the proofs be burnt and the plate broken.'

Those who knew him either loved him, hated him or hated how much they loved him. Case in point: during the inclement Geneva summer of 1816, Mary Shelley invented modern science fiction with *Frankenstein* just so she didn't have to be in the same room as Byron, while his pal Polidori created *The Vampyre* inspired by the brooding Lord. Percy Bysshe Shelley, unlike monster-making Mary, was fond of Byron. He visited Bryon's Italian residence and discovered a cavalcade of creatures, writing in his diary that he saw 'ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon...' He returned to the entry later, adding '... I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea hens and an Egyptian crane.' Imagine the smell.

Luckily, Pope Clement VIII was a fan and wanted to honour Tasso's God-given talents and so proposed to crown him the King of all Poets. Unluckily, Tasso died a few days before his glorious coronation with a crown of bay leaves, in a ceremony that would have made him the OG poet laureate – alas, he literally just missed out on his laurels.

Come to Daddy

Let's take a look at Daddy, I mean Frederic Leighton depicted opposite. This portrait is by Leighton's 'brother in art' George Frederic Watts. The two were extremely close, both in terms of emotion and geography, being neighbours whose gardens were connected by a gate. When Leighton died in 1896, Watts despaired and said 'Half my life is gone with Leighton.' Watt's work shows Leighton in full command of his powers; he's sitting confidently and comfortably in his Academician's gown – a visible symbol of his status as president of the Royal Academy. His wild mane of curls has been tamed, but under the trappings of respectability there's a hint that this leonine leader is not exactly a tamed lion.

Leighton was an artist whose work has been in and out of fashion since his death, but he was enormously popular during his life. Leighton was responsible for *The Sluggard* on page 113, and his Pre-Raphaelite pal, John William Waterhouse, painted *Hylas and the Nymphs* on page 90. Leighton met a poet, Henry William Greville, in Florence. Henry, understandably, became infatuated with Leighton, writing him many letters addressing him as 'My dear boy' and signing off with 'goodbye, my sweetest,' with a generous sprinkling of pet names like 'Fey' and 'Bimbo.' Not exactly the words that spring to mind when looking at this bearded bear of a man.

It's hard to tell if Leighton liked being addressed as fairy-like or child-like (bimbo, before meaning pretty and dimwitted, had connections to 'bambino' meaning 'young child' in Italian), because his letters and diaries were destroyed after he died. Perhaps he appreciated the irony: his other nick-name was Jupiter Olympus, like the god, for his imposing countenance and bushy beard. Maybe he enjoyed someone seeing another side of him.

Leighton was an imposing figure, of that there is no doubt at all. He was a commanding character, with the stature to match his status. However, we have space for all types of men in this work, all brought together for their astonishingly good looks.

The age of the twink

A quick vocabulary lesson before we continue: 'Twink', meaning a slim young hottie with a youthful look about him, possibly has links to terms like twinkle-toes, that sweet American snack, or 1920s slang. But there have been other words for this particular type of hottie throughout the centuries. Oscar Wilde describes Dorian Gray, the OG demon twink and eponymous anti-hero of Wilde's 1890 novel of the same name, as 'some brainless, beautiful creature, who should always be here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence.' *The New York Times* may have declared 2018 the dawning of a twink ascendancy, but these bright young things have been beloved, desired and in vogue for centuries.

An older term, going back to the 1700s, is 'ganymede,' referring to Zeus' cupbearer who was so attractive that he found himself swooped up to Olympus, the home of the gods, to keep their drinks topped up for eternity. It seems that even the gods aren't immune to the appeal of a pretty, youthful lad. And who can blame them? Although not all of our twinks were so careful on their ascent. Icarus (see page 81) had a fateful fall, but the proud portrait of Sir Philip Sidney, painted with a Latin motto meaning 'fame will tell the rest,' reminds us that looks are one thing but our reputations last long after they fade. Two very different twinks – one thoughtful, the other impulsive – but both utterly swoonworthy.

The OG twink

Antinous was arguably the proto-twink who set the standard for all who followed. Unlike the Greek and Roman twinks (think arty tortured poet Apollo who we met on page 67 or boozy Bacchus, who really shines on pages 110–111), Antinous was a real person.

Historians are still piecing together Antinous' life story. We know some basics: he was born in Bithynia (now north-west Türkiye) in around 110 CE and died mysteriously in Egypt in 130 CE, drowning in the Nile whilst cruising with Hadrian and the Emperor's entourage. Antinophiles think that he met Hadrian in 123 CE as the Emperor was touring Asia Minor, and that he may have been fond of hunting. His biography clearly has some gaping holes in it, but his undeniable beauty is reason enough

for his face to be etched in history. When it comes to historically mighty figures like Hadrian, their status and legacy makes it difficult to conceive of them as living, breathing people. However, Hadrian's love for Antinous makes him all the more relatable.

Hadrian's deep devotion to Antinous extended beyond Antinous' death: Hadrian declared his lost love a god. As the de facto Chief Priest of the cult of Antinous, Hadrian had total control over how the new god was to be portrayed. Hadrian was able to share a vision of Antinous as he saw him: all luscious lips and curly locks, probably recalled from years of kisses and caresses, but with the subtle boost that comes from being head over heels in love.

Antinous is one of the most recognizable faces from antiquity and his visage can be admired in museums and galleries all over the world. He is still, it seems, irresistible. After a world tour, a bust of Antinous, known as the *Mondragone Antinous*, returned home to the Louvre in 2011. When the crate was removed and the museum workers could inspect him, before he went back out on display to be admired by eight million or so visitors to the museum every year, they noticed something quite remarkable; a smear of bright red lipstick on his cheek. The museum had to go to great lengths to remove the lipstick due to the porous nature of the marble. If you're going to kiss a statue, get consent first. And, please, don't wear lipstick.

So, Antinous was raised to godhood. Here Antinous is adorned with ivy and clusters of berries. Sometimes he's depicted with vines, encouraging an association with Dionysos or we may think of Zeus' cupbearer, Ganymede. Other times Antinous is depicted with Egyptian head-gear due to his death on the Nile. So, what was he god of? Wine, rivers, cupbearers and others in the drink-pouring business? Historians have said that his power lay in being submissive, which feels like a polite euphemism, but we have accounts of Antinous being a kind of love god, with worshippers praying to him to help them win their men back.

