



Severed: A History of Heads Lost and Heads Found

Frances Larson

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A serious and seriously entertaining exploration of the dark and varied obsessions that the “civilized West” has had with decapitated heads and skulls.

The human head is exceptional. It accommodates four of our five senses, encases the brain, and boasts the most expressive set of muscles in the body. It is our most distinctive attribute and connects our inner selves to the outer world. Yet there is a dark side to the head's preeminence, one that has, in the course of human history, manifested itself in everything from decapitation to headhunting. So explains anthropologist Frances Larson in this fascinating history of decapitated human heads. From the Western collectors whose demand for shrunken heads spurred massacres to Second World War soldiers who sent the remains of the Japanese home to their girlfriends, from Madame Tussaud modeling the guillotined head of Robespierre to Damien Hirst photographing decapitated heads in city morgues, from grave-robbing phrenologists to skull-obsessed scientists, Larson explores our macabre fixation with severed heads. 25 illustrations

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