

books of the year

A taste of Bosch, Dalí’s dinners

Art

Rachel Campbell-Johnston learns the secrets of medieval manuscripts and chews over food as art

Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Works by Stefan Fischer (Taschen, 464pp; £12.99)
The return of Hieronymus Bosch’s surviving arts works to his hometown of ’s-Hertogenbosch to celebrate the 600th anniversary of his death was a cultural highpoint of the 2016 calendar. If you missed it don’t beat yourself up. Taschen has published a magnificently illustrated monograph, *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Works*. Instead of pushing to the front of a closely packed crowd and briefly peering, you can study the mind-bending visions of this medieval master at your leisure. Double spreads capture the marvels of art history’s wildest imagination in all their macabre detail. Full-page close-ups are so magnified that you can see the texture of the paint, and the expert Stefan Fischer offers a vivid commentary.



BEDSIDE CHAT Van Gogh’s home life explained in *Studio in the South*

She offers a poetic meditation on the role of the life model

The Naked Muse

Great Works: Encounters with Art by Michael Glover (Prestel, 224pp; £22.50)
In 50 brief essays, each focusing on one artwork, Michael Glover offers a personal take on our cultural history, from imperial Rome to contemporary Japan. Plunging us into anything from Mantegna’s “stench of the charnel house” to Dubuffet’s delight in a “comical, ramshackle, beast-pocked, pre-tannery” cow, Glover draws on poetic sensibilities to make even the most familiar images feel fresh again.

Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts by Christopher de Hamel (Allen Lane, 640pp; £30)
Like reclusive celebrities, medieval books hoard a whole world of memories behind the walls of their bindings. The Sotheby’s expert Christopher de Hamel invites

readers into this sequestered sphere. Focusing on a dozen of the most precious works that have passed through his hands, he coaxes out their stories, whether decoding their intricate illustrations, examining the political and scholarly roles they have played, or giving us the gossip on the monarchs and scribes, collectors and criminals who have coveted them.

A History of Pictures: From the Cave to the Computer Screen by David Hockney and Martin Gayford (Thames & Hudson, 360pp; £29.95)
It is as if a box of random images of different styles, periods and nations has been upended and muddled about on the floor before being pasted back into a scrapbook. David Hockney pays no attention to normal aesthetic hierarchies as, in conversation with the critic Martin Gayford, he flips from the Mona Lisa to Marilyn Monroe, from Greek vases to Disney, examining the processes and problems of picture-making — often from his own wittily idiosyncratic vantage point.

Studio of the South: Van Gogh in Provence by Martin Bailey (Frances Lincoln, 224pp; £25)
Martin Bailey, the Van Gogh specialist, takes the most famous house share in art history as his subject. He recounts the tale of Van Gogh’s 444 days in Arles, offering a revelatory study of some of the artist’s most instantly recognisable images, elaborating on his gone-wrong relationship with Gauguin and the infamous episode in which his ear was cut off.

The Naked Muse by Kelley Swain (Valley, 160pp; £8.99)
What’s it like to do nothing for a living?



Kelley Swain worked for nearly a decade as an artist’s model. Her lyrical memoir, *The Naked Muse*, charts her progress — physical, intellectual and emotional — from the moment of her first disrobing before a room full of students, through her experiences in the studios of internationally acclaimed artists, to her posing as a saint for a frieze in a Sicilian chapel. The

quietly personal expands into a poetic meditation on the role of the life model.

Dalí: Les Dinners de Gala (Taschen, 320pp; £44.99)
Want a change from Christmas turkey? Why not try ramekins of frogs’ legs or Cytherean meatballs — perhaps with an old champagne sherbert to wash it down...

WATER SPORTS Detail from Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

and a breast of Venus to follow. Salvador Dalí, who as a six-year-old had always wanted to cook, eventually created a recipe book of exotic menus. These are now republished in a sumptuously illustrated volume: “a delirious gastronomy” which, as the great surrealist put it, “ought to transform the art of eating into an oleographic ecstasy”.

mid-1960s, however, the teenage Shore spent his time hanging around Andy Warhol’s Factory in New York, taking pictures of Lou Reed, Nico, Warhol himself, Edie Sedgwick and Yoko Ono. From what must be the most comprehensively documented social scene in history comes this book of photographs from Shore’s archive, many of which haven’t been seen before. Film shoots, photo shoots, portraits and parties — it all looks like a riot. However, accompanying anecdotes and texts from the actress Susan Bottomly (aka International Velvet), the musicians John Cale and Maureen Tucker of the Velvet Underground, and the photographer Billy Name tell a wider story of drug abuse, suicide and desperation amid the glamour.

Jane Bown: Cats edited by Robin Christian (Guardian Faber, 160pp; £14.99)
Books of cats are hardly in short supply, but this one is a little different. It collects the feline work of the celebrated portrait photographer Jane Bown. Forget cute kittens in martini glasses or amusing fat fluffballs spreadeagled on rugs; this is the cat as documentary subject, doing cat things such as sneaking in through pantry windows, looking disdainfully down from walls, fixing owners with looks of appalled reproach from pet-show pillows and generally going about their business projecting a level of scorn that would put Anna Wintour to shame. Wonderful.

