FROM THE DIRECTOR

SINCE THE GALLERY closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our world has transformed in ways we might never have imagined. As we begin to emerge from our homes, we are trying to establish a new normal and striving to find balance. By safely reactivating the Gallery and welcoming back visitors on a limited basis this fall, we can provide opportunities for our communities to listen, learn, and grow amid rapidly changing current events.

The hundreds of thousands of objects in our collection remind us that great art transcends the immediate circumstances of its time and resonates across eras. Many objects in our collection were created to respond to the traumas of wars and pandemics, such as Carlo Maratti’s Study for the Altarpiece of Saint Rosalie among the Plague-Stricken (ca. 1657–60), which Maratti made as a way to heal after an outbreak of the Plague in the city of Palermo, Italy. More recently, works like Titus Kaphar’s Another Fight for Remembrance (2015) open pathways for constructive conversations, especially now, when injustice is thrown into stark relief.

I have been impressed by how the Gallery’s creative staff has used digital resources to prioritize access for our local, national, and global communities. Our welcoming Visitor Services staff is available to answer questions in real time through a Zoom link on our website. Our enhanced online newsletter highlights objects in the collection and programming content that is available online, such as the powerful panel discussion “The Legacy of Lynching,” one of the last events to take place at the Gallery before quarantine. The panel was part of the programming for the special exhibition Reckoning with “The Incident”: John Wilson’s Studies for a Lynching Mural, which, along with our two other special exhibitions—Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art and James Prosek: Art, Artifact, Artifice—has been extended through the spring.

The Gallery has been and always will be committed to the community on Yale’s campus, to our friends and neighbors in New Haven, and to all those seeking to engage with meaningful works of art from across time and cultures. We are a place for you.

We have spent the past few months creating a plan for sharing our collection while keeping everyone safe. My hope is that we can help our communities reflect on how their lives have been impacted by the events of 2020 and that together we can move forward and meet once again in the galleries.

See you soon, and stay well.

Stephanie Wiles
The Henry J. Heinz II Director

AS A SECURITY GUARD AT the Gallery, I ensure the safety of both the guests and the artworks, but in quieter moments, I really enjoy looking closely at the art on view. Now and then, I’m stationed in the Asian art galleries, where three pieces in particular always catch my eye: a Tang-dynasty horse and two Bactrian camels. I’m always struck by the fact that the sculptures are uncovered, not in glass cases like many of the other objects in the space. I enjoy the unimpeded view of these ancient works and find their detail and naturalism pretty incredible: the horse flaring its nostrils; the grooves in its mane and tail implying tiny braids; a textured saddle blanket placed on its back. The camels appear equally naturalistic as they raise their heads and open their mouths, as if they are braying. The glazes on all are brilliant; the light coming in from the windows facing the Margaret and Angus Wurtele Sculpture Garden makes the objects glisten as you walk around them.

Maybe it’s because of the colors of the glazes or familiarity of the animals, but I’ve noticed that young children are usually the first to spot the horse and camels when they enter the Asian art galleries. I’m grateful that the sculptures are out of reach of small hands because the children often want to touch them. I think that looking at these objects from a child’s point of view has made me appreciate them even more.

Mark Maresca is a Gallery security guard.
Helen Frankenthaler’s Low Tide

Frequent visitors to the Gallery are likely familiar with Color Field painter Helen Frankenthaler’s *Island Weather II* (1963), a longtime anchoring presence in the modern and contemporary art galleries. But visitors may be less familiar with Frankenthaler’s *Low Tide*, also dated to 1963, now on view in the Gallery’s exhibition *James Prosek: Art, Artifact, Artifice*. Though the painting was gifted to the Gallery in 1964, it had rarely been placed on view until 2019, when it was requested for loan to the exhibition *Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown* at the Parrish Art Museum, in Water Mill, New York. In preparing to lend *Low Tide* to this exhibition, curators and conservators had the opportunity to bring the painting out of storage and rediscover its particular qualities and nuances.

