

Cover: Winslow Homer, American, 1836–1910

The Morning Bell (detail), c. 1872

Oil on canvas, 24 x 38½ inches

Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

Yale University Art Gallery Selections



Yale University Art Gallery, second floor installation, 1983

Yale University Art Gallery

Selections

Edited by Alan Shestack

New Haven

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Yale University Art Gallery, wing designed by Louis Kahn, 1953, courtyard view

Foreword

The Yale University Art Gallery is the oldest university art museum in the Western Hemisphere, founded in 1832 when Colonel John Trumbull, the patriot-artist, donated more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. The Yale Art Gallery has since expanded to become a major art museum with holdings from virtually all national schools and important periods in the history of art. The present gallery occupies two connecting architectural units: one, built in 1928, was designed by Egerton Swartwout and based on the design of a Gothic palace at Viterbo, Italy; the other, completed in 1953, was designed by the distinguished architect Louis I. Kahn. The new gallery was the first major commission in Kahn's career and was also the first building in a modern style to be erected on the campus.

In addition to the Trumbull paintings of the Revolutionary period, other noteworthy collections of the Gallery include the first collection of Italian Renaissance art ever formed in America, the James Jackson Jarves Collection of early Italian paintings, acquired by Yale in 1871; the Rebecca Darlington Stoddard Collection of more than 600 Greek and Etruscan vases; the Dura-Europos Collection of antiquities from the University's excavations at the site of a Roman outpost in the Syrian desert; the Maitland F. Griggs Collection of Italian painting and Medieval art: the Moore Collections of textiles and of Near and Far Eastern art; the Linton Collection of African sculpture; the Olsen Collection of Pre-Columbian art; and the Garvan and related collections of American painting and decorative arts. Also included are the Société Anonyme Collection of twentieth-century art, formed by Katherine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp; the Rabinowitz Collection and the Stephen C. Clark Collection of old master paintings, and the Katharine Ordway Gallery of Modern Art. The Gallery also houses a comprehensive collection of master prints, drawings, and photographs.

This handbook is designed to introduce the visitor to the Yale University Art Gallery's holdings by presenting fifty selections which are both representative of the collection and illustrative of its quality and range. Most of the items chosen are objects on permanent view in the museum, while light-sensitive objects, especially textiles and works on paper which are usually in storage, were intentionally omitted. Choosing fifty favorite works from among over 100,000 in the collection was a difficult

and arbitrary process and represents the personal tastes of the museum's curators and director; the visitor should always remember that a museum provides the opportunity for everyone to make personal discoveries. While seeking out the works illustrated and discussed here, the visitor should not overlook the many other works of art which might be equally or even more stimulating or visually rewarding.

Since the commentaries were written by twenty different members of the museum staff and by doctoral candidates in history of art, they vary in emphasis and character, but all aim to give the reader a clearer understanding of the significance and meaning of individual works of art.

—AS

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Selections

Assyria, ninth century B.C.

Relief from the Palace of Assurnasirpal II

Limestone, height 43 inches

University purchase

The Palace of Assurnasirpal II, King of Assyria from 883 to 859 B.C., was begun at Nimrud, his new capital, in 879 B.C. An elaborate and imposing structure, the palace was a labyrinth of long, rectangular rooms surrounding an open central courtyard. Colossal limestone sculptures of winged lions and bulls guarded its gates, and painted limestone reliefs adorned many of its walls.

The reliefs were designed to glorify the king, and they show him as both the heroic warrior smiting his enemies and the fearless hunter in victorious pursuit of noble beasts. Many reliefs portray the king engaged in the religious ceremonies associated with kingship in ancient Assyria, assisted by semi-divine and human companions. Most of the reliefs bear a cuneiform inscription, cut in a wide band across the larger figures, celebrating the events of the king's reign and describing his glory and power.

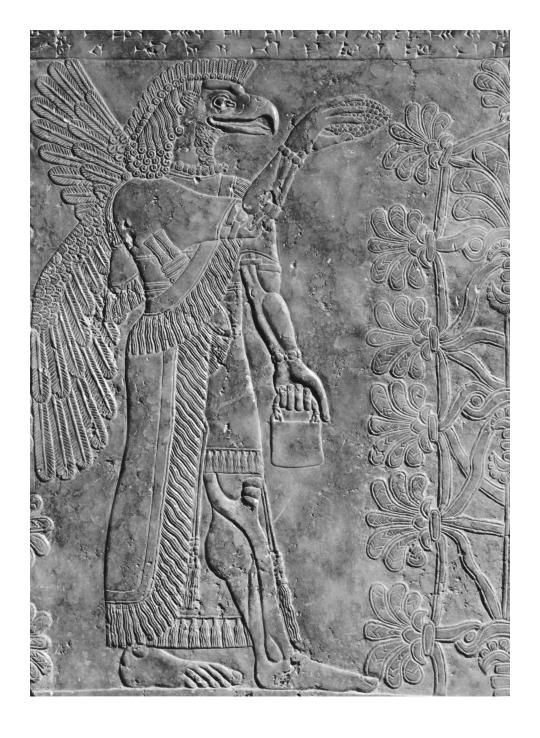
Scenes of offerings and worship are the primary subjects of the religious reliefs. Many of them center around a plant-like form called by scholars the "sacred tree." The king and his semi-divine winged companions (genies) often flank this "tree" and appear to water or fertilize it with an object shaped like a pine cone. Although neither the details nor the underlying significance of this ritual are clearly understood, the frequency with which the scene is repeated throughout the palace suggests that Assurnasirpal considered his role as the chief worshiper of the gods to be his most important function.

Four reliefs which formed part of these religious scenes were purchased for Yale from the British excavations at Nimrud in 1854. This relief shows a winged, bird-headed genie wearing a long, fringed cloak over a short kilt and carrying a double dagger in his belt. The genie holds a pail and a pine cone with which he tends the sacred tree. Above the figure's head is a fragment of the standard cuneiform inscription.

Two of the reliefs are larger in scale, with over-life-size figures more than twice the size of the smaller sculptures. One of these, the finest of the four reliefs, shows a human attendant carrying a bow, mace, sword, and quiver of arrows, offerings brought for the king. Traces of original paint remain on the shoes of the larger figures.

All four reliefs demonstrate the Assyrian artist's love of pattern and detail, evident here in the rows of spiral curls, the feathers, and the fringe, and on the larger figures in the lively animal-head finials on swords and arm-rings. Remarkable even within this context are the lightly incised borders of the human attendant's garments, which bear miniature versions of the very scenes they decorate.

-SBM



Greece, attributed to the Berlin Painter, c. 480 B.C. Red-Figure Amphora
Terra cotta, height 12¹⁵/16 inches
Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard

Vase painting in Athens in the late sixth and early fifth century B.C. marks a high point in the development of Greek art. The nearly perfect balance between form and decoration achieved in the best of these vases resulted in works of art that can be appreciated simultaneously as extraordinary drawings and exquisite decorated vessels. Among the artists who created these elegant vases, an anonymous artist called the Berlin Painter (active c. 500–460 B.C.) is one of the acknowledged masters of red-figure painting.

The red-figure technique, in which figures of unglazed red clay are defined by a solid black glaze background and details of black glaze, originated around 530 B.C. Its first practitioners were interested in its potential for showing the human figure moving in space, and they experimented widely with foreshortening and complex poses. By the early fifth century, however, the information gained from these experiments had largely been assimilated, and the second generation of red-figure painters explored the possibilities of emotional expression through dramatic narrative, or, like the Berlin Painter in his innovative single-figure compositions, concentrated on the purely aesthetic effects of radiant, ochre-colored figures set against a lustrous black glaze.

By limiting himself to one figure on each side of the vase, the Berlin Painter was able to focus the viewer's attention on the perfection of that one figure. The refined and delicate drawing, the careful attention to elaborate details and patterns of dress, and the restrained nobility of the figure could be seen to best advantage. The minimal use of decorative ornament, another original feature of this artist's vases, further emphasizes the figure. The Berlin Painter preferred the amphora for his single-figure compositions, perhaps because the single figures harmonize naturally with the shape of the vase by echoing its vertical form. Here the artist has also used an outstretched arm to balance the strong vertical and to emphasize the widest point of the vase.

Two of the twelve Olympian gods appear on the Yale vase: the warrior goddess Athena, protector of Athens and patron goddess of the arts, stands on one side; and Hermes, the messenger god, appears on the other. Athena holds her spear and helmet and wears an ægis, a goat skin bordered with snakes that had magical power to drive off enemies. Hermes wears the costume of a messenger—a cloak, traveling hat, and boots—and carries a kerykeion, or herald's staff.

This amphora (storage jar) is part of the large collection of Greek and Italian vases given to Yale by Rebecca Darlington Stoddard in 1913.

---SBM



Rome, third century A.D.

Scutum

Wood covered with kidskin, decorated with encaustic paint, height 42 inches

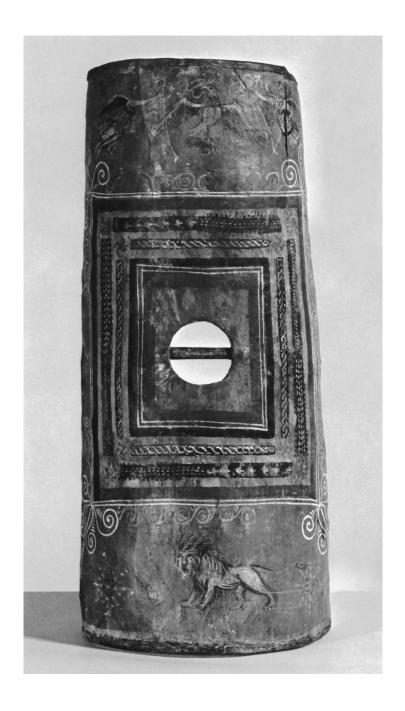
The Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos

The shield most frequently carried by Roman legionaries was the *scutum*. Designed to cover the entire body, the *scutum* was oblong in shape and curved like a segment of a cylinder. It was constructed of laminated wood covered with leather, and the central handgrip was protected by a bronze or iron shield boss, or *umbo*.

The leather covering of the scutum was generally painted, and the decorative motifs can often be associated with particular legions. The Dura scutum is richly decorated, with elaborate rectangular borders around the central handgrip, an eagle crowned by two winged victories above, and a lion below. While these motifs may refer to a specific legion like others of their type, it has not yet been possible to identify it. The painterly style of the lion and the other figures, the use of blues and greens and the dominant red ground, and the plant motifs of the elaborate, rectangular borders provide strong links to Roman wall painting and suggest that this shield was painted somewhere other than Dura and brought to the city by its owner.

Shields of this type are well known from representations of Roman legionaries in art, but because of the perishable nature of their materials, few have survived. At the time of its discovery in 1933 by the joint expedition of archaeologists from Yale and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, this scutum was the only complete example known. Although others have been uncovered recently, the Dura scutum remains one of the most important and beautiful examples of the Roman armorer's craft.

---SBM



Syria, third century A.D.

Portrait of Heliodoros, the Actuarius

Mineral-earth colors on a wet-lime wash applied to a plaster tile,

13³/4 x 17⁵/16 inches

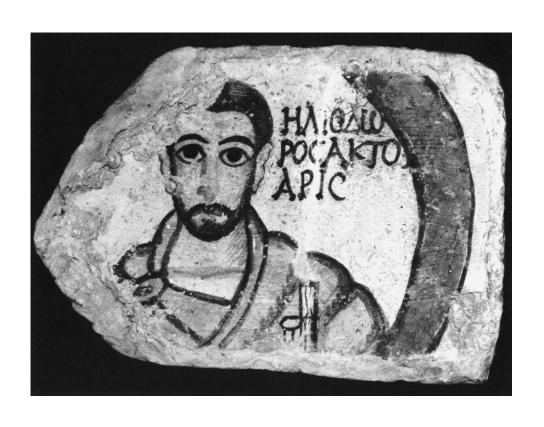
The Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos

In the third century A.D., the city of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates River was a military outpost at the eastern border of the Roman Empire. The activities of the Roman garrison stationed at Dura were recorded in daily reports and duty rosters compiled by official military record keepers, or *actuarii*. A portrait of one of these, a man named Heliodoros, was found on a painted ceiling tile from the House of the Scribes, a private house south of the Roman military camp, which had been commandeered by the garrison to serve as an office. The portrait is inscribed in Greek with Heliodoros' name and title. He wears a military cloak (paludamentum) and carries two holders of writing instruments, the tools of his trade.

Despite its broken left corners, the Heliodoros portrait is in exceptionally fine condition for a painting of this period. Its freshness enhances the effect of the clear, linear style and the strong earth colors. Like much of the painting and sculpture at Dura, the Heliodoros portrait combines elements of Graeco-Roman and Near-Eastern artistic styles. The strictly frontal figure and the unnaturally large, staring eyes are characteristics of Parthian (Iranian) art which became dominant features of Durene painting and sculpture during the two centuries the Parthians ruled the city. The influence of Greek and Roman painting, on the other hand, can be seen in the shading on the face, neck, and cloak, which suggests the illusion of three-dimensional form.

Few painted portraits of the Roman period have survived outside of Egypt. Although Dura is unusually rich in such portraits, all but this one adorned temple walls and represented soldiers or residents of the city offering sacrifices to the gods. The Heliodoros portrait stands alone at Dura as a secular portrait intended to serve as a record of an individual and his role in society. Once again, the distinction between Rome and the East arises. The donor portraits in the temples at Dura are purely Parthian in concept, but in choosing to have himself portrayed in his official capacity in the place where he worked, Heliodoros was thinking like a Roman.

