

Gradhiva: revue d'anthropologie et de muséologie. A biannual journal published by the Musée du quai Branly.*

Reviewed by Sally Price

The story of “Gradiva” began with a fictional archaeologist (obsessed with a Roman bas-relief of a woman to whom he gave that name), passed through psychoanalysis in a 1907 essay on “delusions and dreams” by Sigmund Freud (Jung having brought the story to his attention), and was picked up in the 1930s by the Surrealists (as, for example, André Breton opened an art gallery named Gradiva, André Masson created paintings entitled Gradiva, and Salvador Dalí’s wife Gala became “Gala-Gradiva”). Fifty years later it resurfaced in Paris in the form of a journal focused on the history of anthropology. Michel Izard, Jean Jamin, and Michel Leiris, the three original editors, added a red, italicized “H” to the (otherwise black, roman) name, and there it stayed for many years.

I first encountered the journal in 1986, when I was living in Paris and having conversations with Leiris about art, anthropology, and museums. The cover of the first issue, published that year, carried a silent allusion to Gradiva’s origins—a sketch of the bas-relief’s seductively bare feet, stepping forward, that had driven the archeologist to delirium—but marked its difference (here and in subsequent issues) by the special typographical treatment given to the freshly introduced H, not only in the journal’s title, but in every single H in each table of contents (figure 1). This “orthographic impertinence,” Jamin later explained, stood for *histoire* and *homme* (as in the Musée de l’Homme, where the editors were based), and was meant to echo the slanted position of Gradiva’s erotically arched right foot. (In “Les chemins de la Gradiva” [*Gradhiva* 2:1-6, 1987], Jamin elaborated on the multiple allusions in the journal’s title, including the assertion that “basically, history can never produce more than bas-reliefs of life, which will always escape the historian’s attempts to render it in its full volume.”) By the late 1990s, red and black had traded places several times (sometimes even giving way to white), but the H always respected some kind of color contrast and never abandoned its impertinent slant (figure 2).

Over the next ten years the issues grew from a slender 40 pages to well over 100. Each issue included a mix of academic articles and archival documents—the first issue, for example, published a selection of 1929-1944 letters between Paul Rivet and Georges Henri Rivière and a centerfold photo of the ten men (though not the two women) who participated in the Dakar-Djibouti expedition of 1931-33. Each issue also provided practical information on seminars, colloquia, exhibitions, and new publications. Contributors were often major participants in the French anthropological scene—Denise Paulme, Louis Dumont, Marc Augé, Jean Rouch, to cite just a few. After the death of Michel Leiris in 1990, mention of the three founding editors dropped out in favor of a declaration that the journal was “founded by Jean Jamin and Michel Leiris.”

* Posted on *Museum Anthropology Review* October 30, 2007. See: <http://museumanthropology.wordpress.com/2007/10/30/mar-2007-2-28/>. © 2007 Sally Price.

Fast forward to 2005. The Musée de l'Homme has been gutted of its ethnographic collections—all 300,000 objects, which have been inventoried, cleaned, weighed, photographed, defumigated, and rehoused in a spectacular new building just across the Seine. The journal, too, has crossed the river. Jacques Chirac's about-to-open Quai Branly museum (which has also appropriated the entire contents of the former museum of African and Oceanic art) has taken over publication of the journal, benefiting from a substantial yearly subsidy from the Centre National du Livre. The red ink in the title has shifted from the "H" to the "VA," and the subtitle ("*revue d'histoire et d'archives de l'anthropologie*") has been replaced with "*revue d'anthropologie et de muséologie*." Finally, the sketch of Gradiva's feet has given way to the photo of an equally seductive female statue—the terra cotta *chupícuaro* from Mexico (on display across town in the Louvre) that serves as the Quai Branly museum's ubiquitous logo (and can also be seen, incidentally, on the cover of my own new book, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly* [University of Chicago Press, 2007]).

The new series made its début with a blockbuster 271-page double issue on Haiti. Other issues have focused on themes ranging from jazz to genocide (figure 3). When I asked Jamin (who had by then become editor-in-chief of France's premier anthropological journal, *L'Homme*) how the Quai Branly's *Gradhiva* differed from the earlier version, he replied that, in transferring reins to Chirac's museum, he had taken pains to guarantee that the scientific orientation would be maintained. And indeed, the high quality of the anthropological articles, the inclusion of archival documents, the ample use of always-interesting, often historical black-and-white photographs, and the updates on recent publications have been continued in the journal's glossier incarnation. As a statement by the Quai Branly museum puts it, "there has been no change in either its scientific vocation or its editorial policies. Providing a forum for debate, based on original research, on the history and current developments in anthropology, and committed to the publication of archives and observations, the journal spans multiple disciplines, from anthropology, aesthetics, and history to sociology, literature, and music. Finally, its often innovative iconography develops a special interaction between text and image."¹ The frequent articles focused on museums, appropriate to the journal's new editorial home, mark no departure from the spirit of the original *Gradhiva*, which had been edited at the Musée de l'Homme.

In short, for anyone who's interested in anthropology, history, and museums, this journal remains an essential resource, rich in its articles and beautiful in its presentation. You'll need a reading knowledge of French, but the abstracts provided in both French and English can help you decide where to put the effort.

Note

1. See: <http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/enseignement/scientific-publications/mqb-scientific-publications/index.html>, accessed October 17, 2007.

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Figures



Figures 1-3 (clockwise from upper left):

1. The cover of *Gradhiva* #1 (1986), with the sketch of Gradiva's walking feet.
2. The cover of *Gradhiva* #34 (2003), with the sketch of Gradiva's walking feet.
3. The cover of *Gradhiva* n.s. #4 (2006), with its dancing feet.