**CONSERVING COLOR FIELD PAINTINGS** presents a unique challenge. The Color Field painters—a group of mid-20th-century American artists who covered canvases with flat, solid fields of color—often used the raw canvas as a compositional element, so the treatment of these paintings involves cleaning a bare textile surface. These works also lack the layer of varnish that typically coats and protects the surface of many traditional paintings. In the case of *Low Tide*, the off-white, slightly speckled canvas is an integral part of Frankenthaler’s restrained color palette, which envelops the viewer and evokes the landscape of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where she kept a studio in 1963.

Frankenthaler turned increasingly to the coastal scenery outside her window for inspiration while working in her studio on the Cape, which, according to her stepdaughter Lise Motherwell, “had a great view of the water. When you were standing on the second floor, you could see the colors emerging as the tide went out, the green of the eelgrass in the water, the sand underneath. Helen’s paintings really capture that experience—the feeling of looking down into that.” Frankenthaler worked by pouring thinned paint directly onto an unstretched canvas laid out on her studio floor. Cascading onto the canvas surface, the fluid paint flowed and pooled into neighboring colors, staining the canvas and creating the subtle color variations and blended boundaries that are visible today, while leaving the negative space of the bare cotton canvas as a prominent feature in the final composition.

The year Frankenthaler painted *Low Tide*, 1963, she made the transition from oil to acrylic paints, which had been introduced to the market only about 10 years before. She had experimented with acrylics earlier in her career but struggled with them because they did not soak into her canvases in the way to which she had become accustomed. Oil paints, however, stained the canvas around the pools of color, creating a halo effect that has become a feature of her “soak-stain” paintings. Yet Frankenthaler also knew the oil could embrittlen the canvas, and so, over time, she adapted her technique to acrylic paints, which dried faster, could be thinned with water, and did not result in the distinctive oil halo.

In 2019, when conservators examined *Low Tide*, they found that the off-white canvas had become soiled and was stained where it touched the acidic wood of the stretcher bars. There was also evidence of previous damage: a drip running down the left side of the painting had stained the canvas and discolored the bright hues. Conservators carefully dry-cleaned the canvas with soft sponges, reducing the stains around its perimeter. This allowed the negative space of the white expanses to read coherently and the color balance within the picture to be restored.

Treating the drip presented another challenge. Conservators follow a code of ethics that mandates that anything applied to a work of art must be reversible and distinguishable from the original. In a traditional painting, lost areas of color might be carefully inpainted using reversible paints over a layer of varnish, restoring coherence to the picture. This painting would be permanently stained if conservators used such a strategy. Instead, tiny pieces of tissue paper were toned to match the color of the paint and were then carefully adhered to the canvas with weak wheat-starch paste, a reversible adhesive used more commonly in paper conservation. The stain, once distracting from the enveloping color composition, is now less visible, and visitors can once again appreciate this work after its long period in storage.

*Cynthia Schwarz is Senior Associate Conservator of Paintings.*

Detail of the left side of the painting during treatment, showing the lighter tone of the canvas after cleaning (below arrow) and the stain before retouching.
This year, the Gallery celebrates the centennial of the Société Anonyme, Inc., an artist-run organization established in 1920 to share modern art, primarily made in the United States and Europe, with American audiences. In addition to providing exhibition opportunities and support networks for artists affiliated with the group—including Marthe Donas, Alice Halicka, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Suzanne Phocas, Joseph Stella, and many more—the Société Anonyme amassed an impressive collection of international breadth that eventually consisted of more than 1,000 works.

