

Who Discovered the Tyrannosaurus rex?



Silke Vry
Claudia Lieb

The Dinosaur At The Rock
The adventurous stories of the
first bone hunters

112 pages, fully coloured,
21.5 x 26.5 cm, hardcover
€ 26.00

Sold to China

A twelve-year old girl stands alone on the rough cliffs of southern England and taps rhythmically with a hammer against the rock; two renowned scientists compete for a discovery in a »fight to the bones«; one day, a young adventurer peeks into the empty eye sockets of a Tyrannosaurus rex . . . this book tells the suspenseful stories of the first fossil hunters. At a time when most people still believed that the Earth was just a few thousand years old, and few imagined

that giant prehistoric lizards once ruled the planet, these hardy pioneering researchers were literally prying dinosaur bones out of the rock – and proving just the opposite to a skeptical world. With many illustrations, fossil and research profiles, and appendices.

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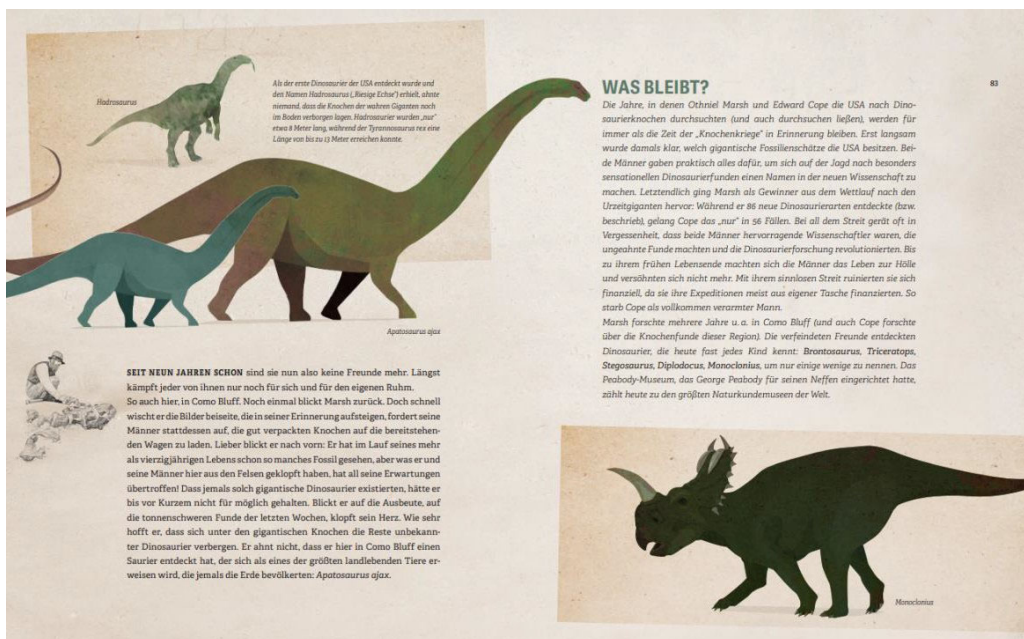
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Silke Vry was born in 1965 in Erlangen. She studied classical archaeology, art history, and folklore and has participated in multi-year archaeological excavations in Syria, Jordan, and Germany. Today the graphic artist and author lives in Hamburg. She has been writing books about archaeology and art for young adults and children for several years.

Claudia Lieb studied communication design in Münster and at Hamburg's Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften. She lives in Munich, where she works as an illustrator and graphic artist for a joint workshop.



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Foreword

In this book, everything – from the first to the last page – revolves around bones. Not just any bones, but very special ones: the remains of prehistoric animals. And it's about the men and women who discovered these bones, who chased them, who marveled, researched, doubted, despaired, struggled, wondered, and spent their lives racking their brains over these mysterious finds.

For what exactly was it that first came to light by chance in caves and swamps, quarries and cliffs? Our ancestors had wondered about huge fossilized bones for centuries. They believed that at some time human giants must have existed. Until the 19th century, no one had any idea of the unimaginably gigantic lizards that once ruled the world. How could they?

This realization took time, as well as close observers, clever minds, courageous thinkers, extraordinary discoveries and bold conclusions. But at some point, the time had come: the fossilized bones were finally recognized for what they really were – real witnesses of a past bygone era, the remains of "dinosaurs". This name ("terrible lizards") showed the fear that accompanied their discovery, for hardly imaginable realizations now came to light, and much of what people had believed with deepest conviction turned out to be a delusion.

First, the earth had not been created in the year 4004 before Christ, as "calculated" by an Irish archbishop, but obviously millions of years earlier. Furthermore, long before humans, the world was ruled by gigantic, monstrous animals, that disappeared one day. But when exactly? And why?