-SBM



France, twelfth century

Sculptures from St. Martin, Angers, c. 1180–95

Limestone, height 55 to 77 inches

Gift of Maitland F. Griggs, B.A. 1896

This group of four standing and one seated life-size limestone figures, dating from c. 1180–95, once adorned the collegiate church of St. Martin in Angers, located in the Loire Valley of west-central France. Positioned high above the altar, this group and an additional figure of St. Martin (now lost) sat atop columns in niches between large windows at the eastern end of the church. Their headless and for the most part handless condition is probably the result of the iconoclastic fervor following the French Revolution. Traces of polychromy, probably applied in an eighteenth-century restoration, are still visible, though it is likely that each of the statues was originally painted.

From their vestments, attributes, and gestures, the figures have been identified, though with some uncertainty. At the left is a figure wearing ecclesiastical vestments, perhaps the local bishop, St. Loup. Next is St. John the Apostle, holding a book, presumably the Bible, and adorned with a halo bearing an abbreviated Greek inscription standing for "The Holy-Ioannes-of-God." In the center is a somewhat unusual seated Madonna, tenderly embracing the Christ Child in a pose deriving ultimately from Byzantine sources. To their right is the apostle St. Andrew, holding a book. And finally, at the far right is a figure in ecclesiastical vestments, holding a book, with a now-broken bishop's crozier over his left arm. This figure has tentatively been identified as either St. Aubin, St. Maurice, or St. Maurille, all local saints venerated in the Angers region.

Each of the figures in the group echoes the solid rectangularity of the limestone blocks from which they were carved, their heavy, linear-patterned drapery tending to hide the bodies beneath. Slope-shouldered, broad-torsoed, feet slightly apart, however, they nevertheless demonstrate the Gothic sculptor's growing awareness of human anatomy. The Virgin and Child in particular, though rather uncomfortably tilted forward in a seated position, begin to emerge from the block as deeply carved, three-dimensional entities. The Christ Child is seen in a three-quarter view, his left arm raised while presumably reaching back to embrace his mother. Though without heads and hands, essential means of expression in any figural composition, the Virgin and Child, as well as the group as a whole, remain as superb examples of the austere humanism of early Gothic sculpture.

---MK











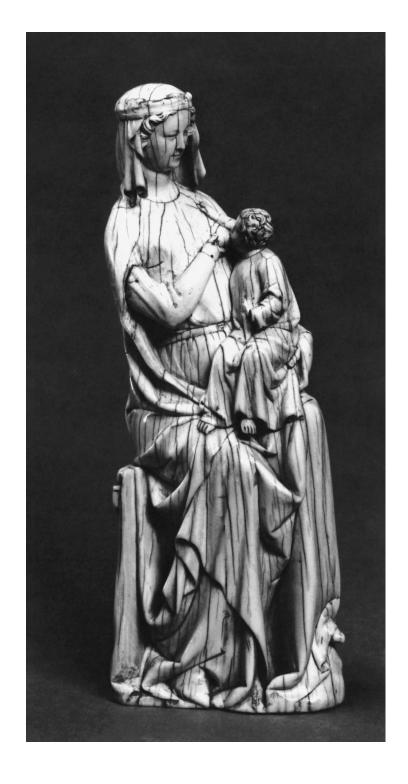
France (Ile-de-France)
Virgin and Child, c. 1300
Ivory, height 10 inches
Maitland F. Griggs, B.A. 1896, Fund

This small-scale ivory Virgin and Child is a virtuoso work made for a refined, aristocratic patron. In ivories of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, an accommodation of the design to the material was highly prized. The gentle curve of the ivory tusk governs the composition, in which Mary leans back somewhat to support the Child on her raised left leg. The garment folds and facial features have been expertly carved. Such technical mastery in carved ivory objects of an intimate scale was achieved in the Ile-de-France, in the court circle at Paris, around 1300.

The Virgin combines courtly demeanor with maternal affection. Enthroned, crowned, and dressed in an elegant robe, she is shown in her traditional role as Queen of Heaven. She is also presented as a tender mother who nurses her Child. With His right hand on her breast, He presses toward her, suckling contentedly. The Virgin's discreetly revealed breast characterizes her as the *Madonna Lactans*. The theme evokes not only her humility but also her mediating function; her spiritual role as nursing mother extends symbolically to all humanity. Just as the Christ Child suckled at her breast, so medieval man, identifying mystically with the body of Christ, could look forward to her intercession on the Day of Judgment.

This object must have served a private, devotional function. Furthermore, its superb workmanship must have given its owner aesthetic pleasure. Originally, a polychrome twig-and-circle pattern on the robe, as revealed by inspection under ultraviolet light, as well as an arcade motif still discernible around the back of the throne, would have contributed to the interest of the piece.

—AC

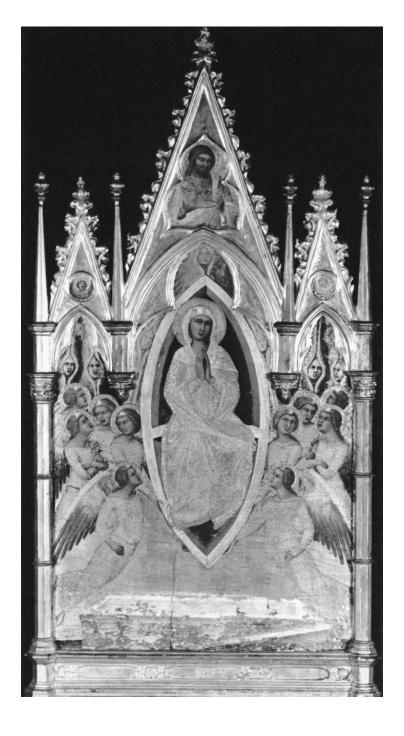


Luca di Tommè Italian, documented 1356–89 Assumption of the Virgin, c. 1355–60 Egg tempera on panel, 47⁷/8 x 24¹/2 inches University purchase from James Jackson Jarves

Luca di Tommè, the artist to whom this painting is attributed, was active in Siena, Italy in the second half of the fourteenth century. The panel, which would have been placed upon an altar, depicts the assumption of the body and soul of the Virgin Mary to heaven three days after her death. This subject had its origins in apocryphal literature of the third and fourth centuries but became particularly popular in the later middle ages and would have had great appeal for the Sienese, since Mary was their patroness. In Luca's painting, the Virgin is cloaked in a sumptuous brocade mantle appropriate to her imminent role as Queen of Heaven. The figure of God the Son, in the central pinnacle, holds a crown that he will bestow upon her at the culmination of her ascent. Framed by a blue almond-shaped mandorla to indicate her glory, the Virgin is borne aloft by a group of singing and adoring angels in delicate pastel robes incised with gold. Red seraphim and blue cherubim, who inhabit the highest reaches of heaven and are commonly depicted with only heads and wings, supplement the celestial choir.

One of the most striking features of this painting is the taste for gold, evident in its use both as a background to suggest the infinity of heaven and in incised designs to imitate luxuriously patterned fabrics. This predilection for decorative painting is characteristic of Sienese art in the second half of the fourteenth century. The gently curving lines of the angels' bodies and wings reinforce the elegance of the heavenly choir. Still, Luca's special skill in the handling of rich pattern and graceful line is fused with a desire to create three-dimensional forms through the modulation of light and shadow and passages of soft, clinging drapery. The conjunction of contrasting tendencies is particularly evident in the juxtaposition of the crowded heavenly realm and the void of earthly space suggested by the clearly receding tomb. It is through such subtle manipulation of opposites that Luca di Tommè creates a tension that vivifies the deliberate symmetry of his composition and conveys the mystery of this event.

—DP



Sassetta or Osservanza Master Italian, early fifteenth century Temptation of St. Anthony, c. 1430 Egg tempera on panel, 147/8 x 15¹³/16 inches University purchase from James Jackson Jarves

This small painting seems to have been part of a large altarpiece depicting St. Anthony and scenes from his legend, likely commissioned for a church near Siena, Italy. Generally regarded as the founder of monasticism, St. Anthony lived as a hermit in the Egyptian desert from the mid third to the mid fourth centuries. This panel painting depicts one of the popular episodes of his legend: the ascetic Anthony, carrying his attribute of a T-shaped crutch, is about to return to the confines of his cell when he is confronted by a charming girl in pink whose true identity as the devil is revealed by the hairy skin visible through the slit of her garment and by her demonic bat's wings. The tension suffusing this moment of choice between the sensual and spiritual realms is conveyed in the placement of Anthony in the center of the foreground walking towards his cell at the left while turning back to look at the temptress at the right, and is underscored by the fork in the road in the middle distance.

The authorship of this painting is not secure. The dollhouse-like dimensions of the cell and the clear contours of the graceful and delicate figures have prompted scholars to attribute it to Sassetta, a major Sienese painter of the fifteenth century, or to a painter closely associated with him and designated as the Osservanza Master. Regardless, the interest in line and deep space evident in the painting are typically Sienese. The figures of St. Anthony and the temptress, at once solid and elegant, are set into a deep and airy landscape suggested by the winding, stony road and the tiny birds sweeping through the sky. The artist's masterful depiction of a stark, rocky landscape whose forested heights are silhouetted against a vast expanse of creamy sky streaked with grey serves as counterpoint to the restraint and elegance of his figures. This subtle contrast evokes the drama inherent in Anthony's act of renunciation.

—DP



Antonio Pollaiuolo Italian, 1429–98 Hercules and Deianira, c. 1470 Tempera on canvas, transferred from panel, 21½ x 31³/16 inches University purchase from James Jackson Jarves

This painting is the only one by Antonio Pollaiuolo preserved outside of Europe. Originally on wood panel, it was transferred to canvas in the nineteenth century because of extensive damage from worm tunneling. It has been cleaned and restored several times, to the detriment of the detail. During the 1915 cleaning, the figure of Deianira was found beneath a repainting.

The painter has taken an episode from the Greek myth of Hercules. The centaur Nessus was to help Hercules' wife Deianira across a river, but when Hercules reached the opposite shore, the centaur started to carry her off. Hercules then shot Nessus with a poisoned arrow. The dying centaur instructed Deianira to collect his blood in a small jar to use as a charm to keep Hercules faithful. Later, when Hercules seemed enamored of the maiden Iole, Deianira soaked one of his garments in the centaur's blood. When Hercules donned the garb, the poison caused him such pain that he committed suicide on a funeral pyre.

Antonio captures the charged moment when Hercules draws his bow to kill the centaur fleeing with his captive. Although Antonio was mainly a sculptor, his paintings show his mastery of the nude in violent movement. The sinewy body of Hercules bristles with the energy that will be released when he looses his arrow. His active, angular pose is echoed by the jagged rocks that occupy the space beside him. As is typical in Renaissance painting, the artist is concerned with realism in human anatomy and landscape, as well as with the expression of motion and energy.

The painter depicts the Arno Valley with Florence in the background. The impression of a vast distance is enhanced not only by the sketchy detail but also by the winding river. Deft brushstrokes create a flickering, light-filled atmosphere in which the rushing river glistens and the city shimmers.

The picture can be interpreted as a Florentine allegory. The pitting of Hercules, sired by Jupiter, against the half-human, half-bestial centaur, stands for the triumph of civilized and cultured Florence over brutishness and unenlightenment. Alternatively, the meaning may reflect the possible function of the picture as half of a panel for a marriage chest (cassone). In this context, the subject might refer to conjugal fidelity or to masculine courage. The original wood panel was a fruitwood, used for finely made furniture. Furthermore, the elevated vantage point would be appropriate for a scene on a low-lying object.

—AC



Peter Paul Rubens Flemish, 1577–1640 Assumption of the Virgin, 1636–38 Oil on panel, 22 x 16 inches Given in memory of Elizabeth Manning Sage

This small panel is the second and final sketch for Rubens' much larger altarpiece done originally for the Church of the Carthusians in Brussels. Such oil sketches allowed Rubens to work out compositional and color ideas, and to present his patrons the opportunity to comment on a commission's progress. Once approval was obtained, Rubens usually left the finished painting to be worked up in larger scale by his studio assistants, with the master himself applying final touches to the most important areas.

That the Virgin was assumed into heaven in both body and soul became an article of faith in the Catholic Church's propagandistic war during the Counter-Reformation. In this sketch, all essential elements of the apocryphal story are visible. As was promised to Mary in a vision, the apostles gather about her opened tomb, awestruck at the miracle that is taking place before them. Some stare into the tomb at the burial robe left behind. The darkly clad female figure at the left holds red and white flowers, symbols of Christ's martyrdom and the Virgin's purity. The heaven-bound Virgin, seen from below in a typical Baroque compositional device, is already physically separated from the earthly world below. She is also depicted as a young woman, though she was reportedly at least sixty at the time of her death. Her triumph over death and her spiritual joy at being reunited with her only son are thereby symbolically implied. Rubens' emphasis on dramatic gesture, sweeping diagonal movement, and the sense of spiritual excitement are all forcefully rendered, even in this small oil sketch.

The wood panel on which the sketch is painted was first prepared with a whitish ground. After making his pencil drawing on this ground, Rubens covered it with thin, brownish (ochre) oil washes which are transparent enough to reveal the original drawing underneath. In the figure of the Virgin at the top of the panel, one can see that in contrast to the pencil drawing, Rubens painted her in a more central position, emphasizing her crucial role in the composition and theme. Similar changes may be seen in the apostle and attendant figures at the bottom of the panel. The artist also highlighted in thickly applied impasto the most important expressive areas, such as the heads and faces of the apostles, the glowing light around the Virgin's head, and the sparkling white of her robes. The economy of means and grasp of the enlarged final altarpiece seen here are typical for Rubens, one of the great geniuses of the seventeenth century.

--MK



Frans Hals
Dutch, c. 1580–1666
Mevrouw Bodolphe, 1643
Oil on canvas, 48³/₁₆ x 44¹/₄ inches
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

Nobody knows this woman's name; the title "Bodolphe" is conjecture, based on a fragment of paper found pasted to the back of the companion canvas. We can tell from their poses and costumes that she and her husband were respectable burghers, members of the prosperous middle class that was responsible for most art patronage in the Dutch republic. But even without further identification, the portrait presents a distinct and lively personality. The old woman must have been an individual of strong character. Alert, calm, slightly bemused, she seems to be watching us as we look at her.

