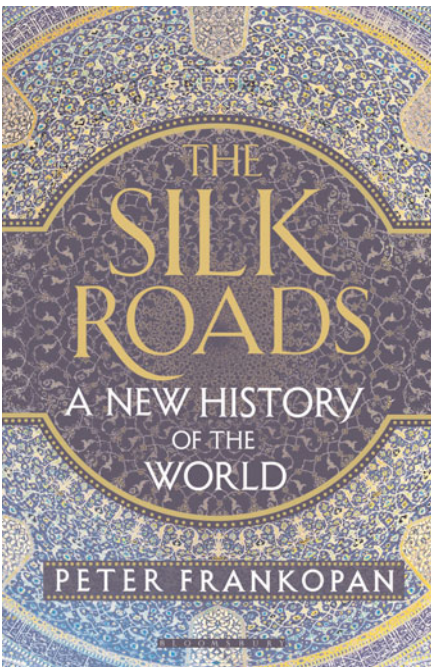


LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



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I recently spoke from the pulpit of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford. This wasn't something I'd ever imagined myself doing, but given the opportunity I was keen to address a subject I care about: the status of art today. My immediate reference was to the debate over the statue of Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College, situated just across the road from the church. If there was one encouraging thing to come out of the furore, I said, it was confirmation of how deeply we still invest in the art around us. The controversy over the statue shows how much we expect of the figures we commemorate in bronze and stone. The threat to the Rhodes statue may not be comparable to that which Byzantine iconoclasts posed to religious art, but we've long been witness to art-induced anxiety.

As Jonathan Harris recounts in his gripping cover story on Baldwin, the first Latin Emperor of Constantinople, the Fourth Crusade seemed to promise, at the time, a new era. Constantinople was captured: the Latins were in, the Byzantine

Greeks were out and, though the crusaders pillaged churches, including Hagia Sophia, such destruction was surely the price one paid for change and resolution. Not so. As often, the destruction of art and monuments presaged further turmoil.

In *ARGO 3* we pay homage to Byzantium. While Leonie Breeds interviews Byzantinist Peter Frankopan on his much-praised *The Silk Roads*, Mino Dinshaw digests a Byzantine-ish dinner ... in Greenwich.

Since this is also an issue dedicated to the resilience and power of art, I am pleased to publish Stella Sevastopoulos' report from Athens, in which a number of contemporary Greek artists give their views on how the art market is faring in troubled times. Their faith and optimism, against all odds, offer assurance to those of us who believe that art can outlive the threat of destruction.

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