

The Gods of Freud. Sigmund Freud's Art Collection by Janine Burke. Milson's Point NSW: KNOPE, 2006. ISBN-10: 1740513754. ISBN-13: 978-740513753.

Anyone familiar with Freud's house in Hampstead will be fascinated to read this book which is an extremely detailed study of the objects that fill the house. But not only does the author discuss Freud's collection of Greek, Roman and ancient Egyptian antiquities, she also paints a vivid picture of the cultural background and intimate context in which the collection was put together. The text is very nicely illustrated with many photographs of objects from the collection.

The author, Janine Burke, is an art historian and biographer. She has curated exhibitions of historical and contemporary art, and currently holds a research fellowship at Monash University. *The Gods of Freud. Sigmund Freud's Art Collection* was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award. And in 2007, with the co-operation of Freud Museum London, the author curated 'An Archaeology of the Mind: Sigmund Freud's Art Collection' for Monash University Museum of Art and the Nicholson Museum, University of Sydney. Burke has also curated 'Freud and Eros: Love, Lust and Longing' at the Freud Museum London in 2014.

Over forty years, Freud amassed over two thousand objects – busts, fragments of papyrus, rings, precious stones, prints, reliefs, vases and statues. The meticulous way in which he put together this collection and his aesthetic desire to surround himself with such beauty went hand in hand, Burke shows, with the development of psychoanalysis. When choosing the epigraph for his first major work, *Die Traumdeutung*, Freud took a line from Aristotle "Enter – for here too are gods". He had begun his collection in 1896 shortly after the death of his father. It was, he thought, a defence against the anguish he experienced at the loss, a "game of substitution, in which the objects involved...were 'erotic equivalents,' items of conquest and desire offering relief, love tokens designed to soothe and heal" (J.M. Masson, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, 110. Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 1985). He had been quite overwhelmed by grief over the death of his father, and recalled that it led him into a deep, prolonged period of mourning that was, nevertheless, highly productive.

In her review of this book Helen Hayward (*The Age*, 2006) wrote that this was, in fact, more of a biography, Freud's life "told through his lifelong passion for antiquities." In so doing, she thought that Burke had displaced the view of Freud the as a godless Jew, by giving a complex and subtle picture of someone "who sought out objects that embodied his belief that the present becomes real through association with the past". In so doing, Freud appears as a deeply spiritual man.

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