KATHERINE S. DREIER AND MARCEL DUCHAMP—cofounders of the Société Anonyme along with Man Ray, who became less active in the organization over time—acquired most of these objects throughout the 1920s and 1930s and donated a substantial portion of the collection to the Gallery in 1941. This was followed over a decade later by a second large gift, through Dreier’s estate. In 1950 the Gallery published a catalogue of the Société Anonyme Collection, which formally marked the dissolution of the organization. Since then, subsequent efforts to bring public and scholarly attention to the artworks, as well as to the related archives housed at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale, have included numerous installations and exhibitions, such as the traveling exhibition that toured the United States and was shown at the Gallery in 2012. The 2020–21 issue of the Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin will be devoted to the Société Anonyme, presenting new research by national and international scholars on the collection and its artists.
In December 2019, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded Yale University a three-year, $500,000 grant to support Lux: Yale Collections Discovery, a unified search gateway to Yale’s museums, archives, and libraries. Its name is derived from Yale’s motto, <I>Lux et Veritas</I>, “Light and Truth.” The project is expected to launch within three years and will bring together on one platform the almost 17 million records—and growing—of the holdings of the Gallery, the Yale Center for British Art, the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, and the Yale University Libraries, making the records available to everyone for free. The new platform will eliminate the need for researchers to visit each institution’s website separately.

**The Main Goal of Lux** is to facilitate academic research, enabling users—whether on or off campus—to identify, access, and engage with items of interest within Yale’s physical and digital collections. Moreover, it will encourage discovery and serendipitous connections across Yale’s collections, exposing hitherto unknown relationships among objects and opening exciting new avenues of research.

The Gallery has had decades-long partnerships with the other museums at Yale, but the collaborative project that would come to be known as Lux kicked off in September 2018. That fall, the Cultural Heritage Information Technology (CHIT) group, composed of representatives from each of Yale’s cultural heritage institutions, began meeting bimonthly to discuss and plan the creation of a transformative shared resource. CHIT continues to work on projects to open Yale’s cultural-heritage collections to the world.

Since the inception of Lux, the Gallery has been busy implementing new cataloguing standards to make our collection records compatible with the standards of the overall project. When fully implemented, these standards will align our data with that of other Yale units and with the project’s mission. These new guidelines will ensure that the Gallery’s collection will be discoverable and searchable across Yale and beyond. The Mellon Foundation grant will aid in the reconciliation work that is needed for the massive data merge and will enable the University to hire a project manager as well as students from Yale and the New Haven Promise program to assist with various data projects. Further, this collaboration will directly fuel the Gallery’s planned reconceptualization and relaunch of its website as the portal to our collection and programs.

Yer Vang-Cohen is Data and Database Administrator.

Thomas Raich is Director of Information Technology.
In mid-2019 the Gallery purchased a major painting by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (1591–1666), known by his nickname, Guercino (“Little One-Eyed”), because of his marked squint. This Bolognese painter’s works were highly sought after during his lifetime and for more than two centuries after his death. His early canvases—richly dramatic in composition, vibrantly colored, and thickly painted—caused a sensation in Bologna and in Rome when they first appeared there.

**Recently Acquired, Recently Restored**

**Laurence Kanter**

**Ian McClure**

**After a Short Period Working** for Pope Gregory XV in Rome, Guercino returned in 1623 to his native Cento, a small town near Bologna, and rarely left for the next 20 years. Cardinals, princes, popes, and kings sent agents to Cento to commission paintings from him. He moved from Cento to Bologna in 1642 following the death of Guido Reni, his chief rival and Bologna’s leading painter, remaining there as the most respected and sought-after artist of northern Italy, and possibly of Europe, until his death in 1666.

This painting, *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (1652), measures almost six by eight feet. The saint, the precursor of Christ, kneels on a rock in a hazy, mountainous landscape. In full profile facing to the left, he is undressed except for a deep red cloth draped over his shoulder and around his waist. He holds a reed cross in his left hand and, with his right, he reaches a small bowl up to a stream of water issuing from a short cliff before him at the edge of the composition. Water overflows from the bowl and runs down the rock face, dripping and splashing into a pool below. The water is both a symbol of the ritual of baptism and an allusion to the Old Testament story of Moses striking water from a rock when the Israelites thirsted in the desert. The painting was originally part of a set of four painted by Guercino in 1652 for his own house in Bologna, where it would have served as a backdrop for his reception of the many foreign dignitaries who visited him there. All four paintings depicted saints in contemplation in the wilderness; aside from Yale’s *Saint John the Baptist*, two of the series remain in Bologna and one has been missing since the 18th century. The history of the Gallery’s painting is significant: in addition to the time it spent in the artist’s home and as the property of his heirs, it remained for many years in only three private collections. This obscure and stable life, which included a stay in an Irish country house for 157 years, has no doubt contributed to its excellent state of preservation, a localized tear and a few small losses being the only damages to the surface. The thin washes of the landscape, which would have been vulnerable to the often drastic cleaning practices of the 19th century, remain beautifully intact.