The portraits of "Mevrouw Bodolphe" and her husband show Hals at his best. In his own time the artist was admired for his ability not only to convey subtle psychology, but also to depict the spontaneous gesture and movement that make his portraits "speaking likenesses." Much of the effect came from Hals' animated brushwork, which catches light and texture. Up close, Mevrouw Bodolphe's fur vest and black dress dissolve into slashing strokes of paint, but as one steps back from the painting the folds of cloth take shape and suggest the forms beneath. Hals' technique greatly impressed Manet and later artists; Van Gogh once wrote in awe, "Frans Hals had no less than twenty-seven blacks!" The portraits Hals painted toward the end of his life show an especially sensitive understanding of older sitters. Few of his contemporaries could paint women as incisively.

Hals' portraits follow a standard format. Since few Dutch houses had the wall space for an oversized canvas, husbands and wives were usually depicted in matched pairs of facing half-length portraits. Details of gesture and composition would link the two together. To indicate the man's position of importance, the woman usually sat to her husband's left. Wives wore at-home clothes, while men were often depicted in hats and cloaks, as if dressed to go out on business. Hals refined these traditional devices to make each portrait work individually as well as being part of a pair. Here the old couple turn slightly in their chairs to look out at the viewer, but one senses they could soon return to their own conversation.

—RZ



Claude Lorrain
French, 1600–82

Pastoral Landscape, c. 1648

Oil on copper, 15⁷/₈ x 21⁵/₈ inches

Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., B.A. 1913, Fund

Landscape first enjoyed broad acceptance as a subject for painting in the seventeenth century. Claude Gellée, called Lorrain after the place of his birth in northeastern France, was one of the first artists to devote himself entirely to landscape painting, and he is still considered one of its greatest practitioners. He left home while still in his teens, traveled for several years, and in 1627 settled in Rome, where he remained until his death.

The huge popularity of Claude's landscape compositions caused many other painters to forge his work. Claude retaliated by keeping drawings of all his paintings bound together in his *Liber Veritatis*, a record meant to prove the authenticity of any painting said to be by him. This book contains a drawing of Yale's *Pastoral Landscape* dated 1648 and inscribed with the name of his patron, Hans Georg Werdmüller, a military engineer and collector from Zürich. Werdmüller did not know Claude personally, nor was he ever in Rome, and his commission demonstrates Claude's widespread fame.

Although many of his paintings contain figures which illustrate biblical or mythological episodes, they remain landscape rather than subject paintings. The figures in the *Pastoral Landscape* refer to a long poetic tradition of rustic shepherds in idyllic landscapes which reaches back as far as Virgil's *Eclogues*. The painting, like most poetry and painting in the pastoral tradition, contains an implicit comparison of life in the countryside to life in the city, with a preference for the country life. Claude idealizes the landscape around Rome, creating a closed, Arcadian world suffused with the light of the setting sun. Just as the tradition of pastoral subjects means that ideas of city as well as country inform this painting, so it contains reference to other contrasts—night and day, life and death. Even in the idyllic countryside, death and decay exist alongside life and growth: the dead log in the foreground is surrounded by lush trees.

-LC



Probably Peter Blin
American, c. 1639–1725
Cupboard, 1670–1710
Oak, cedar, maple, pine, and tulip
Height 56¹/₄, width 49¹/₄, depth 22¹/₂ inches
Bequest of Charles Wyllys Betts, B.A. 1867

The panels with carved tulip and sunflower designs and the applied ebonized turnings on this cupboard relate it to a group of more than 100 surviving examples of case furniture, including six other cupboards, thought to have been made in the Connecticut River Valley town of Wethersfield. In recent years, most of these objects have been attributed to the shop of Peter Blin, a joiner of that town. Blin was probably an English immigrant, but no parallels to this "tulip and sunflower" group have been discovered as yet in English provincial furniture. Given to Yale in the late nineteenth century by the early collector C. Wyllys Betts, this cupboard has come down to us in an excellent state of preservation.

In the seventeenth century, the cupboard was the focal point in the houses of the well-to-do. Generally the most expensive and fashionable piece of furniture in the house, the cupboard held the family's costly textiles, with the household's eating and drinking vessels of silver, pewter, glass, and ceramics often displayed on top, resting on decorative "cubboard cloaths." Thus arrayed, a cupboard such as this example was an accurate barometer of its owner's economic and social status.

--GWRW



Edward Winslow American, 1669–1753 Sugar Box, c. 1702 Silver, height 5³/s, length 7¹³/16, width 6⁵/s inches The Mabel Brady Garvan Collection

Made at a time when Americans had to import sugar from the West Indies, this silver box functioned as a treasure chest for a precious commodity. The box would have been brought to the table on formal occasions, and the sugar used to sweeten wine and other festive beverages. During the early eighteenth century, sugar was considered to have procreative powers. The box contains several symbolic references to this potency: the two winged figures on the lid and the horsemen on the sides and back were images of fertility and ideal love taken from emblem books and illustrated epic poems.

Edward Winslow, one of the leading craftsmen of colonial Boston, employed the full range of a silversmith's techniques to create this richly ornamented object. He began by raising the oval shapes of the box and lid from flat sheets of silver. Using repoussé, a technique of pushing out the metal from inside the vessel, he modeled the surface and the gadrooned borders. Such details as the figures, leaves, and matte backgrounds were added by chasing the metal with special punches.

This box descended in the family of its maker, who gradually abandoned his craft as he acquired greater wealth, and devoted himself to a number of important political offices. This luxury object would have underscored Winslow's pretensions to a position in Boston's economic and political elite.

—**D**В



John Smibert American, 1688–1751 Dean Berkeley and His Entourage (The Bermuda Group), 1729 Oil on canvas, 69½ x 93 inches Gift of Isaac Lothrop

In 1729, Dean George Berkeley set out from London to found a college in Bermuda "for the better supplying churches in our foreign plantations and for converting the savage Americans to Christianity." Berkeley's friend John Wainwright commissioned a large picture of the members of the expedition from John Smibert, a minor Scottish painter whom Berkeley had invited to teach art in the new college. The painting was begun in London, and was completed after the group arrived in Newport to await additional funding for their college. Although he did not accompany Berkeley to the New World, Wainwright is shown with the group, sitting prominently in the foreground as the work's patron. Dean Berkeley stands at the right next to his infant son Henry, his wife Anne, and her companion Miss Handcock. The two wigged gentlemen are John James and Richard Dalton, presumably administrators for Berkeley's new college. At the far left, looking out at the viewer, stands the artist himself. For The Bermuda Group, Smibert put aside his usually sober color schemes and employed a palette that included bright reds, blues, and yellows. Smibert's signature and the date, 1729, can be seen on the edge of a small volume supporting the open book.

When the Bermuda college scheme failed, Smibert, the first academytrained painter to work in the American colonies, established a studio in Boston, where he became that city's most sought-after portraitist, enjoying a lofty professional reputation.

The Bermuda Group, his most ambitious work, remained in Smibert's studio until 1808, during which time many younger artists—among them Robert Feke, John Greenwood, and John Singleton Copley—studied it for its convincing representation of figures in space, sophisticated composition, and varied use of gesture and expression.

—ps



Joseph Richardson American, 1711–84 Tea Kettle on Stand, c. 1745–55 Silver, height 11¹/16, base 3 ¹/8, length 11 ¹/8 inches The Mabel Brady Garvan Collection

"The first drudgery of settling new colonies, which confines the attention of people to mere necessaries, is now pretty well over," Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1743, "and there are many in every province in circumstances that set them at ease, and afford leisure to cultivate the finer arts, and improve the common stock of knowledge." There are few more powerful demonstrations of the truth of Franklin's observation than this elaborate tea kettle on stand made in the late 1740s or early 1750s by the Philadelphia silversmith Joseph Richardson. Commissioned by a member of the Plumstead family, Richardson's work of conspicuous craftsmanship is closely related to an English example of 1744-45 by Paul de Lamerie (1688–1751) of London, originally owned by another Philadelphia family and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The relationship is primarily one of form, however, for Richardson has rather cautiously applied his decorative scheme of scrolls, shells, flowers, leaves, and animal figures within the framework of the object. The ornament has not become the form itself, as occurs in the most stylish English and European examples. Despite its relative conservatism within a larger context, the Richardson tea kettle remains the most ambitious American silver object of the mid eighteenth century. As such, it is also strong evidence of the importance given to the tea ceremony at this time, and it is ample testimony of the economic well-being of its owners. The tea kettle and stand, weighing more than 90 ounces together, were worth about £40 in silver alone, more than a Philadelphia laborer could earn in a year.

-GWRW



Ralph Earl American, 1751–1801 Roger Sherman (1721–93), c. 1775 Oil on canvas, 64⁵/8 x 49⁵/8 inches Gift of Roger Sherman White, B.A. 1899, LL.B. 1902

John Adams described Sherman as "an old Puritan, as honest as an angel and as firm in the cause of American independence as Mount Atlas." Sherman served as a member of the Continental Congress, was elected a member of the First Congress in 1789, and served in the United States Senate from 1791 until his death two years later. Sherman was the only man to help formulate and sign all of the great documents of American independence: the Articles of the Association in 1774, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution.

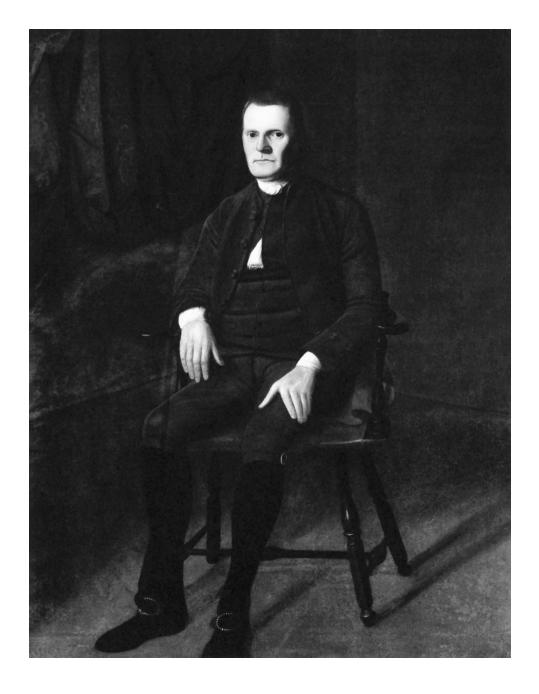
Born in Newton, Massachusetts, Sherman prospered as a shopkeeper in New Milford, Connecticut, where he established a printing business. His dedicated study of the law enabled him to pursue a successful career as a lawyer and a judge. He gave up his law practice in 1761 to open a store in New Haven for Yale students. He was the treasurer of Yale from 1765 to 1776, receiving an honorary M.A. in 1768. In 1784, Sherman was elected the first mayor of New Haven.

Sherman is depicted at full length, seated in a Pennsylvania-style low-back Windsor chair. A commanding and monumental form placed within a stark setting, with strong diagonal shadows that heighten the dramatic impact of the portrait, Sherman appears as an unforgettable image of integrity and high principle. Earl's careful attention to detail is evident in the glint of the silver buckles, the sheen of the rich fabric, and the reflection of the painted wood.

Earl's lack of formal training is evident in the distorted perspective and anatomy. Nevertheless, his simple, direct style of representation is wonderfully suited to the uncompromising character of Roger Sherman. Earl's awkward positioning of the figure tallies exactly with John Adams' observation that "Sherman's air [was] the reverse of grace."

Little is known about the early life and training of Ralph Earl. He was born near Worcester, Massachusetts. At the age of twenty-four, already a practicing painter, he visited Lexington and Concord to sketch the early battles of the Revolution. From 1778 until 1785, he lived in London, where he may have studied with Benjamin West, a compatriot and a fellow of the Royal Academy. After his return to America, Earl spent most of the remainder of his life in Connecticut, painting portraits of the leading figures of the period and executing a few landscapes. *Roger Sherman* is generally considered to be his masterpiece.

---DAF



Newport, Rhode Island

Desk and Bookcase, c. 1760–85

Mahogany, chestnut, pine, tulip

Height 106³/4, width 44³/4, depth 25¹/4 inches

Mabel Brady Garvan Collection

This desk and bookcase is attributed to an unidentified member of the Goddard or Townsend families, which included the most important cabinetmakers working in Newport, Rhode Island, during the second half of the eighteenth century. The maker of this piece skillfully manipulated his materials and construction techniques to produce one of the masterpieces of American furniture. He framed the light mahogany of the blocked areas with corner columns and moldings of a darker color. He played the horizontal lines of the desk section against the vertical thrust of the bookcase, which in turn was capped by a dramatically scrolled pediment. He also designed the desk with a blockfront, in which the central, recessed areas on the drawer fronts, desk top, and doors are flanked by raised panels. Blockfront furniture was an American innovation of the eighteenth century, and Newport cabinetmakers produced their own variation with carved shells incorporated into the convex-concave-convex rhythm of the façade.

Created for Providence merchant John Brown, this desk and bookcase served as both a repository for his valuable papers, money, and books and as a statement of his wealth and sophistication. Its monumental proportions, richly figured mahogany, and carved details were found on only the most expensive custom-made furniture of the colonial period.

—DВ



John Singleton Copley American, 1738–1815 Elizabeth Storer Smith, 1769 Oil on canvas, 50½ x 40½ inches Gift of Maitland F. Griggs, B.A. 1896

This portrait of Elizabeth Storer Smith, the wife of the prosperous Boston merchant Isaac Smith, reflected her position within the closely knit society of eighteenth-century Boston. The pearls she wears on her neck, hair, and dress; her richly colored garments; and the damask-upholstered armchair are all trappings of the wealthy elite. Moreover, the lush background landscape and the ripe grapes in Mrs. Smith's lap were traditional symbols of fertility, a particularly appropriate reference for the mother of six children.