There's also evidence that Hadrian set up special games, not unlike the Olympics, to honour his beloved bright young thing. Perhaps that's one of the beauties of a pretty face, they can be whatever we need them to be.

From cupbearer to cupholder

Bacchus, or Dionysos, often seen with a cup in his hand – or in the case of the Bacchus revelling on page 110, wine being squeezed directly into his open mouth by a member of his entourage – can be a challenge to society and constraints. What else could we expect of a god of wine, intoxication, ecstasy and madness? Perhaps he's best described as a Demon Twink – a term from a 2021 incident involving bad photography and outrageous behaviour. The images of Bacchus we see usually feature his long curly hair, parted, pouting lips and sliding, slippy drapery all suggestive of a good night out. Bacchus invites his worshippers to lose themselves. While he may lack the awe to inspire followers, you'd certainly follow him to a toga party.

This is the Bacchus we are used to seeing: the party god who is already a few shots of tequila into a night out; intoxicatingly charismatic, leading his followers astray. The Bacchus here is the work of Simeon Solomon, who was, briefly, a member of the famous Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood until a scandal in 1873 cut his ties with the fellowship. Critics of Solomon's work have suggested that it shows an interest in bright young things – as illustrated by the scantily-clad crystal-gazer in *The Magic Crystal* – but his interpretations of the characters defied expectations. People didn't quite know what to make of them.

'Where is the jovial god of wine?' asked a critic, wanting a more traditional take on this divine drinker, perhaps not realizing that wine can be sour as well as sweet. Algernon Charles Swinbourne, a poet, friend and artistic collaborator of Solomon, said that his Bacchus has 'the stamp of sorrow, of perplexities unsolved and desires unsatisfied.' We can see that in the not-quite-smile, in the thyrsus (Bacchus' ivy-wreathed staff) resting on his shoulder, giving us the impression that he's on his way to work, but the faraway look in his eyes suggests that he feels it might not be a great day at the office. Does the party end for the original party-boy?

Mythologically speaking, Bacchus is often linked with Pan – both are gods of the wild and both are known for partying a bit too hard. Luckily, these bright young things haven't hit that point in life where it takes at least three days to recover from a night out. Being immortal has its perks!

Just purse your lips and blow

There's something innately sensual about Pan, our musically-inclined Greek god, whether he's kicking up his goat heels in party mode, or taking it easy playing his eponymous pipes. Like Zeus, Pan very much gives over to the pleasures of the flesh; he's a randy satyr who thinks with the brains between his legs. Given that Pan is at least half goat, it's safe to say he's likely to be regularly overtaken by his animal instincts. We've had part human hybrids elsewhere in this book, like the bullish Minotaur (see page 123) and fishy Triton (see page 38). The Minotaur is considered an animalistic exemplar despite only having a bovine head and tail, whereas Triton is regarded as mostly human. But where is Pan on this scale?

Pan is usually depicted as throbbing with excitement, something that ancient artists had no bones about including in their work. But we have to keep modern sensibilities in mind with our modern (well, 1960s) mores when thinking about Bobby Kendall as Pan in James Bidgood's fevered fantasy of a film, *Pink Narcissus*. Bidgood's vision of Pan is loaded with sensuality, the pipe-playing goat god being one facet of how Kendall's character explores and examines his encounters.

The stylized setting and saturated colours give an unnaturalness to the wild nature of Pan, who is looking directly at the camera. His bare feet and leaf-strewn hair suggest this wildness remains, but his pretty, perfectly made-up face makes this Pan a bright young thing rather than a wanton nature god. Bobby's crochet leggings look net-like, as though our wild thing has been trapped by the artist's lens. Bidgood was, as one art critic explains, 'an artist pursuing one very intense thing: his obsession with the young male figure.'

Bobby's body, although not fully goated, is still not completely human. His pointed ears remind us of his supernatural character. His provocative pose with his spread legs is not unlike the *Barberini Faun* on page 45, but here the crossed leg is both a barrier and a way to draw our eye downwards. This Pan is playful and teasing; even his pipes are part of the act. His pursed lips approach them, all ready to go, his instrument mere inches away from his face, but Bobby holds back. His lips pout but are not quite ready to blow.

Critics have described Bidgood's work as 'camp and vulgar' but his stills and photographic work found homes in esteemed museums and galleries around the world.

Going for a dip

It's okay if you haven't heard of Hylas; he is an almost-hero. He accompanied Hercules on a few missions, but an ill-fated side quest on his journey with the Argonauts cut his heroic legacy tragically short. As well as his watery end, Hylas is known for his flowing locks, like Antinous earlier in this chapter. Hylas and Antinous also have an athletic connection; while there were no Hylan games, there were athletes, pretty-boy gladiators (think Roman pro-wrestlers) who would name themselves after our almost-hero in an attempt to establish a reputation as a pin up.

In the image on page 90, John William Waterhouse's Hylas is desired by the naiads, the water-nymphs. We see him through their eyes, his face is obscured in shadow and profile, but the nymphs are getting the full force of his matinee idol good looks. He is clearly the object of their desires – two of them are gently pulling him into the water, and a third is persuading him in with a handful of fresh-water pearls, while the others circle around him. The poor boy didn't stand a chance.

Art historians have given a lot of focus to who the nymphs are, with two models serving as the basis for all seven, giving these naiads an uncanny similarity. Little thought has been given to the object of their desire. Hylas is likely to be one of Mediterranean male models that the Pre-Raphaelites liked to use, possibly Leighton's muse Gaeto Valvona or Antonio Colarossi.

Beach boys

This chapter has celebrated the beauty of bright young things, and our final artist, Henry Scott Tuke, was described by journalists in *Tatler* as 'par excellence the painter of youth.' His impressionistic portraits of sun-kissed young men bathing on idyllic Cornish beaches have been rediscovered recently and celebrated for the joy they bring.

Tuke painted *en plein air*, which is a really fancy way of saying he painted outside, and you can sense the sun's heat and the salt breeze with every brush stroke. Being outside was important to Tuke in how he approached his subjects. In an interview with *The Studio* magazine he said that working outside 'opens up fresh new vistas and certainly gave new interest to the undraped figure to depict it with pure daylight upon it.' The

quality of light is just better outside. He continued that he 'always returns to my first opinion, that the truth and beauty of flesh in sunlight by the sea, is offered to you in a way impossible to secure in pictures built up from hasty sketches, at leisure, in one's studio.'