Sir Joshua Reynolds once stated that “all good paintings crack,” and the crack pattern in this painting is particularly interesting. The horizontally aligned crack pattern is associated with the aging of the oil paint and ground applied over a heavy twill canvas. A series of vertical cracks suggests the canvas was rolled when it traveled from Italy to England sometime after 1719—the last date at which the painting was inventoried in the possession of Guercino’s descendants—and before 1812, when it was sold from an English collection to the Earl of Farnham in Ireland. The tear, which probably happened after the work left Italy, was repaired by backing the original canvas with a lining canvas. An additional lining canvas was added later, probably in the early 20th century. Very little else seems to have been done to the painting.

Upon arriving at Yale, the painting spent months being cleaned in the Conservation Lab in the Collection Studies Center at Yale West Campus. The old varnish layers were particularly discolored, concealing the extraordinarily intense blue of the sky, characteristic of Guercino’s work, and the subtle gradations of the landscape. When conservation work was completed, Guercino’s *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness* was installed in the European art galleries alongside Annibale Carracci’s *Crucifixion* (ca. 1587–88), a gift in 2011 from Richard L. Feigen, and Guido Reni’s youthful masterpiece *Orpheus and Eurydice* (ca. 1596–97), purchased last year through the Gallery’s Maitland F. Griggs, B.A. 1896, Fund and an acquisition endowment established by the Robert Lehman Foundation. The installation of the Guercino completes a display of the classical revival in Bologna in the late 16th and early 17th centuries—one of the greatest highlights in the historical progression of European visual culture.

Laurence Kanter is Chief Curator and the Lionel Goldfrank III Curator of European Art.

Ian McClure is the Susan Morse Hilles Chief Conservator.
Working from home is a time-tested challenge. In the 18th century, long before the pandemic made Zoom calls and homeschooling such a large part of our everyday lives, businessmen and women conducted their affairs from their houses. Some aspects of today’s home offices remain surprisingly unchanged from those of 18th-century America, including specialized forms of furniture designed for efficient storage and increased comfort.

AS THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN colonies grew in economic importance during the 1700s, social and political power became centralized among those trading in raw materials, finished goods, and enslaved humans. A small elite class was prosperous enough to have a room at home outfitted as a dedicated office. Yet for most people, simply owning specialized, work-related furniture—such as desks and bookcases—projected refinement and professionalism.

The Boston merchant Isaac Smith was a member of this elite group. He commissioned John Singleton Copley, a notable portraitist for the wealthy, to paint pendant portraits of him and his wife, Elizabeth, in 1769. Copley depicted the merchant seated at a table attending to his correspondence. The metal elements of the standish—a tray for holding an inkwell and other writing implements—gleam against the deep blue background and visually rhyme with Smith's gold buttons and knee buckle. He sits in a Rococo-style side chair that signals his prosperity as well as his sophistication. The molded stile and scrolled crest rail of the chair’s back frame Smith’s shoulder, while the upholstered seat—edged with brass tacks—and the top of a cabriole leg are just visible below the edge of his sumptuous plum-colored waistcoat. Such an elegant chair was not designed for comfort; it required the sitter to be constantly aware of his or her posture. Indeed, all the elements of the painting bespeak the formality of 18th-century society, from the lustrous fabrics to the manicured wig. Etiquette manuals advised that gentlemen should sit in chairs with their backs straight and both feet on the floor. The informality of Smith’s crossed legs affirms that he has been caught in a moment of reflection, lost in thoughts of his work.