This portrait was painted in 1769, at the height of John Singleton Copley's American career. His intense powers of observation and his painterly skill, which enabled him to render the contrasting textures of flesh, satins, grapes, and mahogany, were greatly admired by his contemporaries. The most successful portrait painter of the colonial period, he produced more than 200 portraits in less than twenty years. However, Copley's family had strong Tory sympathies, and his own desire to study abroad induced him to leave this country for England in 1774.

---DВ



John Trumbull
American, 1756–1843
The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, 1787–1820
Oil on canvas, 21½ x 31½ inches
Trumbull Collection, purchased from the artist

The Declaration of Independence is one in a series of eight paintings of scenes from the American Revolutionary War that Trumbull began in London in 1785, when he was a student of Benjamin West. During a visit to Paris in 1786, Trumbull met with Thomas Jefferson, then the American minister to France, who suggested that the artist undertake a painting commemorating the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson provided Trumbull with a floor plan of the Assembly Room and a first-hand account of the event.

Although Trumbull gave the date of July 4 in the title, the painting actually depicts the moment on June 28 when the drafting committee submitted the Declaration for consideration of Congress. In the center of the composition, Jefferson presents the document to John Hancock, while forty-eight congressmen look on. Surrounding Jefferson are other members of the drafting committee: John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin.

Trumbull's fundamental objective for this painting was to "preserve the resemblance of the men who were the authors of this remarkable act." To record as many likenesses as possible, Trumbull included portraits of congressmen who were not actually present at the event. Trumbull's picture contains other inaccuracies: he represented the Assembly Room's architecture and furnishings as much grander than they actually were. For example, he showed velvet draperies and upholstered French chairs instead of the Venetian blinds and Windsor chairs that were used. It seems that the artist wished to create an ideal image of a great moment in American history that also preserved the likenesses of the participants for posterity. Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams were painted from life directly onto the canvas in 1787. The majority of likenesses, however, were added from small pencil or oil studies made years later. Trumbull did not add the final portrait until 1819, almost thirty years after he began the painting.

—DВ



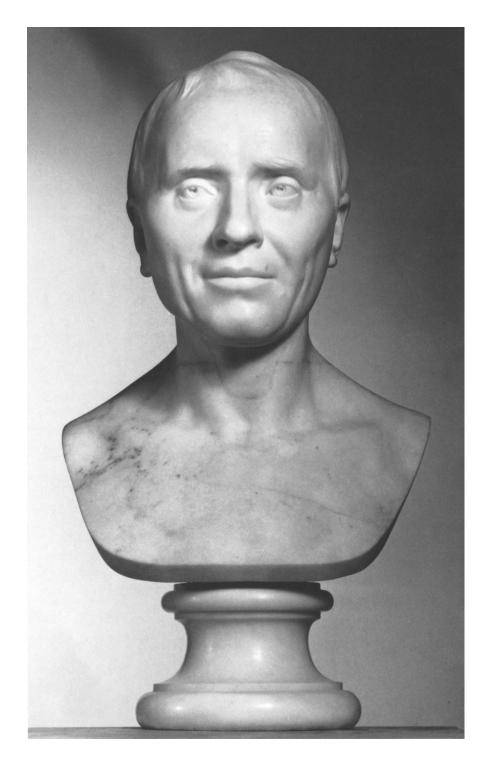
Jean Antoine Houdon
French, 1741–1828
D'Alembert (Jean le Rond), 1779
Marble, height 16 inches
Gift of McA. Donald Ryan, B.A. 1934; and William H. Ryan, 19218

Houdon's marble bust of Jean le Rond, known as d'Alembert (1717–83), suggests a man of quiet self-assurance and a vital, engaging intellect. D'Alembert was a prodigy of the Enlightenment, that period which maintained an optimistic faith in the sovereignty of reason and in the harmony of nature. The contemporary of Voltaire and Rousseau, by birth illegitimate, by stature frail, he became one of the giants of his age. He was a self-taught mathematician who made important contributions to the science of calculus, as well as a theoretical physicist who wrote on Newton's third law of motion, the dynamics of fluids, and the planetary orbits. He was a social philosopher and devoted disciple of human freedom who exhorted writers to pursue "liberty, truth, and poverty." He was, with Diderot (whose bust by Houdon can also be seen in the Yale Art Gallery), the guiding intellect behind the Encyclopédie, perhaps the most ambitious intellectual achievement of the eighteenth century, which gathered and classified the entire compendium of human knowledge.

D'Alembert's bust is dated 1779, two years after Houdon, the most subtle and sensitive portraitist of his age, was admitted to the French Academy, the same institution of which d'Alembert served as Perpetual Secretary. The bust is conceived in a direct and unpretentious classical style that emulates antique philosopher portraits. His shoulders are bare, and he lacks the wig typical of eighteenth-century models. The softly modeled marble evokes an air of noble simplicity and calm grandeur appropriate to this hero of the intellect. The sculpture seems to be absorbed in its own gentle atmosphere. The white Italian marble simultaneously reflects and absorbs the light, creating the sensation of warm flesh and durability. The organic unit of the whole belies the asymmetry of the parts, and through this synthesis d'Alembert seems at the same time transitory and immutable, living and timeless. No centimeter of the surface is left uninflected. One is aware of the furrowing of the cheek and brows, the concentration of the deep-set sockets of the eyes, the expansion of the collarbone as though the figure thinks, sees, and breathes.

The bust was modeled in 1779 but may not have been carved until the mid-1790s, following the Revolution and long after the death of d'Alembert. The circumstances of its execution in marble are obscure, but it is not difficult to infer from its patient, subtle carving an homage by Houdon to one of the great minds of the modern world.

---DR



Benjamin West American, 1738–1820 Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus, 1768 Oil on canvas, 64½ x 106½ inches Gift of Louis M. Rabinowitz

In the third book of the *Annals*, Tacitus relates how the Roman widow Agrippina, granddaughter of Augustus Caesar, returned to Italy accompanied by her two youngest children and carrying the urn with the ashes of her dead husband, Germanicus. Perhaps at the instigation of his uncle, the emperor Tiberius, Germanicus had been poisoned, and his popularity as a general, as well as his wife's legendary virtue and chastity, drew huge crowds of mourners to greet Agrippina when she landed at Brundisium. West was commissioned to paint the subject by Dr. Drummond, Archbishop of York, after the two men read the pertinent passage from Tacitus together. King George III was so impressed with the painting that he commissioned from West another subject from Roman history, marking the beginning of the artist's long relationship with the king, to whom he was appointed court painter in 1772.

West's painting is one of the great monuments of neoclassicism, a style dependent on theoretical writings which emphasized linearity, subdued color, and uplifting classical or biblical themes. Overtly moralizing depictions of classical virtue, such as Agrippina's dignity and restraint, were meant to inspire similar virtue in the viewers of the painting. West's interest in historical accuracy, evident in his close following of Tacitus' text, also led him to base the central group of figures on a published detail from the *Ara Pacis* frieze and the architecture in the background on an illustration in Robert Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalato*. The muted tonality of the central group, suggesting its sculptural source, and the restrained expressions of Agrippina and the grief-stricken onlookers convey the austerity prescribed by neoclassicism.

West was born in Springfield, Pennsylvania, and practiced as a portrait painter there, occasionally attempting historical compositions. His aspiration to high art and the financial support of friends encouraged him in 1760 to travel to Italy, where he studied the monuments of classical antiquity and of the Italian Renaissance, gaining the background he needed to become a history painter. Three years later he settled in London, where he was immediately successful. He was a founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts, and succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds as its president in 1792.

--LC



Stephen Badlam
American, 1751–1815
Carved by John and Simeon Skillin
Chest on chest, 1791
Mahogany and white pine,
Height 101½, width 51½, depth 23¾ inches
The Mabel Brady Garvan Collection

When Elias Hasket Derby (1739–99) commissioned this chest on chest in 1791, he went outside of his native Salem to secure the services of Boston-area craftsmen, including the cabinetmaker Stephen Badlam and the ship carvers John and Simeon Skillin. Bills tendered by these artisans to Derby for the cabinetwork, brasses, and carving totaled £26/17/6, a substantial sum at that time. The result was well worth the expense. Columns with Ionic capitals flank the upper case of this monumental object, while the canted corners of the lower case are carved with trailing floral vines descending from a bowknot. Related neoclassical motifs embellish the rectangular panel, hiding a secret drawer just below the cornice. The carved allegorical figures by the Skillins on the pediment are thought to represent America in the center, flanked by Peace on the left and Plenty on the right. These symbols elevate an already impressive example of Federal-style furniture into an emphatic statement of the attributes, virtues, and ideals of the early Republic. Badlam himself recognized the importance of this object. Shipping labels in his handwriting, pasted on the top of the upper and lower cases and addressed to Derby, read: "... Preserve it from the Sun, from wet & from bruises. It is of Consequence enough to merit great attention."

—G₩RW



Frederick Edwin Church American, 1826–1900 Mount Ktaadn, 1853 Oil on canvas, 35 x 55 inches Stanley B. Resor, B.A. 1901, Fund

Mt. Ktaadn of 1853, one of Frederick Edwin Church's earliest mature works, is a well known classic of American Romantic landscape painting. It expresses the optimism of a youthful society which, despite rapid growth and industrialization, still pictured itself existing in harmony with nature.

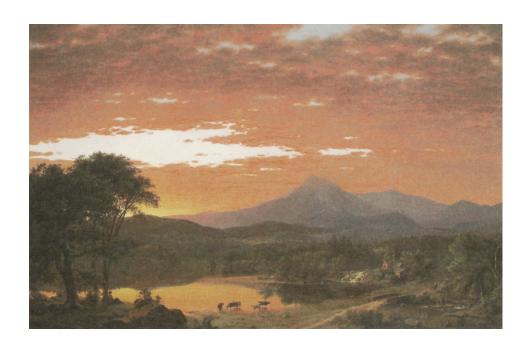
Church, one of the preeminent American landscape artists of the nineteenth century, was the principal follower of Thomas Cole (1801–48), who founded the first native American school of landscape painting, the Hudson River School. Influenced by English Romantic landscape art, the Hudson River painters devoted themselves to a close study of nature untouched by man, while at the same time they remained bound to European tradition, which depicted an ordered, idealized nature. The American artists developed a personal, naive image of their homeland, envisioning actual wilderness as gentle pastoral landscape.

Members of Church's generation, unfamiliar with the more remote regions of the New World, considered Mt. Ktaadn (Katahdin) one of the most impressive mountains on the North American continent. The highest peak in Maine, rising majestically above the surrounding forest terrain, it was reputedly the easternmost mountain from which to watch the sun rising over the Atlantic. Henry David Thoreau had climbed it in 1846, and his enthusiastic account of that ascent inspired other tourists to visit the area. Mt. Katahdin became a favorite subject for Church, who saw the mountain for the first time in 1850.

In Yale's painting, Church proved his skill at capturing on canvas the transitory effects of nature. He represented with precise realism the cloud formations and magnificent color of the sky as it appeared around the mountaintop at twilight. Church's splendid skies were intended to astonish the beholder, communicating a sense of the immanent divine presence in nature.

One notes how the painter, though inspired by nature, makes use of conventional Claudian landscape devices (see pages 34 and 35) to create a tidy, picturesque composition. The framing trees in the foreground shade the figure of a boy, who gazes off across a tranquil, reflecting body of water towards the peak of Mt. Katahdin in the distance. Other details—the cattle drinking by the lake, as well as the roadway at right receding gradually into the background with its quaint stone bridge and fisherman—also serve to tame the natural scenery. The intrusion of a factory, situated in the middleground next to a waterfall, provides the only hint of the world outside, bringing a slight portentous note to this picture of idyllic serenity.

—LR

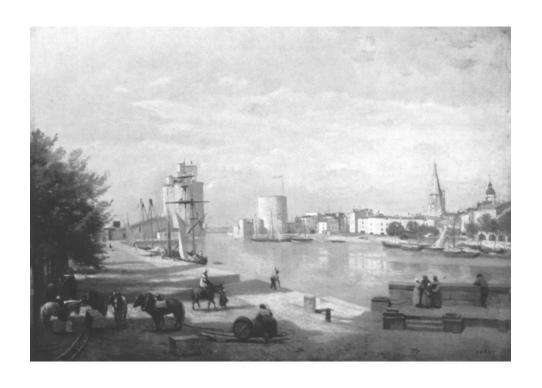


Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot French, 1796–1875 The Harbor of La Rochelle, 1851 Oil on canvas, 19⁷/8 x 28 ¹/4 inches Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

This view of the harbor of La Rochelle on the Bay of Biscay in western France is one of six Corot painted there in the summer of 1851. It belongs to the same period of the silvery landscape pictures which he had begun to paint two or three years earlier, and which brought him his greatest popularity. This well preserved canvas records a view taken from a second-story window of a house on the Quai Vallin, and was painted during ten to twelve sessions of three to four hours each. Exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1852 and several times afterwards, it was in Corot's opinion one of the best of the series.

The apparent simplicity of the scene belies the extraordinary sensitivity Corot displays for the arrangement of both cityscape and figural elements. The foreground figures, for example, are sketchily though surely drawn, enough to imply their activity without emphasizing it. The more prominent cityscape presents a softly receding shoreline diagonal which is offset by the more horizontally disposed buildings beyond. Solidly modeled and softly sunlit, these buildings are painted in an extraordinary range of whites, tans, golds, browns, and grays in what could be described as a paradigm of the tonal painting for which Corot is so deservedly known. With light-dark contrast held to a minimum, only rarely does he depart from the close-valued earth tones to add an occasional highlight of pure red in the foreground figures. The serene, almost classical, harmony of compositional and coloristic elements in this and other harbor scenes was to provide the model against which the later accomplishments of the young Monet and Pissarro would be measured.