Tuke's Cornwall seems to offer a bounty of beautiful young things bathing in their birthday suits. For some of Tuke's works, his models were in the buff in the middle of busy harbours. To save his models' blushes and the modesty of those going about their beachside business, Tuke moved his models to a quieter, more sheltered stretch of sand: Newport Beach, Sunny Cove, affectionately known as 'Tuke's Beach.' It was at Tuke's Beach that he painted *Ruby, Gold and Malachite* in 1902. Critics from the time describe it as 'a picture of boys bathing... flooded with beautiful light, seen through a soft, warm atmosphere.'

Tuke said of his passion for his subjects: '... I have seen the most beautiful things that eyes can see, and if occasionally one has been able to give even the palest reflection of it, it has been worth the struggle with natural obstacles which beset the painter, changing lights, encroaching tides and buffeting winds.' Tuke dabbled in working on gods, but it was the everyday Cornish lads who were his true muses, such as rower Charlie Mitchell who we see reclining on the rocks in *Beach Study* on page 97. In a touching gesture, Tuke left money for his models in his will.

The New York Times article referred to earlier suggests that twink-ness offers a new answer to the problem of what makes a man. It certainly made it clear that there is more than one body type that can be deemed attractive, and even within this archetype of bright young things we've got a real range of looks; the beach boys, the party boys, the gods and the doomed youth. (We'll be exploring the question of What Makes a Man? in more detail on page 134.)

Our hardest worker is Thornycroft's *Mower*. With his hand on his hip, it's easy to imagine him either assessing the size of the job and coming up with an appropriate estimate (that, let's face it, is bound to change) or he's looking back over the freshly cut field, admiring a job well done. The life-sized version of this statue is like a Victorian soft drink commercial – you can't help but feel like you need to hand him a cool, refreshing beverage. Thornycroft first exhibited this work alongside a few lines of a poem:

'...A mower, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing, heaved the river-grass
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass.'

He imagined his mower taking a break to observe the passing artist. Thornycroft designed his life-sized simulacrum while on a summer boat trip along the Thames, so he may have based him on labourers he passed on the journey.

The Mower was a career highpoint for the artist, and a critic described the work thus: 'the modelling was never more learned or beautiful in any previous work of Mr Thornycroft, nor the flesh more finely contrasted against the various textures.' Our bare-chested gardener is a feast for the eyes; the bronze mimics the worn boot-leather, socks rumpled and muscles honed by years of hard work, not a gym subscription nor fleck of protein powder in sight.

We've seen museum hunks who have laboured, such as Hercules (see page 121), but *The Mower* is one of the very few who has worked for their physique. Fun fact: experts think *The Mower* is the first major sculpture to depict a worker at work.

The dazzling doctor

After all that manual labour, we need to wind down a bit before we can collect ourselves to go out. Let's meet our next museum hunk; the good doctor. Decked out in a striking scarlet robe is the swoon-worthy *Doctor Pozzi at Home*, who has clearly had a hard day at work and now needs to unwind. Clothing and costume is a large part of what makes this portrait so eye-catching. Indeed, Sargent was especially sartorially astute in his work, with clothes and fashion signifying levels of meaning to the masses. He had

his sitters dressed in garb that identified their roles. The bright blood red of the resplendent ruby robe put some contemporary gallery goers in mind of cardinals and popes, but the fiery fabric in fact refers to Pozzi's medical profession. With the shock of scarlet and the ruffs and frills, he's not a million miles away from our *Tailor* (see page 13). Indeed, the good doctor was another key inspiration for the very tome you hold in your hands.

Critics described the image as 'an audacious portrait of a daring man,' and Sargent himself regarded Pozzi with affection, calling him 'a brilliant creature.' The dashing doctor Pozzi had a complicated private life. Although married with children, the surgeon had scandalous affairs with opera singers and actresses, all the while maintaining a successful, thriving and groundbreaking medical practice. Beautiful doctors? Messy private lives? It's all very *Grey's Anatomy*.

Pool parties

Going back to 1870, we can see a party starting around another pool in *Summer Scene (Bathers)*, with young men in surprisingly modern looking swimwear. Hands up who wants their own pair of tiger-striped trunks?

This summer scene was painted by Jean Frédéric Bazille, an artist who was part of the 'new painting' movement, which was all about depicting spontaneity – we can see that throughout this piece. In the background, there's a gentleman who has decided that it's time to ditch the suit and have a paddle. Moving forward, we have a chap enjoying watching some impromptu wrestling. Right at the front we have our tiger-striped bather dipping his toe in the cool water, debating whether it's too cold for a full jump in.

Although Bazille's work was a step away from formal posed portraiture, he still took inspiration from great artists of the past. Our tiger-striped bather's pose is a nod to Saint Sebastian, the wrestlers are grappling and locked in the same stance as some classical wrestlers, possibly Hercules and Antaeus. Their playful physicality suggests that they are out in the park ready for some fun.

Although a critic said the sunlight 'inundates the canvas,' it's Bazille's use of shade that really directs our gaze. The dappled sunshine gives the painting depth but the shade also provides us with a spotlight, directing our gaze and telling us what to focus on: the playfully wrestling lads, and not Saint Sebastian's feet...

Hey, Mr DJ, put a record on

The boys are out-out. Bathed and primed and ready. Our party is beginning to pick up steam. The bass is pumping, the lights are strobing and the disco ball winks and glints as it spins overhead. Some people say that God is a DJ, but I think God might be a dancer, our soul's companion, spinning around on the edge of a Saturday night. What better way to demonstrate this than with *Shiva as Lord of Dance*, whose creative and destructive powers are kept in balance with a swing of the hips and a fling of the arms. His cosmic dance marks the eternal cycles of life.

When we dance, humans and godlings alike, the music and movement gets us out of our heads, lost in our bodies and in the moment. Shiva's dancing is, to use a modern term, mindful; crushed under his dancing feet is Apasmara, a demon who represents ignorance, selfishness and forgetfulness. Music makes the people come together.

Shiva's got the party started and asked the DJ to put a record on and now we can dance with our museum hotties. The night out really gets going with the raucous *Ladies Night* by Beryl Cook. 'I'm just painting people enjoying themselves,' said Beryl of her work. The ladies here are definitely having a wild night on the town. It's ladies' night and the feeling's right. Let's go, girls.

