

# The New Criterion

## Art

February 2009

### Exhibition notice

by [Christie Davies](#)

On "Babylon: Myth and Reality" at the British Museum, London.

The British Museum's exhibition on the art and archaeology of Babylon is a tribute to the greatness of a fallen empire—Imperial Germany, the Kaiserreich, 1871–1918. It was the archaeologists of the German Orient Society, led by Robert Johann Koldewey, who uncovered the ruins of Babylon between 1887 and 1917, including the foundations of the ziggurat Etemenanki, supposedly the Tower of Babel, Nebuchadnezzar's palace, and the Ishtar Gate. The finest artifacts in the current British exhibition all owe their existence to the care and *Kultur* of the German scholars, who excavated fragile mud brick ruins and reconstructed from mere fragments richly colored lions and dragons in glazed brick. But why come to see them in London, when you can see a full-sized reproduction of the entire Ishtar Gate in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin? Indeed the present exhibition in the British Museum is a mere remnant of an earlier one held in that c ...

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

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This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 27 February 2009, on page 51

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