

The New Criterion

Dispatch October 22, 2021 03:59 pm

Week in review

by Jane Coombs

Recent links of note:

“Viking Artifacts Give Precise Date for Europeans’ Earliest Presence in North America”

Robert Lee Hotz, *The Wall Street Journal*

In 1960, a pair of Norwegian archaeologists uncovered a Norse settlement in Newfoundland, Canada, a discovery that appeared to confirm, at least in part, the accounts of New World exploration recorded in Icelandic sagas set in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Found at the coastal site were eight timber-framed structures similar to the Norse buildings scattered throughout Greenland and Iceland, as well as around eight hundred artifacts made from wood, bone, stone, and bronze. Conventional radiocarbon dating, which is used to estimate the age of organic materials, can only be accurate to within two or three hundred years, but researchers at the University of Groningen have applied a new dating technique to three artifacts retrieved from the site. While an early eleventh-century date had long been suspected, the group’s findings, published in *Nature*, confirm that the wood fragments were made from trees felled in precisely 1021. Now if only there were an easier way to visit this stunning, but remote, landmark. (Barring an expensive flight to the tiny St. Anthony Airport in Newfoundland, reaching the settlement requires a five-hour car ride along the “Viking Trail” route from Gros Morne National Park to the northernmost tip of the island.)

“Daughter of Impressionism: Julie Manet’s fascinating family album”

Jackie Wullschläger, *Financial Times*

A new exhibition at the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris is the first to focus on the artistic circle of Julie Manet, the daughter of the Impressionist painters Berthe Morisot and Eugène Manet (the less-famous brother of Edouard). From a young age Julie was surrounded by artists, musicians, and poets. “Julie Manet: An Impressionist Heritage” contains over a hundred works painted by Julie Manet herself and by her relations (some of whom she modeled for) as well as works she collected with her husband, the painter Ernest Rouart. Julie is perhaps best known today for the journal she began at the age of ten, later published as *Growing Up With the Impressionists*, which has become an

important source for art historians studying the 1890s. Orphaned at sixteen, Julie's guardian became the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Three years later she married Rouart, the only pupil of Degas, and moved in next door to her cousin Jeannie, a musician, and her husband, the modernist poet Paul Valéry. Jackie Wullschläger, writing in the *Financial Times*, explores the personal lives of this creative family in this well illustrated article.

"Ars no longa"

Armand D'angour, *Times Literary Supplement*

What did dancing look like in ancient Greece? *Choral Constructions in Greek Culture* by Deborah Torn Steiner attempts to tackle this thorny question, beginning with the earliest known phrase written in Greek, "He who dances now most gracefully of all the dancers," a fragment of text inscribed on an eighth-century B.C. vase that might have been a prize for the best performer. In this week's *Times Literary Supplement*, the Oxford classics professor Armand D'angour discusses some of the most famous forms of dance in the ancient world, such as the *pyrrichē*, a war dance performed wearing armor, and the dithyramb, an "expansive circular dance involving a competition between ten tribal groups" who would move while singing to the god Dionysus.

Podcasts:

"Is America in irreversible decline?"

Conrad Black delivers the third annual Circle Lecture with an introduction by Roger Kimball.

Dispatch:

"Surpassing beauty," by Nathan C. Stewart.

On the composer Marcel Dupré and an organ concert by Jeremy Filsell

Jane Coombs was the ninth Hilton Kramer Fellow at *The New Criterion*.