Beryl's Ruben-esque figures are having the time of their lives. You can virtually hear the hearty laughter of the woman in green over the disco beats and the shocked gasp of the polka-dotted patron as the dancer full monties. He seems proud of his performance and the black-clad clubber is enjoying the view as much as we are.

Beryl worked by sketching and photographing scenes from life, a devil with a disposable camera capturing the goings on around her. People in Beryl's hometown of Portsmouth in Hampshire claim to be the models, even when they are caught in less than flattering moments. Beryl didn't artistically airbrush life, and she was great at capturing people in awkward moments without judgement, malice, misogyny or moralizing. She's having a hearty laugh with a good group of pals. Beryl's work is always popular with people who connect with her humour and honesty. Her subjects, even her hunks, are on the curvy side – more to cuddle!

Although we enjoy the party, and consider Beryl Cook one of Britain's best loved artists, the art world has been reluctant to give Beryl her dues. A prominent critic said she had 'developed a highly successful formula that many fools are willing to buy, but in my opinion, it's anti-art. It has a kind of vulgar streak that has nothing to do with art.' How dare people enjoy something!

A former director of the Tate galleries said that there would never be a Cook on the walls in the gallery; however, the gallery has a photograph of her in their collection and two of her works were included in the exhibition *Rude Britannia!*, so I guess Beryl had the last laugh.

The after-party

Now Bacchus comes riding in, tipsy and triumphant. Having fun and letting loose is when this god comes into his own. On page 110 we see Bacchus as we'd expect: enjoying his wine. Solomon's *Bacchus* (see page 87) has the sadness in his eyes of someone who over-indulged the night before – hangovers are, after all, the wrath of grapes. Michaelina Wautier's *Bacchus* is a hedonistic figure, reclining while wine is poured down his throat. It's clearly been a messy night of revels – who let the donkey in? – and it looks like the group, made up of mostly masc followers, nary a maenad in sight, is headed to the after-party. There's only one female figure in full focus: the artist herself.

At this point (the 1650s), there was a general consensus that women were not able to depict the masculine form. This might have had something to do with women being excluded from art school and not permitted to study the male form. Sigh. In *The Triumph of Bacchus*, we see several examples of masculine bodies exposed and on show. We have the star, Bacchus, barely clad in his leopard print cloth, his muscular body given over to intoxication. His followers show different types of bodies, with the barrow-pusher being not too far off a dad-bod, if we expand the definition of dad-bod to include goat legs. In many ways, this painting is Wautier Triumphant rather than Bacchus. She demonstrates that she's got a skill and a mastery that shows that women artists are every bit as capable as their masculine colleagues. As the party swirls in an excess of ecstasy, she stands apart, unbothered. 'Look,' she's saying, 'I'm in control here.' Given all the carousing, someone needs to be in charge!

After the party

Let's wrap this chapter up with *The Sluggard* – he's stretching and yawning and so are we after all the raucous revels. Originally, Daddy Freddy Leighton (see page 75) was going to call this chap *An Athlete Awakening from Sleep*. The big stretch tells us that he's a tired boy. Changing the name to *The Sluggard* gives us the opposite reading; he's worn out, possibly from a big night. The crumpled laurel leaves at his feet suggest that he's earned his rest.

Artistically, the big stretch that Leighton is going for with *The Sluggard* is a tricky effect to pull off. Leighton has created a body that is at once hard, yet supple and flexible – with taut muscle but the softness of exhaustion. There's a dynamic twist to the figure too, to add a further complexity to the piece.

Leighton, like so many of the artists featured, preferred to work with live models and *The Sluggard* is no exception. In 1906 a Leighton biographer recorded the name of the model as Guiseppe Valona, and thus that was the name that was repeated over and over again in the text books. In 2001, a family named Valvona came forward with an interesting discovery; an extensive manuscript written by an ancestor named Gaeto, who shared his stories of being a model for artists like Leighton, Millais and Alma-Tadema. In particular, he wrote about how his rising and stretching after a challenging session with Leighton led to *The Sluggard*! You can picture the moment oh so clearly. Readers, take note: this is why it's important to check your work.

Gaeto met Leighton while the artist was travelling around Italy. Gaeto, being a Naples native, was well-placed to help Leighton get the lay of the land. Gaeto and Frederick clearly hit it off. The piece formerly known as *An Athlete Awakening from Sleep* was conceived as a companion to another Leighton work: *Athlete Wrestling a Snake*. There is some evidence to suggest that Gaeto was the model for that piece too, but some art historians think it was another hunky Italian model, Angelo Colorossi.

The knight in shining armour

The archetypal monster slayer, be they metaphorical or legendary, is the knight in shining armour. Pledging life and loyalty to their liege lord and lady fair, they battle against dragons, demons and the forces of darkness. Think circular tables and love triangles, that kind of thing. Our first beplumed hero on page 117 fits this mould to a tee. *Sir Arthegal, the Knight of Justice* is from Edmund Spenser's epic 1590 poem 'The Faerie Queene', a piece of flattery that made the case for Elizabeth I to be regarded as the legitimate heir to the legendary King Arthur.

Alongside the main text, Spenser wrote a 'Letter of the Author' in which he tells us his aims in publishing 'The Faerie Queene'. He wanted to 'fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline.' Noble? Virtuous? Gentle? Disciplined? All the ingredients for the perfect man, but more to the point of this chapter, he wanted to make heroes!

The hero we see before us is Arthegal, a knight of the titular queen. His name means 'valour' and he showed great courage in the face of danger. Perfect for a knight. His weird little guy friend is his squire, Talus, an enforcer of justice in his own right. His approach is tougher than Artegall's and allows wrong-doers no mercy. Talus is directing Artegall's gaze. He's noticed you and wants his Good Sir Knight to see you too. Are you looking upon Artegall with impure thoughts? Naughty. Watch out.

Fortune seeking

John Hamilton Mortimer's 'Hero' series shows the hero's journey in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step format. Imagine a superhero comic with fewer words and much larger pictures. The series kicks off with *The Hero Decides to Seek His Fortune* depicting the unnamed hero saying 'Yes!' to adventure – or, given his downward gaze, it may have been more of a semi-embarrassed 'Oh, go on then.' Mortimer's other works in this series show key stages of any typical hero narrative, like beating up the bad guys and the inevitable happy ending.