—мк



Edouard Manet
French, 1832–83
Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume, 1862–63
Oil on canvas, 37^{1/4} x 44^{3/4} inches
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

Manet's Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume engages us with a disarming stare. This fleshy, Mediterranean model appears at the same time seductive and aloof, relaxed and wary, familiar and yet subtly incongruous. Her pose echoes the tradition of recumbent female figures in the history of art, yet her torero's costume gives her the appearance of a misplaced Venus in exotic, masculine garb. The identity of Manet's model is not known. His canvas is dedicated to Nadar, the photographer, journalist, caricaturist, and pioneer balloonist who in 1874 would hold the first exhibition of Impressionist painters in his studio, and it has long been thought that this femme espagnole was one of Nadar's many mistresses.

The figure, illuminated from the front, is painted in broad, bright, disembodied strokes of pale pink and silver that differentiate such textures as her fleshy cheeks and the slick satin of her tightly fitted culotte. She is set against an intricate tapestry of burgundy tones that define the volume and velvety texture of the overstuffed chaise longue. The rounded forms of this sofa embrace the equally rounded shape of this curvaceous model, forming the pocket of space in which she comfortably resides. A gray cat on the floor beneath her is painted in staccato strokes that suggest his animation. He rapaciously paws an orange while eyeing the one before him, his glance echoing the woman's confrontation of ourselves.

The Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume is one of a number of Spanish subjects painted by Manet in the early 1860s. His infatuation with things Spanish shows the exotic current in his pre-Impressionist art as well as his familiarity with the painting of Velasquez and Goya. The subject may in fact be a paraphrase of Goya's Maja Clothed in Madrid. The alarming frankness with which we are confronted by Manet's brunette model; the stiffness of her pose; the tentative placement of her arm above her head; the bright, bold strokes which set her against a darkened, neutral ground; and, of course, the Spanish costume suggest that Manet had Goya's prototype in the Prado firmly in mind. However, such antecedents, seen in Paris of the 1860s, must have seemed fashionably bohemian. Indeed, this painting's debt to the past was a point of departure for the directness of observation, bold brushwork, and color that would characterize the Impressionist style developed by Manet in the following years.

—DR



Winslow Homer American, 1836–1910 The Morning Bell, c. 1872 Oil on canvas, 24 x 381/8 inches Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

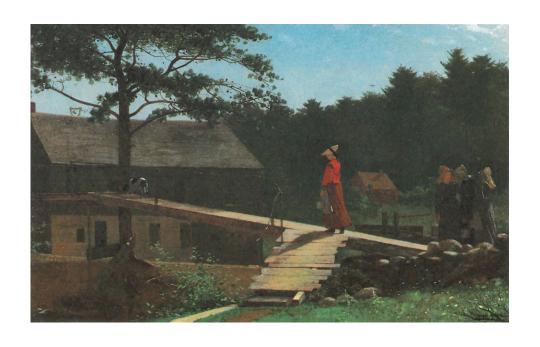
Winslow Homer was born in Boston and began his artistic career at the age of eighteen as an apprentice to a lithographer. He soon became a popular illustrator for magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*, but after the Civil War his attention turned increasingly towards oil and watercolor painting. In 1866, Homer traveled to Paris, and for several years thereafter he painted scenes with colorfully dressed figures in sun-drenched, outdoor settings. In a work such as *The Morning Bell*, Homer's interest in light and color is similar to that of the early French Impressionists, though Homer's brushwork remained more meticulously controlled than that of his European counterparts.

This painting depicts several young women, lunch pails in hand, on their way to work in a New England factory. Three women dressed in aprons and homespun garments converse together on the right. Alone on the ramp, a fourth woman wears a straw bonnet and a scarlet jacket with green epaulets, a surprisingly fashionable outfit for a mid-nineteenth-century mill worker. She lowers her head while a black-and-white dog sniffs cautiously farther on. Both seem hesitant to move forward.

The ramp leads over a stagnant stream and towards a weathered factory with broken windows. A makeshift addition to the ramp serves as a dividing axis in the painting's composition. On the right are deep woods, lush vegetation, and a bird in flight. To the left, the bell of the painting's title calls the laborers to work, and the old mill with the stagnant stream stands as a foreboding element in the natural landscape.

At a crossroads appropriate to adolescence, the young woman is situated on the dividing axis of the painting, symbolically poised between the freedom of childhood and the responsibility of adult life. The painting also suggests a young nation in transition between an agricultural and an industrial society. These oppositions reveal thematic complexities in a work which seems at first glance nothing but a sunny, carefree, and colorful scene. In December 1873, *Harper's Weekly* published a wood engraving based on this painting which emphasized more strongly the weary resignation of the factory laborers.

—KD

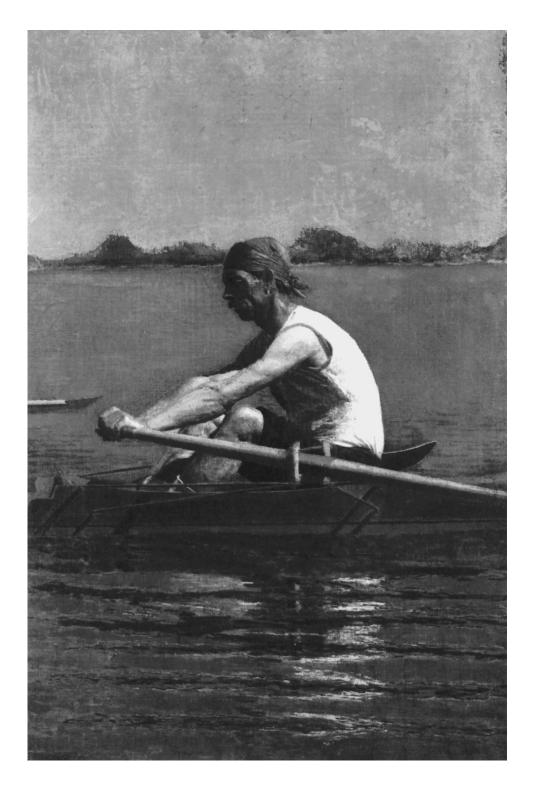


Thomas Eakins
American, 1844–1916
John Biglin in a Single Scull, 1874
Oil on canvas, 24⁵/16 x 16 inches
Whitney Collection of Sporting Art,
given in memory of
Harry Payne Whitney, B.A. 1894,
and Payne Whitney, B.A. 1898, by
Francis P. Garvan, B.A. 1897

John Biglin and his brother Barney were sculling champions of international renown, and Eakins painted them numerous times during their 1872 visit to Philadelphia. Eakins' native city was one of the centers of rowing as a competitive sport in America, and the artist himself often rowed for pleasure on Philadelphia's Schuylkill River. A single scull is a racing boat about thirty feet long, with a sliding seat which holds one man who propels the boat with a pair of short oars technically called sculls. Yale's painting is, in one sense, a portrait of John Biglin, but he is described as much by the particularity of his activity as by his features. The solitary man both sums up his profession and is defined by it, so that the portrait of the man is also the portrait of his profession.

Eakins spent the years between 1866 and 1870 in Europe, studying for most of that time with Jean Léon Gérome at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. During the first few years after his return to Philadelphia, Eakins often depicted oarsmen. Once he portrayed himself in a single scull. In 1872, he sent a watercolor of *John Biglin in a Single Scull*, very similar to this painting, to his teacher Gérome. However, after about 1875, Eakins never again painted men rowing. Many years later, he told one of his students: "When I came back from Paris I painted those rowing pictures. I made a little boat of a cigar box and rag figures, with the red and white shirts, blue ribbons around the head, and I put them out into the sunlight on the roof and painted them, and tried to get the true tones."

--LC



Vincent van Gogh Dutch, 1853–90 The Night Café, 1888 Oil on canvas, 28½ x 36¼ inches Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

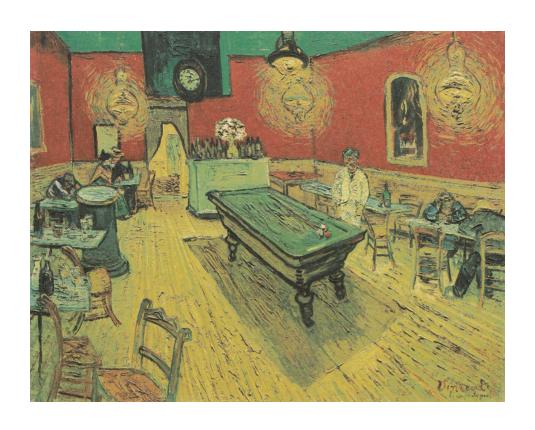
In September 1888, van Gogh was living in Arles in the south of France, having abandoned the city life of Paris. During his sojourn in Arles, he painted this picture, one of his most famous. To complete this painting of the Café de l'Alcazar, where he took many of his meals, van Gogh stayed up three consecutive nights, sleeping during the day. He used the finished picture to settle debts with the landlord, who appears here staring out from behind the billiard table in his white working coat. This café was an all-night haunt of local down-and-outs and prostitutes, who are depicted slouched at tables and drinking together at the far end of the room. The glare of gaslight permeates the space; shocking colors hold in suspension the materials of pleasure—the billiard table, wine bottles, and glasses—bitterly contrasted with the few human beings absorbed in their individual loneliness and despair.

Van Gogh was fascinated by the oppositions of light and dark and wrote that for him the night was more alive and richly colored than the day. This led him to experiment with night scenes such as *The Night Café*, which he described as "one of the ugliest pictures I have done" because of the exaggeration and violence of the colors and the thick texture of the paint. He explained in a letter to his brother Theo the aims of his color symbolism in this painting:

I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green. The room is blood red and dark yellow with a green billiard table in the middle; there are four lemon-yellow lamps with a glow of orange and green. Everywhere there is a clash and contrast of the most alien reds and greens in the figures of little sleeping hooligans, in the empty dreary room, in violet and blue.

However, van Gogh did not describe one of the painting's most powerful effects—its shocking perspectival rush, which draws us, by the converging diagonals of floorboards and billiard table, towards the mysterious, curtained doorway beyond.

—AL



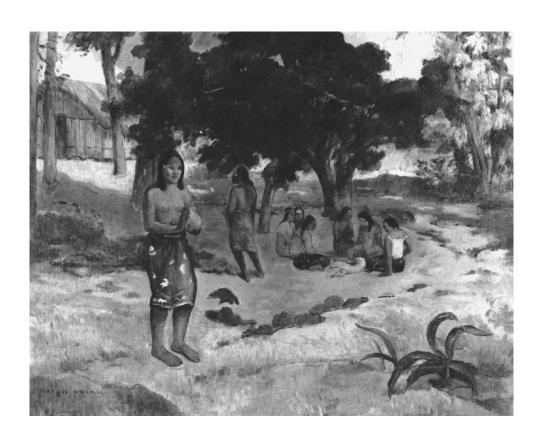
Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903 Parau Parau (Whispered Words), 1892 Oil on canvas, 30 x 38 inches The John Hay Whitney Collection

Parau Parau was painted in the fall of 1892, a year and a half after Gauguin's arrival in Tahiti in June 1891. During his first months there, Gauguin had set to work familiarizing himself with the Tahitians and their environment. He was content to paint from daily life. One of his earliest Tahitian oils was entitled Les Parau Parau (Whispered Words) and included the group of seated, conversing women subsequently repeated in the present canvas of 1892. But even in the first version of our painting, conversation was more suggested than depicted. Gauguin's Tahitians, plucked from disparate studies and sources, were invariably mute, the mystery of their thoughts and feelings far more the subject of the painting than any overt action.

Into Yale's painting Gauguin infused elements foreign to Polynesia. While the Tahiti of 1891 had fired Gauguin's imagination, it had failed to provide sufficient visual material for his art. In March 1892 he had embarked on a series of works that strove to recapture the past, to revivify the Tahiti that had already been suppressed by European colonialists and missionaries. Repeatedly Gauguin drew upon a repertoire of images derived from a cache of drawings, photographs, and reproductions he had brought from Europe. For instance, the topmost seated figure in our painting may well have been inspired by Hokusai's Manga, while the standing woman closest to us derived from a fourteenth-century Buddhist relief from the Javanese temple of Borobudur. Since their postures are unexplained and their relationships to the others unarticulated, their presence became mostly decorative. The second standing woman (probably drawn from life) acts as a musical counterpoint to the first. Moving into the space of the painting while opposing her own S-curve to that of the foreground woman, she complements the ebb and flow of Gauguin's sensuous color-space. There is no narrative here, only the suggestion of a mysterious and peaceful society set in the hushed warmth of a tropical paradise.

Parau Parau must have served Gauguin as a peaceful, Impressionistic interlude between the symbolic works of the spring of 1892 and the abstract canvases of late 1892 and early 1893. Such undulations of creative activity, moving between poles of abstraction and symbolic content on the one hand, and relaxed, relatively objective observation on the other, not only characterize Gauguin's Tahitian oeuvre as a whole, but describe the impulses that shaped each canvas.

-RSF



Wassily Kandinsky Russian, 1866–1944 The Waterfall, 1909 Oil on composition board, 27⁹/16 x 38³/8 inches Collection of the Société Anonyme

The Moscow-born artist Wassily Kandinsky was, along with Klee, Matisse, and Picasso, one of the most important contributors to the avant-garde movement in the early twentieth century. Kandinsky and Klee were, in fact, fellow students in the Munich Academy, and it was from the *Jugendstil* milieu at the turn of the century that Kandinsky's lyrical early style developed. Kandinsky's painting of *The Waterfall* is one of the earliest landscapes done under the inspiration of the Murnau countryside near Munich, where the artist lived from 1909 to 1914. His intention was to create a pictorial world free from direct representation: instead of realistically depicting a familiar site, Kandinsky wished to provide the viewer with a totally new visual experience. This goal placed him in close company with the Cubists in Paris, and the bright palette and patchwork organization of color shapes indicate his knowledge of Parisian Fauvism as well.