At almost nine feet tall, the block-front Desk and Bookcase owned by the Providence, Rhode Island, merchant John Brown might be considered the ultimate home office. The triple bookcase doors enclose shelves for books of various sizes, from folio business ledgers to quarto- (9½-inch) and octavo-size (6-inch) volumes. The lock on the slanting front, the concave and convex blocks of which are capped by voluptuous carved shells, secures a complex interior with large and small compartments for papers and writing implements and an additional...
locked compartment containing two drawers. When open, the slanting front, supported on pull-out lopers, forms a writing surface where the real work of the desk was done. Below the desk section, a pull-out slide perhaps provided a temporary shelf for volumes being moved to or from the bookcase. The large drawers below accommodated additional storage for rolled charts or even clothing.

Its extreme height suggests that the desk and bookcase may have been made for the 19,000-square-foot, three-story brick house that Brown completed in 1788—at that time the largest house in America. It sat on a Providence hilltop with a view of the water and the ships that were the basis of Brown’s fortune. On the desk’s writing surface, Brown would have kept business accounts of travels to the Caribbean, where he traded in sugar, molasses, and slaves, as well as of annual voyages to China, a lucrative new market opened to Americans after the Revolution. Brown was the first Rhode Island merchant to enter that trade, and with it came increased paperwork and an even larger fortune.

Continuing the tradition of efficient, multi-functional furniture—albeit on a slightly more modest scale—the Writing-Arm Chair combines a classic American Windsor chair with the storage and versatility of a desk. The huge balloon-shaped writing arm offers ample workspace. It supports a sliding shelf to hold a candle or inkwell and a small drawer, probably for writing tools and sand to blot wet ink. A larger second drawer for storing papers and books is located beneath the seat. Branded “EB: TRACY” on the

Attributed to Daniel Spencer, Desk and Bookcase, Providence, Rhode Island, 1772–90. Mahogany (primary); American black cherry, chestnut, and eastern white pine (secondary) (by microanalysis). Yale University Art Gallery, Mabel Brady Garvan Collection
underside of the seat, this chair was produced by the prolific Windsor chairmaker Ebenezer Tracy of Lisbon, Connecticut, and features several of his distinctive construction details, such as the squat baluster turnings on the arm supports and the graceful swelling on the spindles. Tracy considered comfort as well as function when designing this chair, choosing to include a wide arm rail on which a sitter could rest an elbow, a high-back crest to lean one’s head against, and a gently tilted writing surface to allow for a bit of relaxation while writing. This novel seating form was popular in the years immediately following the Revolution and often appeared in the probate inventories (lists of assets taken after death) of clergymen, doctors, and other educated gentlemen. Tracy’s own probate inventory, taken in 1803, revealed that he, too, owned a “Writing Chair & cushing [cushion],” valued at four dollars, then a considerable sum.

For the merchants, landowners, and clergymen whose livelihoods centered on the creation and organization of paperwork, such furniture was not only essential but also a material manifestation of their erudition and prosperity.

Patricia E. Kane is the Friends of American Arts Curator of American Decorative Arts.

John Stuart Gordon is the Benjamin Attmore Hewitt Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts.

Alexandra Ward is the Marcia Brady Tucker Fellow in the Department of American Decorative Arts.
JAMES GREEN

The Beauty of African Cultures

WHEN THE GALLERY FULLY REOPENS, visitors will see a newly installed portion of the African art galleries. Breaking from a thematic arrangement of objects, the display will focus on different African cultures, highlighting masterpieces by some of the continent’s most celebrated artists. A new section dedicated to the art traditions of the Asante peoples of Ghana will include the finial of a 20th-century Counselor’s Staff decorated with gold leaf, by Osei Bonsu, as well as a complete Counselor’s Staff, a gift from Governing Board member Helen Runnells DuBois, B.A. 1978, in memory of Bill Wright. Recently acquired works by two Kongo artists, Chief Voania of Muba and Benoît Madya, will be showcased alongside works by other Kongo masters in a broad range of media, including prestige crowns (mpu) bequeathed by the late Paul F. Walter in 2017 and on view for the first time.

