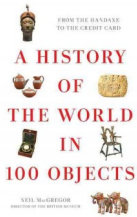


A History of the World in 100 Objects



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What a cool idea for a book. Telling the history of the world by looking at museum artifacts. To make it even more interesting, these descriptive reports of jewelry, mummies, pottery, coins, art, textiles, etc. were written by experts for radio. Luckily, for us we get to view the pictures also, hundreds of them.

A History of the World in 100 Objects is no coffee table book but a book to be read end to end. The entries for each of the objects (that range in date from 2,000,000 B.C. to 2010 A.D.) describe not only the artifacts themselves but what they teach us about history and about humanity. For example of silver bowl full of coins from around the year 927--shows that already England was well on its way to becoming a monarchy. Inscribed on one coin is *Athelstan Rex totius Britanniae* or Athelstan, King of All Britain. Other items found in this same buried stash were arm bracelets from Ireland, Viking coins, and others from as far away as Afghanistan. A Viking stash of coins showed that they were becoming Christian--engraved on several was St. Peter's name (Petri), but also inscribed was the hammer from Thor, the old Norse god.

Neil MacGregor's book showcases a lot of interesting art. A pair of swimming reindeer from 11,000 B.C. were carved onto a mammoth tusk. Around this time the amount of surviving objects that show our human fascination with creating art grew exponentially. Was it because of increased tool use? Or did some change in our brain make humans more interested in depicting the patterns of the world around them? As you might guess, the articles included here raise as many questions as they provide answers for. There's so much to learn and discover. I hope you'll right dive in. Here are a few final examples: the chronometer from HMS Beagle, a 2009 credit card from the United Arab Emirates, a Ming Dynasty banknote, a bird-shaped pestle from New Guinea, and fragments of a harem wall-painting from Iraq. This wonderful book gives you access to one of the world's greatest museum collection on your nightstand. If you find its take on the material world fascinating, try any of Henry Petroski's books especially [The Evolution of Useful Things](#) and [The Pencil: a History of Design and Circumstance](#).

Posted by Dory L. on February 10, 2012

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