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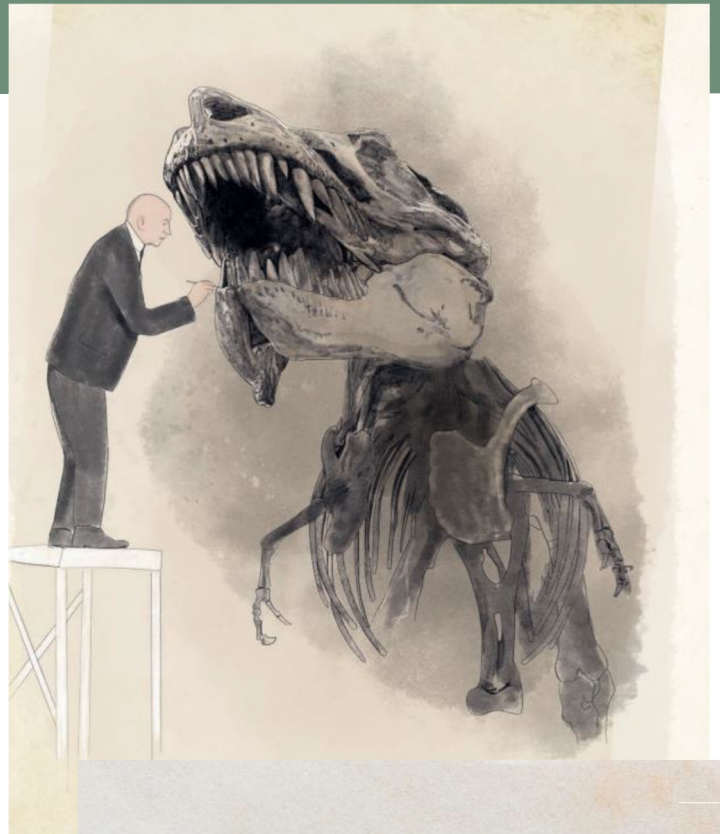
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Yet another frightening and novel thought was voiced for the first time: "Living things – whole species of animals – can become extinct!" One had to get used to this frightening idea, that it could ever be possible. Life on Earth seemed to be much more fragile than expected. What did this mean and how could this happen? Had God, who created the world and all life, possibly made a mistake? Disturbing thoughts, which led to further questions: would this fate also befall humans? Was our existence only a coincidence? What would emerge from further research?

Back then, anyone who delved into the past as a paleontologist (a fossil researcher) needed more than just a geologist's hammer. They needed a large portion of fearlessness and the confidence that everything hidden underneath would make sense.

How many days of fruitless searching and how many sleepless nights of brooding the researchers may have endured! Mary Anning, Gideon Mantell, William Buckland, Barnum Brown, to name just a few, whether in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany or Tanzania... what did they feel as the image of their world was increasingly shaken? But they all did not let themselves be discouraged from further research, and many more findings came to light – Charles Darwin also played an important role in this series with his "theory of evolution".

In all this, of course, the men and women were tormented not only by "subterranean" worries, but also by very earthly ones: fear, poverty, hunger, for example, morbid envy, jealousy and the fear of being deprived by another bone hunter of the fame

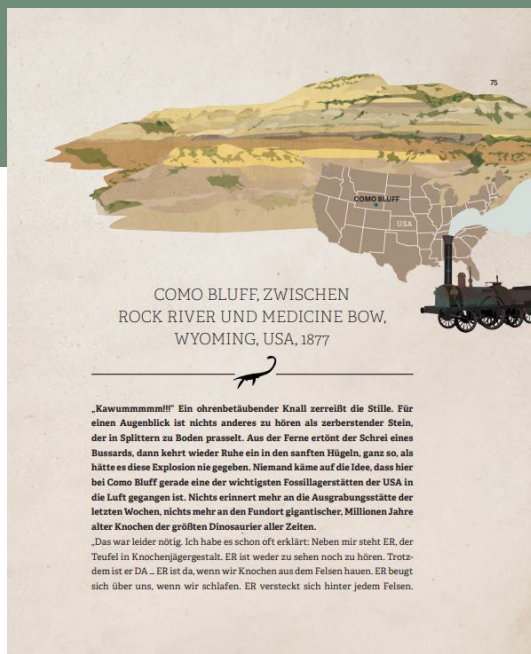


of discovery they themselves wanted to gain

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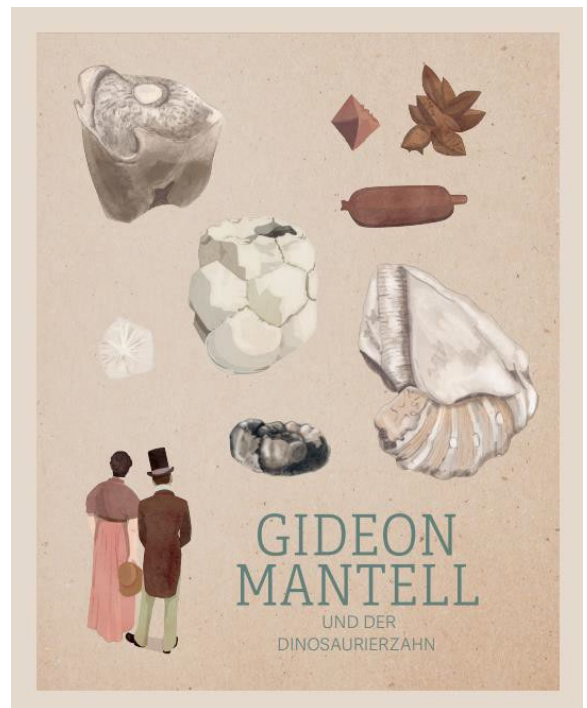
They had their eye on the future: what can be learned from the time of the dinosaurs for the benefit of the future of our fragile planet? The struggle of the men and women of that time made it clear: the discovery of these bones forever changed people's view of our wonderful world and resurrected a mysterious time that no one had thought possible.

Women at that time – as elsewhere and not only in scholarly circles – had much more difficulty than their male colleagues and competitors gaining recognition for their discoveries.

As long as this science was ridiculed as just searching in the dirt, men had held back. But as soon as paleontology was recognized as a serious science, women hardly had a chance. Yet they too have written "prehistoric history".

Each of the following nine chapters is about the hunt for the bones of extinct prehistoric animals. And yet no two stories are alike: It's the people, their fates and peculiarities, that make each tale distinctive.

It's easy to forget that each of these people struggled and fought for this image of the world, and that it was a long way from the first bone finds to the image of prehistory that we are so familiar with today. Despite all the differences, they had something in common with the paleontologists of today: looking back to prehistoric times – to transience and mass extinction – they too were searching for clarity.



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