Despite the obvious abstract qualities of *The Waterfall*, it is apparent that the underlying imagery is carefully derived from a naturalistic scene. The painting's bright colors evoke the warmth of a clear summer day. Two multicolored poplars arch up from a green bank and frame a stream, which is suggested only by a lemon-yellow haze and pink, orange, and white rocks. This stream flows from the elongated, triangleshaped waterfall at the right which gives the painting its name. It is also possible to discern two figures in the painting. A large, standing figure on the far right spans the height of the canvas, shown in profile and wearing a brown, turban-like headdress cut by the top of the frame. This white-robed figure is accompanied by a shorter one, with a disembodied green face looking out from under an orange turban and a robe which blends with the background. The figures cower uneasily at the corner of the canvas, their attitude disturbing the idyllic landscape setting. At this time in his career, Kandinsky was interested in both apocalyptic and garden-of-love themes, and the meaning of the figures, though unclear, is probably related to these subjects. There is, as a result, a tense interaction between the decidedly ambiguous content of the painting and its surehanded formal and coloristic organization.

---мк



Kasimir Malevich Russian, 1878–1935 The Knife Grinder, 1912 Oil on canvas, 31³/8 x 31³/8 inches Collection of the Société Anonyme

This painting shows a man operating the simple, portable sharpening device with which he earned his living. Although Malevich produced several pictures of peasants working at various tasks, this is his only surviving machine subject.

The Knife Grinder is usually considered the best example of "Cubo-Futurism" in Russia. It combines the pictorial vocabulary of Cubism with the dynamism of Futurism. The cylindrical and rectangular forms are evocative of Futurism's images of the machine and of multiple movement.

In this picture, the knife grinder has become one with his machine. His eyes shift from side to side following the movement of his hands, while his foot works the grindstone. The square composition into which the grinder's hunched pose is compressed emphasizes his closely focused attention. His firm standing leg is depicted once, whilst his vibrating left leg is painted in many positions. This rhythm is echoed by the moving knife blade and cylindrical, machine-tooled fingers, which appear in repeated fragments about the fulcrum of the grindstone. The grinder is surrounded by small, angular planes which seem to pivot about the central wheel. They resemble ascending stairs at the right, and on the left a balustrade and a table on which rest other black-handled knives.

By repeating simplified, flat, geometric shapes and volumes in this manner, Malevich has evoked the vibrating, rotating quality of the machine and its possible compatible relationship with man.

Although abstractly drawn, the figure of the knife grinder is clearly visible in this painting. A year later Malevich was to change his style radically and adopt a non-representational type of painting which he termed Suprematism and which he believed could best express the pure world of feeling.

—AL

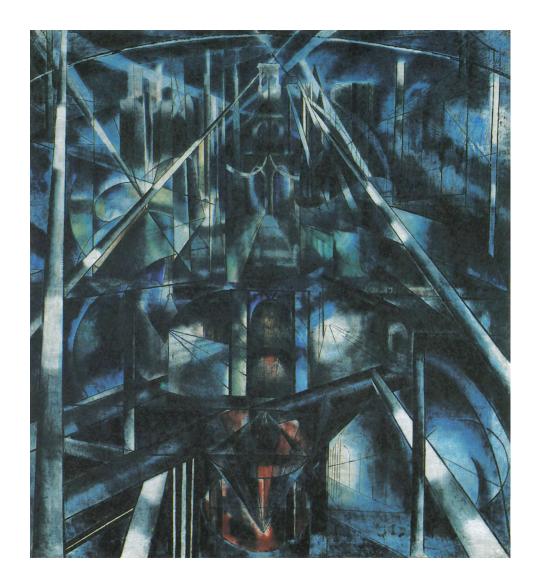


Joseph Stella American, 1877–1946 Brooklyn Bridge, 1917–18 Oil on canvas, 84 x 76 inches Collection of the Société Anonyme

Since the day it was dedicated in 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge has been seen as a symbol of the powers of technology, the energy of the city, the achievements of civilization—and a remarkable feat of engineering. Writers and artists in the early twentieth century seized on the bridge as an icon of the modern age. For Giuseppe Carlo Stella, an Italian who emigrated to New York at the age of nineteen, "The mystery of the metallic apparition" had an almost spiritual significance. He recalled, "It impressed me as the shrine containing all the efforts of the new civilization in America. . . . I felt deeply moved, as if in the presence of a new DIVINITY." Stella depicted the bridge in numerous paintings and drawings throughout his career. Yale's version is his earliest known painting of the subject, and perhaps the most exciting.

At the time he painted it, Stella lived in Brooklyn and walked across the bridge every day. At night he would stop to notice "the railings in the midst of the bridge vibrating at the continuous passage of the trains . . . the blaze of electricity scattered in lightnings down the oblique cables." Influenced by the art of the Cubists and Futurists he had seen on a recent trip back to Europe, Stella invented an artistic language to communicate a total experience of sound, light, and motion, and to give the sensation of walking over, under, and through the bridge simultaneously. In the lower portion subways tunnel under the bridge; in the center, Stella extends the diagonals formed by the bridge's cables and truss system into lines of pure force and energy; above, the cables soar up to the succession of arched openings in the bridge's towers, framed by searchlights in the distance. Pure, soft, jewel-like colors glow with an inner light, as if the bridge were a cathedral filled with stained glass. A silver cable arching across the top could be a metallic rainbow or a bridge in itself—the beginning, middle, and end of a journey. Stella's ecstatic vision was part of a great wave of technological optimism and celebration that characterized the early decades of this century.

--RZ



Marcel Duchamp French, 1887-1968 $Tu\,m'$, 1918Oil and pencil on canvas, with bottle brush, safety pins, and a bolt $27^{1/2}$ x $122^{3/4}$ inches Gift from the Estate of Katherine S. Dreier

Tu m' was commissioned by Katherine Dreier to be hung over a bookcase in her library—hence the unusual length and frieze-like shape of the work. Executed in 1918, it is Duchamp's last painting on canvas. As such, it is his final statement on the making of pictures of machines and precedes his making of actual, though useless, machines.

The painting sums up Duchamp's previous artistic concerns. Ranging across the canvas from left to right are the cast shadows of three "Readymades" (man-made, utilitarian objects taken out of their everyday contexts and elevated by Duchamp to the rank of anti-art): a bicycle wheel, a corkscrew, and a hat rack. Several objects are painted illusionistically: from the center to the upper left, a series of superimposed paint samples receding into the distance; in the lower center, a painted hand with a pointing finger (done by a sign painter, whose signature, "A. Klang," appears in pencil to the right); and nearby to the upper right, a painted tear in the canvas. Providing counterpoint to these elements of trompel'œil are real objects: an actual bolt holds down the largest color sample, and three real safety pins mend the tear, from which a veritable bottle brush extends. Duchamp hereby summarizes different ways in which a work of art can suggest reality: with the shadow of a thing, with the imitation of a thing, and with the actual thing.

Duchamp also plays with the ideas of accident and control in the creation of shapes. On the lower left, the wavy lines recall a previous work, *Three Standard Stoppages*, which give the chance patterns resulting when three pieces of thread were dropped onto a wooden panel and the shapes cut out. Echoing the wavy lines on the lower left are those on the right side of the canvas. Here both the wavy lines and the circles surrounding the colored diagonals were drawn with a compass and are thus products of geometrical manipulation.

The title, which appears in the lower left painted in white along with the signature and the date, lends a sarcastic tone to the work. The words —perhaps short for the French "tu m'emmerdes" or "tu m'ennuies" (you bore me)—seem to express his attitude toward painting as he was casting it aside.

—AC



Top

Piet Mondrian
Dutch, 1872–1944
Fox Trot A, 1927
Oil on canvas, 43 1/4 inches diagonally
Collection of the Société Anonyme

Many painters early in the twentieth century felt that art should no longer try to copy nature. Instead, they wanted it to convey more abstract aesthetic concerns. Piet Mondrian was one of the painters during this period who most rigorously pursued the goal of a totally non-representational art. Inspired by the metaphysical teachings of the Theosophical Society, he felt that the appearances of nature were accidental and veiled the truly essential aspects of reality.

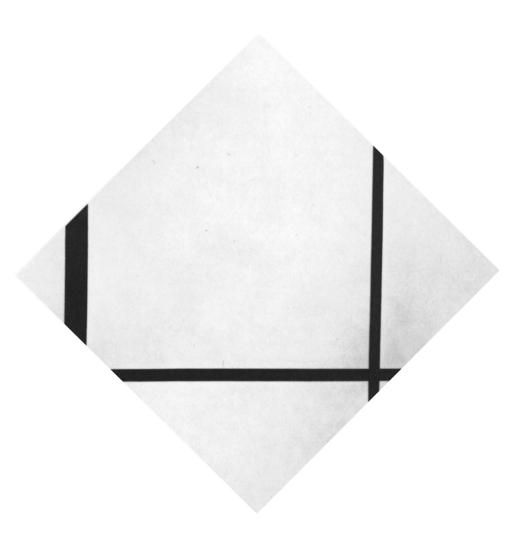
Mondrian painstakingly developed his method of non-objective painting after encountering Cubism during a visit to Paris in 1910. In 1917, Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, and several other artists founded a movement which had utopian aspirations to create "a new image of the world." For several years, they published a journal, *De Stijl* (The Style), but Mondrian broke with the group after van Doesburg suggested altering some of its original principles.

Guided by intuition as well as theory, Mondrian carefully considered every detail of his compositions, always aiming to create forms which conveyed universal truths through their simplified, asymmetrical arrangements and concentrated dynamic tensions. The intersections of aspiring horizontal and passively vertical lines, counterbalanced by blocks of primary colors on a neutral white or grey field, symbolized for Mondrian the essential forces which govern life.

Fox Trot A is an especially intriguing composition created with a minimum number of pictorial elements. Three black lines traverse a white ground in a subtle arrangement of oppositions. The thicker line on the left counterbalances the thinner intersecting lines on the right, and the entire composition suggests that the lines in the painting extend beyond the lozenge-shaped boundaries of the canvas. This formal structure induces the expectation that the two truncated lines on the left will eventually intersect. Therefore, the composition only completes itself in the viewer's mind, and the painting becomes a truly conceptual work of art.

Despite his tendency towards speculative thinking, Mondrian was in touch with the vitality of modern urban culture. He particularly appreciated popular music, as the title of this painting indicates, and felt its syncopated rhythms symbolized modern life. He wrote, "In modern dance we see . . . the round line of the old dances (waltz, etc.) has given way to the straight line, while every movement is immediately neutralized by a countermovement—a sign of striving for balance." Thus in jazzinspired dance rhythms, Mondrian found an analogy for his own aspirations in art.

—кр



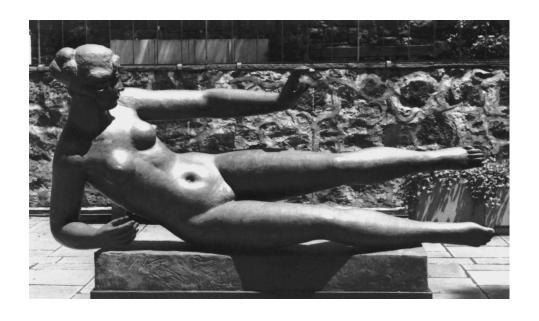
Aristide Maillol French, 1861–1944 Air (L'Air), 1938 Lead, 50¹/2 x 94¹/2 inches Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Heinz II, B.A. 1931

Aristide Maillol, born in the Basque region of southern France, began his career in the 1890s as a painter and tapestry maker whose style was strongly influenced by Gauguin and the Nabis. It was not until the turn of the century that he turned to sculpture, a decision forced on him by failing eyesight. Even at this early point in his sculpting career, his interest in the reclining female nude was evident. A small terra-cotta from 1900 was the artist's first attempt at a recumbent figure. It was followed in 1912–25 by a terra-cotta study for the Monument to Paul Cézanne, and in 1925 by a lead study for the same monument. In 1938 Maillol was commissioned by the city of Toulouse to do a monument to French aviators, and he borrowed the figure's pose from the Cézanne monument for this commission. The model for the figure was almost certainly Dina Vierny, Maillol's constant companion in his later years. Maillol completed a full-scale plaster of L'Air in 1938, but Yale's lead cast was not made until after the artist's death.

In nearly all his works devoted to the reclining female nude, Maillol's primary concern was to imbue his sculpture with a sense of grace, dignity, and the monumentality of the human form. For the most part, he simplified the figure's forms and avoided individualizing detail. Maillol stated that "my point of departure always is a geometric figure—square, lozenge, triangle—because those are the shapes which stand up best in space." Here Maillol has seemingly contained the figure in a horizontal rectangle, carefully and simultaneously balancing gesture and mass. Though the artist's free-standing works are generally meant to be seen in the round, this and other reclining figures seem to be viewed best from either front or back, where the composition is most clearly defined.

Maillol's sensitivity to the body's proportions almost denies the massiveness of the woman's ample limbs and torso, and the viewer is not immediately aware of her larger-than-life size. With both legs and arms raised, and resting ever so gently on her right buttock, she appears to hover miraculously above the base—an appropriate, expressive quality for a monument to flight. This pose—arms and legs almost parallel to the ground below—also allows the viewer to see fully the woman's sensuous curves. Her restrained gaze and elegantly poised hands are a final touch to this exercise in sculptural counterpoint.

—мк



Pablo Picasso Spanish, 1881–1973 First Steps, 1943 Oil on canvas, 51½ x 38¼ inches Gift of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

Women parade through the art, as through the life, of Pablo Picasso. Depending on his mood of the moment, they appear as untouchable goddesses, erotic playthings, or frightful monsters. Yet Picasso always reserved a special respect for motherhood, here tenderly personified by his maid Inez and her son. The artist's recent meeting with Françoise Gilot, soon to become his lover, surely inspired him to paint such a hopeful and intimate subject during the trauma of the German Occupation of Paris. As in his other works of the period, this composition's extremely close framing relays the artist's sense of confinement. Yet here the tight format communicates not a frustrated claustrophobia, but a dignified monumentality.