The Hero Decides to Seek His Fortune shows exactly what you might expect: the life-altering moment a young man answers the call. All the heads in the bar have turned to look at our hero, who looks suddenly self-conscious about the admiration he's receiving. The bar patrons may only

have eyes for their hero, but the image draws our attention to the blonde guy and the red-haired girl framing the protagonist. With those bulging biceps, the blonde looks like he's more than capable of shouldering the heroic burden. The redhead, however, looks like she's planning how best to reward the hero for his labours later...

Mortimer is known for enhancing the masculine traits of his male subjects. Prior to his work, the fashion was for a more effete body type to take centre stage. We have two burly brawny subjects here to enjoy, both projecting a 'good guy' vibe.

So, our hero has answered the call. Unlike his glowing companion, he has kept his tunic and armour on. Although armour suggests getting battle ready and fighting the good fight for truth, justice and a better tomorrow, artists have traditionally depicted their heroes in their altogether. Even today's spandex-clad comic-book crime fighters leave little to the imagination, despite being completely covered up from head to toe.

The altogether approach wasn't a way to invite lingering looks over taut muscles – well, not entirely anyway – but rather a way to demonstrate that these heroes are the real deal; they don't need armour, they have righteousness on their side! They don't need ornamentation, they have truth and justice! Also, artists like to show off how skilled they are with musculature, veins and even body hair. If one is being fancy, we call this approach 'heroic nudity.' So, let's be fancy as we feast our eyes on our hunks and appreciate their heroics.

What happens to our hero next? The second work in Mortimer's series has him seeking his father's permission to continue his mission, and in the third he rescues some prisoners from bandits – John Hamilton Mortimer liked showing criminals in his work, adding some grit and grime to offset the pretty and the polish. More than that, it reminds us that heroes have to get their hands dirty to do some heroing, otherwise what are they even doing? We finish our story with the most traditional of endings; in the fourth of Mortimer's works the hero gets married, and, we presume, lives happily ever after. The hero is very concerned about his father's approval, which, while virtuous, doesn't necessarily feel 'heroic'. But it all depends on the father figure. Perhaps it would be best to be prepared for some daddy issues if you fall for Mortimer's hunk.

A hero's work

Some of our heroes, like Hercules, Perseus and Theseus (according to some versions of the story) have heavenly heritage, but there's no way we can describe Hercules' and Perseus' father, Zeus, as a hero, no matter what children's film would have us believe.

Towering over us, at more than a colossal 3 metres (10 feet) tall, is the famous *Farnese Hercules* (see page 121). The original was created by an artist called Lysippos in Athens around the 4th century BCE, but this is a Roman copy of that lost original. The copy was made by an artist called Glycon, who was celebrated for his naturalistic style.

The *Farnese Hercules* was found in the Baths of Caracalla, a Roman Emperor who reigned from 198 to 217 CE. The baths were Rome's second largest public bathing complex and were richly decorated with over 120 statues. It really puts the local swimming pool to shame. Caracalla wasn't a popular emperor, he's mostly remembered in history for his assassination during a bathroom break while travelling.

This Hercules has a faraway look on his bearded face and is leaning on his gnarled club – he's worn out. He has literally been carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders while the Titan Atlas went to fetch some apples from the garden of the Hesperides. Hercules is holding the apples, which look ever so dainty in his huge hands, behind his back. Hercules is near the end of his labours now. He's overcome the Nemean Lion, we can see the leonine pelt draped over a stump; he's handled the Hydra; battled bulls, boars and birds and cleaned some nasty stables. There's just one more thing on his list: a trip to the underworld.

Having done all of that, it is no wonder he's sometimes known as The Weary Hercules. He's earned his rest after all that labouring. Glycon has perfectly captured the look of utter exhaustion. Time to relax in one of the hot baths.

But why the labours? Hercules was making amends. Hera, Zeus' wife (and technically Herc's stepmother) sent him a fit of madness, causing him to kill his wife and children. The gods declared he would be absolved of his actions if he served a mortal and completed the tasks he was set. Even before the incredible feats of strength, Hercules was shouldering an immense emotional burden.

Despite this tragedy, Hercules is usually a happy chappy when we meet him in stories. A flagon of wine in one hand, and a hearty chuckle

HOTTIES IN ART

warming the cockles of those gathered around him, Herc's love of carousing means he'd fit in well with the Work Hard, Play Hard fitties on pages 98–113. Some artists have depicted Hercules with a hairy bum: combine that with his good sense of humour and we may have found the perfect date!

In many ways, Herc's heavy hulking frame is very different from the other heroes' leaner bodies. Lysippus and Glycon's visions for Hercules give him a boxer's physique rather than the leaner body of a track runner. Could you imagine going a few rounds in the ring with him?

Weary Hercules is a newer depiction of the demigod, the earliest is 525 BCE. He was usually shown as the invincible hero, overcoming all odds and going the distance. The *Farnese Hercules* from 4th century BCE shows the incredible toll those labours took on him. He's half-heavenly, sure, but also half-human.

Canova by candlelight

Perseus was another hero who also had Zeus as a dad; according to legend Zeus came to Danaë, Perseus' mother, as a godly golden shower. Yes, you read that correctly. Perseus is known for slaying the Gorgon Medusa and rescuing the beautiful princess Andromeda from a ravaging sea serpent. Like Hercules, his story also got the cinematic treatment with the ever-so-handsome Harry Hamlin donning sword and sandals to portray Perseus fighting Ray Harryhausen's state of the art special effects.

But pin-up Perseus is a concept that goes back far beyond 1981's *Clash of the Titans*. Let's travel back a bit further to the early 1800s. Canova is the master sculptor of the era. His work is considered unsurpassable. Popes, princes and even Napoleon were desperate to get their hands on one of his pieces. Today, we are lucky enough to see them in museums all over the world. The *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* in the Met was commissioned by Polish Countess Valeria Tarnowska, who was smitten with Canova when she met him, writing 'I saw the great Canova! I saw him amidst his glory, surrounded by his masterpieces—simple, modest, he seems to ignore the fact that he has become immortal.'

Canova modelled his Perseus on the *Apollo Belvedere* (see page 67). With such a beautiful blueprint to begin with, how could this work be anything less than divine? While the *Apollo Belvedere* is aiming an arrow, Perseus has his arm outstretched, holding Medusa's severed head.

Although Perseus is looking at the head, he's not looking Medusa dead in her petrifying pupils. Canova recommended his statues be seen by candlelight – perfect for a romantic evening. But be careful where you cast your gaze, you might end up hard as rock.

