7.5: Reading: Ancient Near East

The Cradle of Civilization

What’s in a Name?

Ancient Near Eastern Art has long been part of the history of Western art, but history didn’t have to be written this way. It is largely because of the West’s interests in the Biblical “Holy Land” that ancient Near Eastern materials have been regarded as part of the Western canon of the history of art.
The Land of the Bible

An interest in finding the locations of cities mentioned in the Bible (such as Nineveh and Babylon) inspired the original English and French nineteenth century archaeological expeditions to the Near East. These sites were discovered and their excavations revealed to the world a style of art which had been lost.
Court in the Crystal Palace, 1854

*The Nineveh Court* at the 1851 World’s Fair in London and a style of decorative art and architecture called Assyrian Revival. Ancient Near Eastern art remains popular today; in 2007 a 2.25 inch high, early 3rd millennium limestone sculpture, the *Guennol Lioness*, was sold for 57.2 million dollars, the second most expensive piece of sculpture sold at that time.

A Complex History

The Euphrates River in 2005

Geography and the Growth of Cities

Sumerian Art
Uruk is circled in the region of Sumer.

An Agricultural Theocracy

Cuneiform tablet (above), still in its clay case: legal case from Niqmepuh, King of lamhad (Aleppo). 1720 B.C.E., 3.94 x 2" (British Museum)
Lapis Lazuli Cylinder Seal with a modern impression, From Ur, southern Iraq, c. 2600 B.C.E.
(British Museum)
CC licensed content, Shared previously