Picasso expertly manipulated his formal means to distinguish the physical and psychological states of the mother and her child. Her role as a nurturing and protective shelter announces itself in the solidly massive body, unified as one great arch. Even her head slides off her back with a natural grace indifferent to the structural support of a neck. The toddler's head still nestles in this maternal haven: the curve of his temple rhymes with her curving jawline, while his rounded crown nicely supplants her left breast. But here the identification ends, and the rest of his body strikes out toward independence. In contrast to her solid bulk, his torso divides into boxy, polygonal planes that abut at sharp angles and extend out in random directions. These planar sections seem to confound one another, just as the boy's muscles and limbs defy his struggle for motor control. His left arm sprouts stubbornly from his chin and dispels any notion of coordination. The equally radical distortion of his face tells of the strenuous effort the child devotes to his task. His concentration sets his wide-open eyes and elfin ears crazily askew. While his left cheek collapses into the center of his face, his nose and nostrils swell out like the snout on a heaving bull. Such formal ingenuity endows this standard genre subject with a complexity worthy of a momentous occasion at once noble and sweet, serious and comical.

—AT



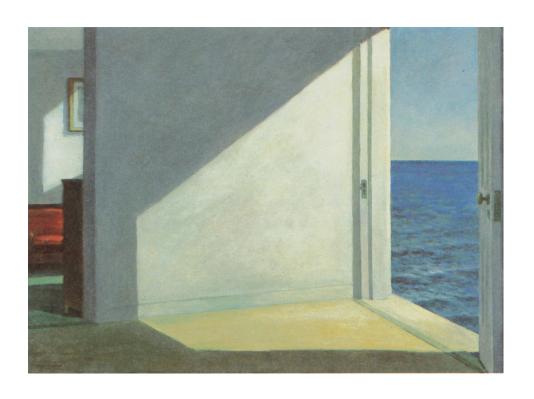
Edward Hopper American, 1882–1967 Rooms by the Sea, 1951 Oil on canvas, 29 x 40 1/8 inches Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

Edward Hopper first began painting the effects of sunlight as a young art student in Paris, and this interest continued throughout his career. As a mature artist, he lived and worked in New York City and spent most of his summers on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. He designed and built a sunny, secluded studio at Truro on a bluff overlooking the ocean. The view from that studio suggested the composition of *Rooms by the Sea*, but the painting is more a product of artistic imagination—an evocative metaphor of silence and solitude—than a direct transcription of the actual scene.

Despite the sparse furnishings, the rooms convey a potent sense of mystery. The bare, white wall in the middle ground blocks most of the far room; only small portions of the red couch, bureau, and picture appear beyond it. Through the open door to the right, an expanse of brilliant blue ocean meets the sky at a clearly defined horizon in the distance. This threshold seems inviting but also poses a threat; to step through it would mean a sudden drop into the water. The interior is somewhat troubling because it offers uncertain access to the natural world beyond its doorway.

However, the light in the painting successfully bridges the gap between nature and interior space. Sunlight streams through the door and lands on the grey, flat wall, casting strong shadows around the doorjamb and baseboard. The bright shaft of light contrasts sharply with the surrounding shadows and orders the composition into a striking abstract geometric pattern. At the same time, the light brings the vital qualities of the out-of-doors into the rooms, enlivening the bright areas with a three-dimensional solidity not found in the darker areas of the painting. Seen metaphorically, the light becomes a hopeful symbol and somehow suggests the possibility of bridging that problematic threshold between a constrained, self-enclosed environment and the vast, unlimited realm of nature.

—кр



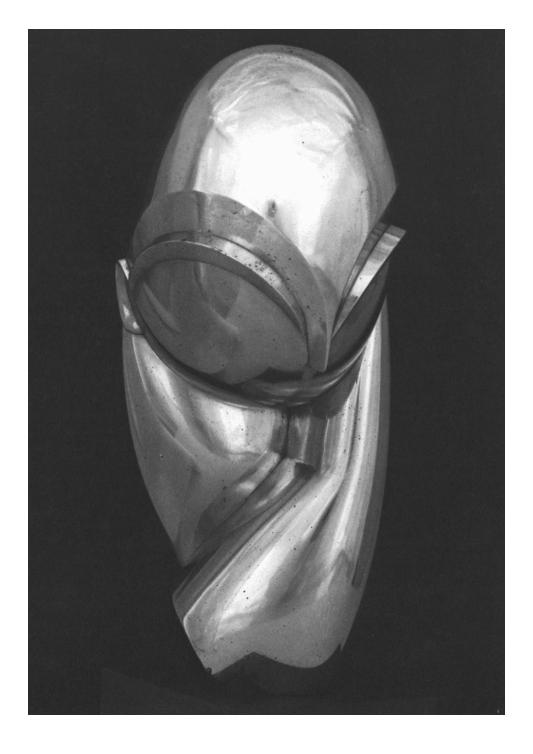
Constantin Brancusi French, b. Rumania, 1876–1957 Mlle. Pogany II, 1925 Polished bronze, height 17 inches The Katharine Ordway Collection

Fascinated by the process of evolution, Brancusi repeatedly examined the same motifs in order to mine the possibilities of formal and technical variation and refinement. *Mlle. Pogany II* is the second in a series of three discrete yet evolutionary interpretations of a subject Brancusi had first treated in 1912. The original *Mlle. Pogany* derived from sketches and clay busts of Margit Pogany, a Hungarian artist who had posed for Brancusi in the winter of 1910–11. In the second and third versions, conceived in 1919 and 1931 respectively, Brancusi placed progressively greater emphasis on attenuated verticality and simplified formal elegance, thus moving the work farther away from the realm of actual portraiture into that of abstract, decorative design.

Our Mlle. Pogany II, cast by the artist in 1925, is one of four polished bronzes of the 1919 version. The mouth, eyes, and chignon of the 1912 work have been replaced by accentuated, arcing brows and an elongated, stepped swirl of arched curls. The arms and hands which in the earlier sculpture were held to the left cheek in an attitude of prayer are now joined into a single tapering column. Brancusi's new, sparer design, with its precise contours and sharply defined but sinuous lines, establishes a rhythm of smooth transition between parts. In combination with the work's spiraling rather than frontal orientation, this rhythm invites the viewer to move around the sculpture. The resulting multiplicity of aspects is reinforced by the highly polished surface, which denies one's sense of mass and weight by reflecting light and mirroring the work's environment.

Mlle. Pogany II's contemplative pose and the sacrifice of individually articulated features in favor of a more concentrated unity suggest that Brancusi intended the work to represent the artist's muse, the source of his creative inspiration. The contained tranquility of the pose, complementing the sculpture's formal equilibrium, can thus be seen to symbolize Brancusi's conception of the creative act as a pursuit and revelation of inner essence rather than external appearance.

---LKB



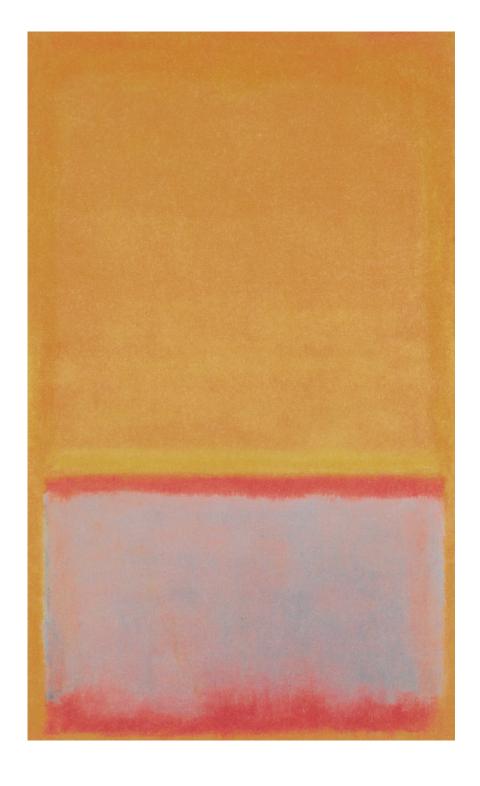
Mark Rothko American, born Russia, 1903–1970 Untitled, 1954 Mixed media on unprimed canvas, 93 x 56³/16 inches The Katharine Ordway Collection

Mark Rothko's mature works share a deliberately limited structure of rectangles or squares arranged in loose, vertical sequences. Yet within this repeated format, they explore an infinite range of exquisite color harmonies and proportional relationships. Overlapped and juxtaposed in pairs of vivid color opposites, as in the orange/blue and purple/yellow of *Untitled*, these colors vibrate with an unprecedented luminosity. Color acts as both space and light, achieving an effect analogous to that of the diffused, colored light that streams through stained-glass windows.

Clearly, the optical translucency of Rothko's colors is intimately dependent on his painting technique. Each layer of brushed or poured paint soaks into the unprimed canvas, resulting in a radical dissolution of traditional distinctions between figure, ground, and support. In *Untitled*, touches of reds and yellows emerge faintly through the pinkish orange of the upper rectangle, while the purple-blue in the lower zone is but an insubstantial veil over the rich reds and oranges glowing through it. The scumbled edges of these rectangles contribute as well to Rothko's complex merging of foreground and background into an indeterminate, atmospherically illusionistic space.

Rothko's work is calmly lyrical. Its intensity is that of meditation rather than activity; and its sensuosity is more purely optical than tactile. Like all of the Abstract Expressionists, Rothko celebrated painting as a revelation of the self, a metaphor for the artist's inner emotional and psychological state. Yet he was concerned as well with the viewer's share in this art of subjective expression. Suggesting that his paintings be viewed up close and in dim light, he hoped to immerse the spectator in the color itself. To Rothko, the immediacy of such an encounter, in which the viewer and the object seen are implicitly united, echoed in part his own intimate relation to the work as its creator.

-LKB



Henry Moore British, born 1898 Draped Seated Woman, 1957–58 Bronze, height 72 ½ inches Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alex L. Hillman

Henry Moore's *Draped Seated Woman* is an embodiment of the artist's ideal of monumental form. Always a classicist, though rejecting academic realism, from the start of his career Moore sought to create a noble and lasting sculptural expression in contemporary language that would be as true to twentieth-century culture as the great carved Greek goddesses were to ancient Athens.

Prior to World War II, Moore concentrated his efforts on abstract carving in wood and stone, sculpture into which he tried to incorporate some of the native power and energy he found in primitive art. In his continued preoccupation with the female reclining figure, Moore developed the notion of the human body as a metaphor for the timeless aspects of nature. During the war, Moore worked as an official government artist, creating his famous series of drawings depicting scenes in London's underground bomb shelters. These drawings helped to inspire the most representational phase in his art, for which Moore turned once again to classical European sources as his model. Following a trip to Greece in 1951, Moore produced a number of monumental bronzes, of which the Yale Seated Woman is an important example. These heroically scaled figures combine a sense of the unchanging quality in nature and man with a timely awareness of the immediate suffering in wartime, a theme which had first appeared in the shelter sketches.

As in other works of the 1950s, Moore's bronze Seated Woman makes use of drapery for expressive effect. The sculptor models an elaborate complex of loose and clinging folds which serve to emphasize the essential shape of the torso underneath. The full, relaxed form typical of Moore's earlier recumbent females is set upright, and her small, abstractly modeled head, with its alert gaze, contributes a sense of watchfulness to the figure. Moore intended that the gently sloping contours of her shoulders and limbs, and the undulating ridges of drapery should evoke mountain forms which he called "the crinkled skin of the earth."

---LR



China, Northern Ch'i dynasty (550–577) Buddhist Votive Stele Limestone, height 81 1/4 inches F. Wells Williams, B.A. 1879, Collection

In pre-Buddhist China, flat, rectangular monoliths, or stelae, were covered with commemorative inscriptions; however, when Buddhists adopted the stele form, the surface of the stone was treated sculpturally, and written texts were limited to a subordinate role on the base and sides. Buddhist devotees, often large families or groups of families, commissioned these monumental works of art in order to accumulate merit toward salvation for themselves and their deceased relatives. Erected in temples or their courtyards, they stood as enduring testament to the strength of the Buddhist faith in China. Because of their size and weight, stelae were difficult to transport; therefore, there are comparatively few Buddhist monuments of this type in Western museums.

Although Buddhism was introduced into China in the first century A.D., it was several centuries before this foreign religion gained popularity and indigenous forms evolved. By the sixth century, at the time when the Yale stele was carved, in Nan-fen-chou, Shansi Province, Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism was widespread in both North and South China. The iconography of this richly carved stele is based on several sacred texts or sutras, including the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Vimalakirti-nirdesa Sutra*, which preach the fundamental tenets of Mahayana Buddhism. The many Buddhas, carved on all sides of the stele, embody the belief in the coexistence of an infinite number of Buddhas, all of whom are temporary manifestations of the ultimate truth or reality.

The uppermost register on the front of the stele depicts a Buddhist paradise where a Buddha sits enthroned beneath a jeweled canopy, his attendants at his side. Above, two elegantly carved trees form an arch, their luxuriant foliage adding pictorial interest to the top of the stele. Protective dragons encircle the tree trunks, while faces of those reborn in this land of unlimited bliss peer out from among the branches. The effect of shadowed niches is heightened by the contrast between the elaborate linear rendering of the foliage and canopy and the deep, simplified carving of the deities. This columnar figural style reflects the influence of the Indian Guptan tradition as transmitted through the Buddhist centers in Central Asia and Northwestern China—for example, Kyzil and Tunhuang. The pageantry of such paradise scenes had a direct popular appeal, offering the hope of salvation and a better life to all believers.

-MGN



China, Chin dynasty (1115–1234)

Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, dated by inscription 1168

Polychromed wood, height 63³/4 inches

Gift of Winston F.C. Guest, B.A. 1927

This majestic figure represents Kuan-yin, the bodhisattva of compassion. Bodhisattvas are deities who delay entrance into nirvana until all sentient beings have achieved enlightenment. This figure is identified as Kuan-yin by the small image of Amitabha Buddha enshrined in the center of the headdress. The rocky ledge on which the figure sits evokes Mount Potala, Kuan-yin's legendary home, which is described in Buddhist texts as a terrestrial paradise.