Staying with the 'euses', heroes who fought animal-themed monsters, and with Canova too, we have one of the most striking statues ever, in my humble opinion: *Theseus and the Minotaur* (see page 123). This is the piece that really put Canova on the map, artistically speaking. For context, Theseus was the son of Aegeus, an Athenian aristocrat: in some versions of the story, he's Poseidon's progeny. His heroic journey takes him from Athens to Crete, where he fights to save the youth of Athens from being devoured by the Minotaur.

In an unusual composition, Canova's Theseus can be seen not in the heat of battle nor in the glorious glow of victory, but rather in a pose curators have described as 'overcoming the Minotaur.' Indeed, the Canova museum describes the pose as Theseus 'sitting triumphantly atop' the beast, which feels just a whisper away from a euphemism. Canova's approach to the pose was suggested by his friend, artist and antiquarian Gavin Hamilton, who obviously knew what the audience needed to see.

Theseus has a typical athletic build, but the Minotaur is buffer and, dare I say, beefier. As with other mashed-up monsters, the animalistic nature of the Minotaur shows his otherness, but he's just human enough for us to recognize reflections of our natures too. Swirls of hair on his chest and in his arm pits, and that cheeky little tail...

When this tableau was revealed, critics hailed it as 'triumph of logic over irrationality.' Is it irrational to be just as into the Minotaur?

Overcoming the odds

Most of the heroes in this chapter, like Hercules, Perseus and Theseus, have well-known, well-connected dads. Are they nepo-babies? They are not, not benefitting from dad's connections and influence. Other heroes, however, like Michelangelo's *David*, are a bit more self-made. They come from humble beginnings and had hero-status thrust upon them. The story of David comes to us from the Bible; he's the little guy who took on the giant Goliath and, against all odds, ends up winning.

Giorgio Vasari, an Italian painter and architect from the 16th century, thinks so too, and said that 'Whoever has seen this work need not trouble to see any other work executed in sculpture, either in our own or in other times.'

There are so many reasons as to what makes *David* so enchanting. Michelangelo started work on him in 1501, finishing in 1504. He lovingly carved every little detail from a single imperfect block of marble. But Michelangelo wasn't the first artist to get his hands on that slab of stone. Another artist had already tried to carve a figure on this marble but he botched and bungled the job, leaving the marble a mis-shapen mess. David is about more than the little guy defeating the giant. He's a second chance, a do-over!

Once Michelangelo started work on the marble, he identified with *David* and wrote about him in his poetry. He found points of connection with how they overcame their obstacles using their tools: 'David with his sling/I with my bow.' Through Michelangelo's deft handiwork, David was transformed into more than a character from a story. He became the embodiment of an idea: you can overcome your obstacles too, you just need the right tools.

Despite being a statue, *David* doesn't stand still; his body is infused with energy, he's amped up! His heart is beating hard as he screws his courage to the sticking place. Despite being 5 metres (17 feet) tall, it is David's little details that keep us coming back for more and more. Have you ever noticed his distinctive heart-shaped eyes? They soften him somewhat, giving our colossal hero a hint of vulnerability. Some historians think that the heart-shape in David's eye is the letter D, which was a way of drawing a love heart at this time. Could Michelangelo have had someone in mind?

Some art historians have found it difficult to imagine a model for *David*. Michelangelo said he was inspired by statues of the Dioscuri – the twins Castor and Pollux – but critics said if this is true, he hid his models well. (A load of Pollux, perhaps?) While there was no singular model for *David*, Michelangelo created his ideal man – perhaps THE ideal man – when carving his marble. It is said that no work of art in the Renaissance was created without purpose. David's purpose was to inspire. He's still inspirational today.

You're a champion, greatest of them all

Jem Wharton (see page 131) was one of the greatest boxers of the 1800s. With a career of eight wins and one draw, Jem was never defeated in the ring. Here he's decked out in a tight white shirt, which emphasises his physique. It shows that in the picture, he's in training mode, to keep his skills sharp. If you were meeting Jem in the ring, he'd be bare chested just like boxers today. It's nice that some things stay the same.

Cast your eyes downwards, beyond the brilliant white of the shirt and there's a colourful scarf to greet you. This is more than a bold fashion statement; it is a celebration of victory. It would have been awarded to Jem after his last boxing bout. Given that Jem is wearing whites and beiges, this coloured scarf pops all the more; the artist wants you to see Jem as a boxing hero, overcoming the odds. He's a champion!

Come and take them!

Our heroes so far have been legendary, born of myths and stories to give us hope when the tidings were dark and dismal. Somewhere in our wildest fantasies there has to be a real life hero racing with the thunder and rising with the heat to rescue us.

We don't have a super man to sweep us off our feet, instead we have Sparta-man in *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (see page 124), legendary leader of the 300 Spartan warriors who beat off invading Persian forces at the Battle of Thermopylae (the Hot Gates, named for the nearby sulphur springs. That's why the heat is rising!).

This story may have an echo of familiarity for you – do you remember the 2006 film *300*? Clearly the costume department saw *Leonidas at Thermopylae* and thought, 'We'll get some red cloaks and some sandals and call it a day. Job done, lads.'

Leonidas stares out at us from the painting, his outward gaze separating him from the hustle and bustle and tussles of the troops. He knows his fate, we know his fate. Spoiler: it doesn't end well for him. Xerxes, the Persian leader, had offered to spare the lives of Leonidas' legions on the condition the Spartans submitted and handed over their weapons. Leonidas replied defiantly: 'Come and take them!' Our heroes have been worth holding out for. They've fought beasts, brutes and baddies, and they've looked good doing it.

So far we have explored a few different facets of masculinity. We've seen hunky heroes, glorious gods, sexy soldiers, delicious dudes and myriad other masculine forms. They all show different ways that an art history hottie can exude both desirability and masculinity. It leads us to the big question, one we've been building up to for this whole book; what makes a man?

And on the sixth day...

In the beginning there was the word. But, there was no-one to hear the word, so did the word even exist? It wasn't until the sixth day that the Christian God said – presumably to Himself, as by this point, nothing else had language apart from maybe one or two very advanced parrots from day five – 'And now we make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us.' Adam was made first, and then, after seeing that he really wasn't doing well when left unsupervised, God made Eve.