Party people and a bunch of cool cats

Photography

Nancy Durrant admires a Vogue master, Warhol’s New York in-crowd and Jane Bown’s moggies

Around That Time: Horst at Home in Vogue by Valentine Lawford and Ivan Shaw (Abrams, 384pp; £45)
Known mostly as a fashion photographer, Horst P Horst (1906-99) was also skilled at shooting interiors and portraiture. His penchant for lavish sets in his fashion work (and his early days studying architecture under Laszlo Moholy-Nagy at the Bauhaus) made him the ideal interiors man. From the tobacco heiress Doris Duke’s Persian bathing pavilion to Karl Lagerfeld’s stainless-steel bed and Valentino’s visual migraine of a guest room, these pictures of astonishing homes and

their equally astonishing owners — designers, socialites, aristocrats and presidents — are a joy. Horst also briefly worked for Le Corbusier, but found him too austere: “Everyone wants something beautiful,” Horst once said. “Why make workers live in a jail cell?”

Overview by Benjamin Grant (Penguin, 288pp; £30)
The “overview effect” is an experience, this book tells us, that transforms our perspective of Earth and mankind’s place on it. Named by the science writer Frank White in 1987, it refers to the awe and the will to care for the planet felt by orbiting astronauts. This book attempts to recreate that feeling through aerial photographs that illustrate our impact on Earth. It’s not entirely successful, but the photographs are stunning. A city such as Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl in Mexico becomes a bizarrely farrowed-out landscape, farmland around Addis Ababa a riot of crazy paving, Beijing’s south railway

station a Cyloptic eye glaring from the urban sprawl.

Still: A Poetic Response to Photographs of the Somme Battlefield by Simon Armitage (Enitharmon Press, 74pp; £30)
Not strictly a photography book, this slim, austere volume nevertheless contains many images, printed from glass negatives in the collection of the Imperial War Museum. Simon Armitage was commissioned to write poems inspired by these aerial reconnaissance photographs of the Somme battlefield. The ruins of a windmill after capture by the 2nd Australian Division in 1916 might as well not be there, while the Albert-Bapaume road, built ramrod straight by the Romans, hints at invasions past. The poems and pictures are a poignant tribute to the suffering of man and land in war.

Factory: Andy Warhol by Stephen Shore (Phaidon, 192pp; £39.95)
Stephen Shore is a photography professor at Bard College in upstate New York. In the



IN VOGUE Marella Agnelli photographed by Horst P Horst in 1967



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Travel

Tom Chessyhre takes an armchair journey from the Panamanian jungle to the Thames

The Marches by Rory Stewart (Jonathan Cape, 351pp; £18.99)
In this elegantly written account of a father/son ramble across the “Middleland” between England and Scotland, covering 600 miles in 30 days, Rory Stewart describes much rugged scenery and many lively encounters. Yet it is the interplay between Stewart, the MP for Penrith and the Border, and his late father, Brian, who served in the Black Watch and M16, that provides the main theme. Their close, evolving relationship is woven into the adventures, with Stewart’s 90-year-old father joining for stints (“ambushing” him by car) in this wild “forgotten country”.



Under the Tump: Sketches of Real Life on the Welsh Borders by Oliver Balch (Faber, 306pp; £14.99)
When Oliver Balch moves with his family to the village of Clyro, just outside Hay-on-Wye in the Welsh Borders, after working as a journalist in Argentina, he is keen to explore “somewhere alive to the sound of birdsong rather than bus exhausts”. He picks the right place, soon discovering *Kilvert’s Diary, 1870-1879*, the minor classic that tells the stories of the Rev Francis Kilvert, who lived locally and walked many miles in the hills. Inspired, Balch describes learning to love the landscape (including an ancient “castle tump”, or fort, on a hill by Clyro), and his family’s integration into the Welsh Borders.

jungle-clad Panamanian province, proved costly. At a time of national impoverishment, the “tropical dream” of riches, fronted by the energetic William Paterson, was enticing, but failure brought debts that affected the 1707 Act of Union with England. In this offbeat book John McKendrick visits the former colony of Caledonia to shed light on the doomed 1690s expeditions, which were thwarted by disease, Spanish aggression and ill-discipline.

Estuary: Out from London to the Sea by Rachel Lichtenstein (Hamish Hamilton, 328pp; £18.99)

Joining cockleboats, tugs, barges and yachts, Rachel Lichtenstein spent five years researching this intriguing, watery travelogue, once shattering bones in her hand when a boat almost capsized. Raised in Southend-on-Sea, she has a fascination with the Thames estuary. Some say the estuary starts at Tower Bridge, others refer to the 18 nautical miles from Gravesend to the Nore. Lichtenstein focuses on the outer reaches, where London’s “brackish, dirty water” merges with the North Sea, interviewing many a sea dog and shoreline inhabitant to capture this edgeland.

Writing the Thames by Christina Hardyment (Bodleian Library, 304pp; £25)
Christina Hardyment grew up on Richmond Hill by the sweep of the Thames painted by Turner; she danced at Rolling Stones gigs on Eel Pie Island; and she still enjoys sailing on the river. This engaging history, based on many trips, is her love letter to England’s longest river (215 miles). The beautifully illustrated book chronicles authors’ connections with the river, including those of Charles Dickens, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley (who finished *Frankenstein* in Marlow) and Henry Fielding (who wrote *Tom Jones* in Twickenham), among many others. It’s a treat. **Tom Chesshyre** is author of *Ticket to Ride: Around the World on 49 Unusual Train Journeys* (Summersdale, £9.99)



STYLE TRIBES Life in the Panamanian jungle. Top: Old Father Thames