

The New Criterion

Art

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Exhibition note

by [Christie Davies](#)

On "Seduced: Art and Sex from Antiquity to Now" at the Barbican Art Gallery, London.

"Seduced: Art and Sex from Antiquity to Now"

Barbican Art Gallery, London.

October 12, 2007-January 27, 2008

"Seduced" will appeal to those who enjoy art, to those who enjoy sex, and to those who enjoy both. The censorious will delight in the first exhibit, an enormous fig leaf presented to Queen Victoria by the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1857 to cover up her life-sized plaster copy of Michelangelo's *David*. The fig leaf does seem rather larger than it needs to be. Tuscans do exaggerate so.

After the fig leaf comes the full-figged ancient world, whose Greek and Etruscan ceramics are a forceful reminder of how rarely the sexual act is depicted in the art of Christian Europe though common enough in South and East Asia. Such sexual scenes as are to be found in the art of Christian Europe refer to such Bible stories as Lot and his daughters getting ready for incest, Potiphar's w ...

Christie Davies is the author of *The Strange Death of Moral Britain* (Transaction).

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