The story goes that Eve was made from Adam's rib. In Kristian Zahrtmann's *Adam in Paradise* (see page 137), we can see Adam's hand splayed across his ribs, reminding us where Eve will spring from. The Old Testament tells us that 'The Lord God made the man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh.' It's nice to know that God used an anaesthetic for his pioneering rib removal surgery. Given the gentle touch of his hand over the spot, Zahrtmann's Adam might still be feeling a bit tender from the procedure.

Adam is sitting on an earthy throne; his pose is giving King of the Jungle energy to the piece. He is seated in all his glory, not covered by a fig leaf, however the fig leaves hang on the nearby tree, suggesting The Fall isn't too far off. Verdant vegetation blooms and abounds but the reds and the yellows and deep shadows bring a sense of impending doom, those tropical hues hinting at the fires of hell and damnation.

You'd be hard pressed to find an apple amidst all the fecundity on show, but bananas are very much present. Not only do they reinforce our focus on Adam's, ahem, 'glory', but some philosophers, theologists and other Big Thinkers hold the opinion that Eve was trying to encourage Adam to get more potassium in his system rather than trying to keep the doctor away. For a start, doctors hadn't been invented yet.

Swedish biologist and Big Thinker Carl Linneaus was one such proponent for the banana as a contender for the Forbidden Fruit. One of his theories was apples being a Latin pun on *malus*, meaning both apple and evil. Other possibilities for the Fruit Which Must Not Be Eaten include figs, because the first clothes were fig leaves, and pomegranates, because this messy fruit pops up all over the place in ancient stories.

Adam's nudity is often innocent. He doesn't know any better until he partakes of that ill-fated fruit salad. It's only after eating that he and Eve gain the knowledge of arts and crafts, as well as an awareness of good and evil. Adam isn't a hero like our hunks on pages 114–133 – he isn't depicted as nude because he fights for justice; he just, simply, is. Our scene here is not a million miles away from the 2019 film *Midsommar*, a Nordic affinity for nature, and an idyll with an underlying darkness. No bears, though. That's something.

Who is Zahrtmann's Adam? Zahrtmann met the model – a soldier, hence that muscular physique – on a train journey. Zahrtmann appreciated him not just on an aesthetic level but on a romantic one, too. He wrote in a letter, to a Ms Holga Hendricksen, that he looked forward to enjoying himself with his Adam as if they were in Paradise.

Being handsome is a boar

While Adam was the first man, the blueprint from whence ideas of masculinity sprung, Adonis is one of the earliest bona fide hotties. Even Sappho wrote about Adonis. Adonis was so beautiful that there are accounts of not just one god being enamoured of him; not just two, but at my last count FIVE divine beings had the hots for Adonis.

The most well-known of these stories is Aphrodite, also known as Venus, and Adonis – reimagined by Titian in the 1550s on page 140. We see the goddess of love cling to her favourite as he's about to ride off into the woods. Aphrodite is the star of the show here, which is entirely her right as a goddess; but Adonis' bicep and strong leg show he's hero enough to warrant attention from the gods – and that cheeky nip slip seals the deal.

Aphrodite is grasping at her lover, as he leaves she's begging him not to go, calling his name two, three times in a row. The goddess of love isn't crazy in love – she fears for his life. Although in this scene as Titian depicts it, the desire to keep Adonis alive certainly includes some erotic undertones. What can be so fearful as to make a god afraid?

Aphrodite may be the goddess of love, but she was far from universally beloved. She had enraged Ares the war god by taking another lover; she had incensed Artemis by orchestrating the downfall of her follower Hippolytus. Although the details vary from telling to telling, Adonis met his end on that hunting trip, gored by a wild boar. Luckily his beauty wasn't lost forever; wherever his blood fell, beautiful anemone flowers bloomed and blossomed.

The moral of the story is, as we see so many times, don't hook up with gods. Bad things happen when you do. Earlier I mentioned that Aphrodite wasn't the only god to love Adonis. So, who were the others? One was none other than Queen of the Underworld Persphone, who demanded he spend part of the year with her. Others were: daddy Hercules (see page 121) whose affection for the lad earned the ire of Aphrodite; tortured poet extraordinaire Apollo (who you can check out on page 67); and party-personified Bacchus (on page 87) who got carried away and carried him off.

Building a body

And so the Christian God had made man, and other gods made man into a flower. The Bible doesn't say what God used as his raw material for this endeavour; He simply willed humanity into being. In other creation stories from other cultures, we hear of gods shaping clay and other materials into figures before breathing life into them. In modern day myths we have mad scientists building bodies out of spare parts (an interesting take on the reduce, reuse, recycle concept) or growing clones in all sorts of bubbly apparatus which undoubtedly leads to unforeseen consequences.

But you don't need test tubes, body bits and assorted science apparatus to construct your dream man. Over on the creative side of things, artists use more traditional tools like stone, clay and paints to perfectly capture the likenesses of, amongst other things, hot guys.

Here is Osmar Schindler's *The Young Sculptor*. If his style looks familiar, it's because he also brought us the very fetching Germanic warrior on page 57. We are seeing an artist creating art about creating art – his sculptor is taking a moment to consider his next move on his marble, while Schindler is working out how best to do hands. Hands and feet are notoriously tricky.

The artist in the piece is a work of art himself. Just look at his rakish little moustache; it's very much of the moment. While we're gazing admiringly at Schindler's artist, let us take a moment to acknowledge the leather apron, and consider whether we think if that is enough PPE and whether the risk and safety assessment of the workshop is up to scratch. The apron is frayed and ragged, with a hint of heroic nudity going on here – look closely, there's a bare bum! The sculptor here is aptly demonstrating that you don't always need a gym membership; the workshop is the gym.

Masculinity is a performance

In this chapter, we are thinking about what makes a man. So far, we have interpreted that in a very literal sense, with artists and divine beings literally making men. Let's take a step back and consider what goes into making a man in a more conceptual sense. Masculinity can be seen as adopting traits or behaviours socially or culturally deemed 'manly'. These ways of being and behaving are dictated according to societal norms and are usually adopted for social acceptance, or status.

'Manliness' is a construct that is performed and created, with each person who takes on the role of 'man' bringing something new to their unique interpretation of what that means. In the widest sense, society makes its own men to reflect its values.

Men perform manliness through their actions and gestures, and this changes across time, space and culture. In 2025 we even saw the rise of a type of man called the 'performative male' who, armed with a sustainable tote bag, wired headphones and a cardigan (wait, isn't this just millennial men? Just me?), is said to perform a softer and less aggressive form of masculinity. Still, at the end of the day, however one interprets 'manliness', it is a performance.