Textiles from across the continent will introduce color and pattern into the space. A newly conserved wool Marriage-Bed Screen (Arkilla Kerka) from Mali—commissioned as part of a Fulbe bride’s trousseau and donated to the Gallery by the Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society in Madison, Connecticut—will cover much of the gallery’s south wall and form a dramatic backdrop for a selection of antiquities and wood sculpture from the Sahel region. Highlights from the Gallery’s collection of North African jewelry, donated by African art historian Labelle Prussin, Ph.D. 1973, and her daughters, will introduce the public to the vibrancy of art from this region, a strength of the Gallery’s collection.

An exciting aspect of the reinstallation will be a digital display of African rock art organized in partnership with the Yale School of Drama. Photographs of sites taken across the continent over a 40-year period by Kenyan rock-art specialist David Coulson and conserved at the British Museum, London, through support from the Arcadia Fund, will be projected onto the convex exterior of Louis Kahn’s circular stairwell. Representing some of Africa’s most ancient sites of cultural heritage, rock art is extremely vulnerable to natural and man-made destruction. This digital record provides unrestricted public access to these fragile, and often inaccessible, artworks.

James Green is the Frances and Benjamin Benenson Foundation Assistant Curator of African Art.

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For information on how to support the Gallery’s programs, please contact Brian P. McGovern, Director of Advancement, at 203.436.8400 or b.mc governor@yale.edu.

Reactivation
We are working to reactivate the museum and welcome back visitors. Please continue to check our website for updates.

Your health and safety are our top priority. We are taking the following steps to keep you safe:

→ Reduced opening hours
→ Limited capacity
→ Reservations strongly recommended
→ Face coverings required
→ Physical-distancing required
→ Enhanced cleaning protocol

Are public tours available?
All tours are suspended until further notice.

Will the Gallery host any public programs this fall?
There will be no in-person public programs taking place at the Gallery this fall. Please check our online calendar and social media accounts for updates about our virtual programs.

Free Membership
The free membership program extends the Gallery’s philosophy of free admission one step further, allowing everyone who wants to belong the opportunity to join. Benefits of free membership include a subscription to the Gallery’s magazine and online newsletter; a 20% members’ discount on all publications at the Museum Store; and discounted parking at the Chapel-York Parking Garage.

Free Student Membership
We invite high school, college, graduate, and professional school students to join the Gallery’s free student membership program and to enjoy, in person or online, all that the Gallery has to offer.

Connect with the Gallery on Social Media
Follow the Gallery on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for the latest news about exhibitions and programs, behind-the-scenes photos, and exclusive content. Watch videos of past lecture series, artist talks, and more on the Gallery’s YouTube channel. Share your favorite Gallery experiences and artworks with us by tagging your posts and photos @yaleartgallery. To learn more, visit artgallery.yale.edu/connect.

Cover Image: Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri), Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness, 1652. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Class of 1913, Fund
Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art

Through February 28, 2021


Reckoning with "The Incident": John Wilson's Studies for a Lynching Mural

Through February 28, 2021

Exhibition made possible by the Isabel B. Wilson Memorial Fund. Organized by Pamela Franks, Class of 1956 Director, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and former Senior Deputy Director and Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Yale University Art Gallery, and Elisabeth Hodermarsky, the Sutphin Family Curator of Prints and Drawings, Yale University Art Gallery.

James Prosek: Art, Artifact, Artifice

Through February 28, 2021

Exhibition made possible by Donna and Marvin Schwartz, with additional support provided by Susan and Stephen Mandel, Jr., the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, the Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund, and the Robert Lehman, B.A. 1933, Endowment Fund. Organized by James Prosek with Laurence Kanter, Chief Curator and the Lionel Goldfrank III Curator of European Art.

Exhibition closing dates are tentative and subject to change.