Characteristic of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Buddhist sculpture, this Kuan-yin, seated with one leg pendant in a posture of royal ease, is more worldly and approachable than the hieratic deities of earlier times. The high chignon and crown complement the full, round face, while the lowered eyelids create a feeling of calm and tranquillity. The scarves which enwrap the upper body, as well as the graceful folds of the skirt, drape over the rocks, lessening the heaviness of the figure. Although considered to be without gender, here Kuan-yin is depicted as a benign feminine deity, the savior of all mankind.

The importance of this piece lies in part in the fact that it is dated by an inscription to the eighth year of the Ta-ting reign, or 1168 A.D. At this time, during the Chin dynasty, a period of non-Chinese rule, Buddhism enjoyed a powerful resurgence in North China. The sculpture is made of at least eight blocks of wood, pieced together and painted with gilt and polychrome. This Kuan-yin was probably created, together with other sculptures, as part of the altar set for a large Buddhist temple.

-MGN

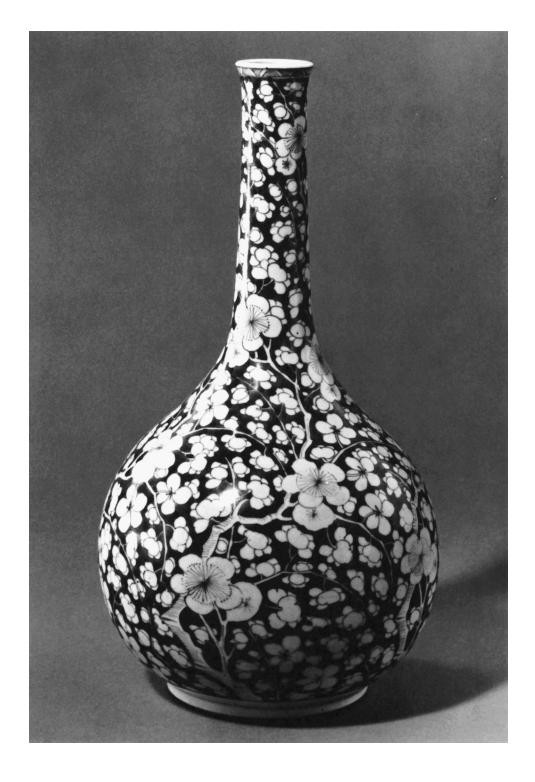


China, Ch'ing dynasty, K'ang-hsi reign (1662–1722) Hawthorn Vase
Porcelain, painted in underglaze blue, height 16⁵/8 inches
Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection;
gift of Mrs. William H. Moore

Branches of blossoming plum, reserved in white against a sapphire-blue field, decorate the long neck and round body of this elegant porcelain vase. A thin band of segmented wave pattern borders the mouth, while an intricate network of darker blue lines covers the rich background, creating an impression of cracked ice. This blue-and-white design of plum and cracked ice, often referred to as the hawthorn pattern, has seasonal associations, marking the end of winter and heralding the coming of spring. Only a few of these exquisite vases have survived.

The reign of the K'ang-hsi Emperor (1662–1722) of the Ch'ing dynasty marked a high point in the creation of porcelain, one characterized by the confluence of fine technique and artistic sensibility. This vase, probably made at the Imperial Kilns at Ching-te-chen, is a superb example of early Ch'ing blue-and-white porcelain, the cobalt-oxide pigment applied under the glaze having achieved a deep, luminous blue.

-MGN



Japan, Heian period, tenth century

Taishakuten

Japanese torreya wood with traces of pigment, height 41 inches

Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., B.A. 1913, Fund

Taishakuten (Indra, greatest of the Vedic gods) is a divine guardian who was transformed into a Buddhist deity. The assimilation of Hindu deities into the Buddhist pantheon symbolized the superiority and inclusiveness of Buddhism. Taishakuten, a mighty warrior and guardian of the Buddhist faith, is recognizable by the armor-like plates on his chest. Originally this statue of Taishakuten was paired with a statue of Bonten (Brahma, lord of creation). The two guardians are thought to have flanked a Buddhist image in Kanbodai-ji, a temple in southcentral Japan.

The Yale Taishakuten is representative of the finest tenth-century Japanese sculpture, combining vigorous modeling with an expression of blissful serenity. The stocky torso, plump face, short neck, and "rolling wave" folds of the garment lend a strong sense of mass, while the bent leg, rippling sleeve, and outstretched arm imply graceful movement and poise. With the exception of the sleeves and hands, the entire figure was carved out of a single block of wood, a technique known as *ichiboku*, which was characteristic of early Heian sculpture. Later sculptors devised other methods, such as hollowing out the wood or joining thin sections of wood with pegs and glue, to lessen the weight and prevent the cracking visible in this figure. Traces of pigment on Taishakuten's garment suggest that the surface once had a colored lacquer finish which has since worn away, revealing the simple beauty of the wood beneath.

---LEC



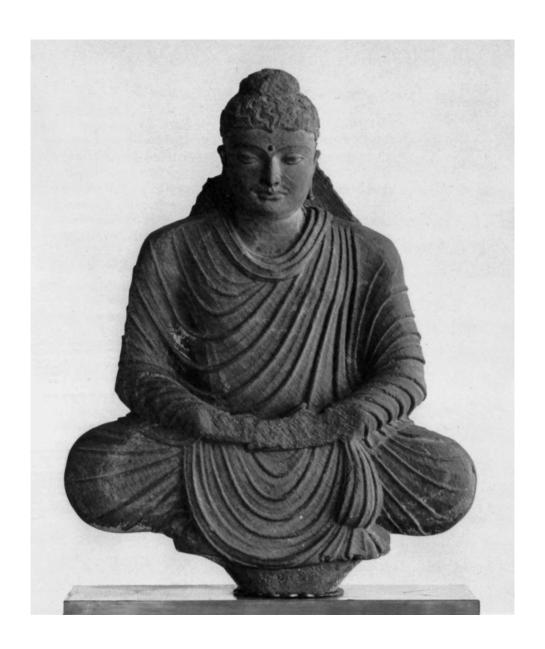
India, Gandhara, c. third century A.D. Seated Buddha in Meditation Slate, height 28³/4 inches Anonymous gift

Tranquil and self-contained, the Buddha sits, his legs crossed in a yoga posture, his hands in the *dhyani mudra*, a symbolic gesture of meditation. This relief sculpture represents Gautama Sakyamuni (c. 563–483 B.C.), the historic Buddha whose teachings formed the basis of the religion which in later centuries spread throughout all of Asia.

The Buddha, as always, is simply attired in a monastic garment, and his body bears the magic marks or *lakshana* which symbolize his suprahuman nature. The domed topknot or *ushnisha* indicates cosmic consciousness; the third eye or *urna*, the raised dot between the eyebrows, represents the source from which the light of wisdom emanates to illuminate the universe; the elongated earlobes and broad shoulders suggest his noble stature. An inscription carved into the base and written in Kharosthi reads "Gift of Eni," referring to the probable donor.

This Buddha embodies the Gandharan sculptural style, a syncretic style popular throughout the area which today encompasses northwestern India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In the first centuries of the Christian era, this region was ruled by the Kushans, an Indo-Scythian race of Central-Asian origin. Being in close contact with the Roman West, the Kushans imported foreign artisans to sculpt the earliest images of the Buddha in anthropomorphic form; as time progressed, these craftsmen were replaced by native artists. The youthful demeanor, wavy hair, and drapery of the Yale Buddha reflect this Roman influence; however, the strong frontality of the image, schematic drapery folds, and full face reveal the gradual Indianization of Gandharan art. Carved in the third or fourth century A.D., this seated Buddha exemplifies the style of later Gandharan sculpture from which Central Asian and early Chinese Buddhist art emerged.

---MGN



Ivory Coast or Liberia, Dan People

Mask, late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Wood and raffia, height 10½ inches

Director's Purchase Fund

The Dan, a Mande people of the Ivory Coast and Liberia, carve masks as their main artistic expression. Various masks become the important characters in the Dan religion and society: the resolute judge, the provocative entertainer, the powerful leopard spirit, and the eternal beauty. This late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century beauty mask epitomizes the Dan aesthetic of glossy black surface, cool expression, slit eyes, high forehead, facial scarification, and elaborate coiffure. It combines elements of the Beauty with the impeccable strength of the Judge, or "Ga Wree Wre" mask.

The intricately braided raffia or palm-fiber hair is rarely preserved on pieces from this period. Originally, metal teeth were inserted in the holes seen in the lips, and brightly colored beads and brass bells were strung in the perforations along the mask edge. The masker would have worn a raffia gown, indigo-dyed textiles, and a conical headdress. Music and dance usually accompanied all mask appearances. Thus, the African mask is not conceived or celebrated by itself, but rather as a part of a larger artistic context including music, dance, theater, and the visual arts.

This mask stands out for the virtuosity of its unknown sculptor, as well as for the superb condition of the piece. As in all transcendent art, a balance of forces is achieved. In conception, the facial features effortlessly blend the individual with the ideal beauty, while in formal terms, the undulating facial planes mediate the strong shifts in depth. Compare the tempered appearance of the front view with the dynamic projections of the profile line. In this way, the mask embodies the combined Dan ideals of inner calm and vibrant strength that underlie true outward beauty.

-RRS



Nigeria, Southwestern Yoruba Civilization Ifá Divination Tray, c. 1875–1900 Wood and camwood chalk, 11¹/₄ x 16¹¹/₁₆ inches Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903, Fund

The Yoruba of Nigeria worship Ifá as the divinity of wisdom, order, and divination. According to the legends, Ifá attended the creation of the universe and witnessed the assignment of destinies to all souls. When Ifá resided on earth, there was perfect order; however, after being mortally offended, Ifá returned to heaven, taking with him all knowledge of individual fate. Since that time, the Yoruba have performed complex divination, using trays such as this, to regain from Ifá the solutions to difficult problems. The restoration of balance in human affairs lies in consultation with the god of fate.

Various references to the Ifá divination beliefs and practices cover this elaborate tray, or *opon ifá*. Order and calm are communicated through the strong symmetry of the sculptural and relief patterns. The interlacing forms along the sides of the tray surface echo the decoration of royal beadwork and embroidery. Thus, Ifá is praised as the divine king who maintains peace. At the center top of the tray appears the face of Eshu, the provocative god of chance and intermediary between human and heavenly spheres. After Ifá reveals the solution to the problem, Eshu delivers the prescribed animal sacrifice to the god, who will redress the imbalance.

The four female caryatids, or figural supports, kneel in a traditional Yoruba gesture of submission to authority. Their bulging eyes indicate the state of spiritual possession. They wear leopard-patterned wrappers as another reference to royalty. These powerful figures display the characteristic Yoruba sculptural style: glossy surface, ovoid heads proportionately emphasized, bent-knee position, possession eyes, and interweaving of figural and geometric representation. The expressive, precise carving and symbolic richness of this piece indicate that it was used to answer the most important questions facing the Yoruba at the end of the nineteenth century.

-RRS



Mexico (Nayarit), 100 B.C.–250 A.D. Ball Court with Spectators Pottery, length 17³/4 inches Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903, Fund

This diminutive clay sculpture of a ball court was laid in a deep tomb in western Mexico over 2,000 years ago. Throughout what are now the states of Nayarit, Colima, and Jalisco, tombs were filled with valuable offerings of carved jade and sculpted ceramics. The dead were accompanied on their afterlife journey by objects of great beauty and utility, much as the Egyptian pharaohs were.

This intriguing sculpture shows the characteristic game of Meso-American antiquity. In Meso-America, the area of high civilization between central Mexico and Honduras, reliefs on the walls of actual ballcourts show a game like a cross between our soccer and basketball. Players attempt to hit a small, rubber ball through a stone ring set high on the wall, using only their hips, elbows, or feet. This arduous sport may also have had a larger significance, metaphorically expressing the conflict between the forces of life and death. Skulls appear on the carved ballgame equipment, and in some areas the losing team was sacrificed to the earth goddess.

The unknown sculptor has captured both action and personality in simple pinches of clay. The crowd watches the play in various states of excitement, boredom, and even amorousness. A latecomer hurries towards the outside stairs. This might seem to be merely a lively scene from everyday life, yet in the burial chamber the ordinary world and the unknown were to be bridged. Therefore, the sculpture may have represented more than simply a familiar pastime; it may also have embodied the soul's struggle against supernatural opponents.

-RSS



Mexico (Aztec), 1400–1500 A.D. Brazier with Effigy of Corn Deity Pottery with polychrome, height 15 inches Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903, Fund

The great Aztec empire of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Mexico excelled in religious pageantry. In the capital city of Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City, the year was filled with colorful ceremonies marking the important moments in the agricultural calendar. Ritual objects, such as this sculpted incense bowl support, were placed in the many temples to the earth, rain, and corn.

This decorated cylinder would have held a bowl of burning resin, known as copal incense, behind the head of the figure. When seen from far away, the sweet-smelling smoke would have appeared to come magically from the figure itself. This dramatic effect was one of a number of techniques used by the artist to suggest movement and power at a distance. As in a theater set, the exaggerated contrasts of color and relief make the image clear. The deep shadows set off the figure's face and make the thin arms and legs pop out as if in a dance movement.

The dancer's body is almost obscured by the elaborate ritual costume: a crown-like headdress; a half-mask with a large, round eye; a patterned loincloth or skirt; and a necklace of ears of corn. By wearing these different elements, the figure embodies two important concepts. The mask is an attribute of the rain god, Tlaloc, while the ears of corn refer to the corn goddess, Cinteotl. The dualistic character of the piece shows that it might have been part of the spring corn-planting rituals, used at the time when rain is crucial for the earth's fertility and for human survival.

-RSS



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