Lost Worlds by John Howe

Interesting But More For Kids

From the world of Aratta and Mohenjo-Daro to Atlantis and Camelot, this visually stunning book is a window with a view that takes readers on an historical, archaeological, and mythological journey through lost worlds, those abandoned in time, buried and forgotten, and the ones that live in the imagination. Attempting to put the most plausible pieces of history together, John Howe, concept artist for The Lord of the Rings film trilogy, begins the journey that will move readers to explore these lost worlds even further.

My Personal Review:
John Howe is a maker of magical worlds -- anybody who's seen his "Lord of the Rings" art knows that he's a master of elegantly detailed pictures, glowing with vibrant colors. But "Lost Worlds" is not just an art book, but a moderately exploration of "lost" places... some of which have been lost to time, and some of which technically never existed except in people's minds. And yes, the art is gorgeous.

Some of these lost "worlds" did once actually exist as ancient cities and countries throughout history -- Babylon, Thebes, Troy, Timbuktu, the giant statues of Rapa Nui, Mohenjo Daro, Teotihuacan, Persepolis, the ancient site of Cahokia, Pompeii, Knossos, and perhaps the Garden of Eden (it's a bit hard to prove the specific existence of someplace with no buildings).

Then there are the ones that are all about the imagination --the realms of the gods known as Asgard and Olympus, Camelot and Avalon, the sunken city of Atlantis, Ultima Thule, the seven cities of Cibola, Shambhala, Uluru, the mythical kingdom of Prester John, the realm of Faerie, and the whole legend about a Hollow Earth. I'm not sure why Ker-Ys isn't included in the mythical funfest.

Some of these "lost worlds" were real (or our information of them is commonly based on something real), some of them may have been mistily attached to something real, and some are pure flights of fancy. But they do
all have something in common -- John Howe explores their backstory, with
archaeological photographs and explorations, and historical records (such
as a papal letter to King Prester John... which is a bit confusing since
nobody can find his kingdom).

None of it is terribly in-depth -- usually the text stretches no further than
two and a half pages, and it seems aimed at younger readers sometimes.
But it is highly informative and full of intriguing, and Howe seems to have
done plenty of research. And his focus has a wide range, from Australia to
southern Asia, the South Pacific to Egypt, the Americas to ancient Britain,
Greece, and Rome. It also has a nice little foreword by Sir Ian McKellen,
describing the sensations of reading this book (and reminding us, "Not that
John is some conjurer of cheap tricks").

And since it's John Howe, it has artwork -- rosy-hued skies, great grey-blue
tsunamis and rivers, shadowy bull-monsters, warm-hued stone walls and
obelisks, the bloody eruptions of fire and volcanoes, horn-headed sea
serpents swimming near a misty shore, murky floating wall art, shimmering
white castles, twisted trees and a "North Pole hole" that illuminates the the
vast darkness of space.

"Lost Worlds" is a very lovely art book that also explores the origins,
legends and history of all these various places -- whether they're imagined,
or just lost. I mean, really lost. And the artwork simply sweeps you away.

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