So, let us explore some hotties in art who knew all about performing and performance: Ira Aldridge, one of history's most-celebrated Shakespearean actors who is notable for being the first man of colour to play Othello. The portrait of Aldridge here is from 1826, when, aged just 19, he trod the boards in the starring role. Othello is, textually, around 30–40 years old, so casting a teenager is an interesting choice for the commanding Venetian General. *Othello* was first performed in November 1604, in front of King James I and IV. It is astounding that it took over 200 years for that appropriate casting move to happen.

Ira was a star on the stage, and the British theatre scene helped him dazzle the crowds. He moved to The Big Smoke from the US a few years before his big break as Othello because he was 'finding no adequate outlet for his ambition in New York,' according to his biographer, Bernth Lindfors. So Aldridge set sail for Britain in 1824. It wasn't long before he found work at London's Old Vic Theatre, but he found greater acclaim and better roles outside of London. He was a smash hit in Manchester.

This portrait was commissioned after Ira was performing in Manchester, at the Theatre Royal. It was painted after James Northcote, which is a fancy way of saying that whoever painted it was imitating the artist's style, or, less politely, it's a copy. James Northcote studied under Joshua Reynolds, who founded the Royal Academy, so it's likely they were trying to learn from the masters.

Northcote was around 80 years old when he painted Ira Aldridge, so he would have been a seasoned artist at this point in his career. Fun fact: for a while, experts thought the subject of this painting was someone else entirely, a certain Frances Barber, who worked for Samuel Johnson. However, the dates didn't quite match up as Barber died 20 years before this painting existed.

Welcome to the stage

Another chap who knows a thing or two about performance is this fine fellow who, depending on who you ask, is called *The Performer*, *The Artist* or *The Acrobat*. To the museum he calls home, Berlin's Alte Nationalgalerie, he's simply *Artist*, although curators describe the fine figure as an 'athlete' too, which is perfectly understandable – that body is ready to turn somersaults at a moment's notice.

Painted by Arthur Kampf in 1906, our handsome hunk with a bold taste in booty-shorts is a Vaudeville performer; adept at circus skills, acting, a bit of slapstick and the odd song and dance number. A multi-talented artist, performer and moustache-wearer. The true definition of a triple-threat!

As an artist, Kampf was known for History Paintings, which are more about subject than style. Usually, History Paintings depict scenes from a narrative, most often something Greek, Roman or Biblical and almost always dynamic. Our Vaudeville wunder may be posing, but even standing still, he's full of energy.

Kampf was also known for his large-scale work, and our moustachioed muscle man stands at over 2 metres (nearly 7 foot) tall, and he's just over 1 metre (3¼ feet) wide.

Even though we can imagine a story around our anonymous artiste, story-telling and narrative wasn't Arthur's focus with him. With the posing, posturing and flexing, we can see that Kampf was interested in the muscular body of the performer, and the way the everyday exertions and athletic activities have shaped his physique. His crisp white and powder pink outfit contrasts with the dark background, all the better to revel in both the painter's and actor's artistry.

things with their bodies that seem to defy gravity, physics and all laws of reason! So perhaps the pose was a little bit off on purpose.

Regardless of Roman tastes, *Discobolus* has managed to pull off a unique feat; becoming an icon of both the art world and the world of sports. He provides the blueprint for many an athletic promotional image, as well as a go-to pose for art school models.

Man is the measure of all things

Myron's *Discobolus* is all about trying to bring order and balance to the chaos of the world. An ambitious goal for a slab of stone! Every aspect is about finding the right rhythm. Myron's contemporary, Protagoras, said that 'man is the measure of all things.' Protagoras was thinking in a philosophical way – humanity creates its own reality, filtered through the way we understand things. Roman architect Vitruvius had this in mind when he was devising systems of architectural proportions in line with the body; early ergonomic design if you will.

That name might sound familiar... where could you have heard it before? Allow me to reintroduce you to the *Vitruvian Man*, one of Leonardo Da Vinci's most recognizable works. Although *Vitruvian Man* is an icon, the original is so fragile that it is rarely out on display. Once you recognize him, you'll see his influence all over the place.

Both Da Vinci and Vitruvius were interested in the ideals of beauty that correspond to proportions found in the human body. Whereas Myron has a body in motion, Da Vinci is exploring what makes an ideal man with a more scientific and analytical approach – an anatomical study of what proportions should be, with arms and legs splayed out like a subject spread out on the dissection slab in science class. Yes, this is art, but with the laser-like precision of the scientist.

Climb every mountain

And so, we have made it to the very end of our artistic exploration. We have reached the summit of our metaphorical man-mountain, and now we can remind ourselves of the path we have trodden, take a deep breath of that fresh alpine air and admire our final hottie. He's an enigmatic chappie from the imagination of the German Romantic landscape painter Caspar David Friedrich.

Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog is considered to be a Romantic masterpiece. Sure, hiking might not be everyone's idea of a perfect date, but wining and dining on a mountain top isn't what we mean by 'romantic' here. For Friedrich, 'romantic' meant advocating for imagination and appreciating the beauty and majesty of nature. Indeed, nature was regarded by the Romantics as a place for profound spiritual and emotional connections. The *Wanderer* certainly invites us to make a connection with him, his landscape and his thoughts.

Romantic artworks are full of passion and emotion, but what type of man is the Romantic ideal? The answer is varied, but a Romantic artist is more likely to paint a knight than a Greek hero. Our *Wanderer* is very dapper considering he has just climbed a mountain. He seems far more likely to whip out a pen than a sword, and it seems likely he would be more into journaling than jousting. Indeed, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* is more about self-reflection and quiet contemplation than springing into action to save the day.

Technically speaking, the piece is a *Rückenfigur*: a picture of a rear-facing figure. Friedrich was a fan of the technique and used it in several of his paintings. In doing so, he invites us inside the painting to imagine the face of our *Wanderer*, as if we are part of the scene, helping to forge a relationship between the viewer and the figure. It is up to the viewer to decide whether the figure has reached his final destination or not. Perhaps he will keep going; all that climbing is great for the legs. But who is the mysterious figure? Some art historians think he could be the artist himself – they note the similarity of build and the distinctive strawberry tones to the windswept hair.

This painting might look familiar to you, and for good reason: it often pops up on book covers and is referenced in TV and film, sometimes as parody, sometimes as Easter egg, but recognizable by those who know the image.