Some background notes by Lee Pentecost on the Baroque and Rococo Collections compiled for the revised school tours and the 2006 Know Your Museum Tours. Please discard any of my previous drafts for the galleries covered. There have been considerable additions and changes. At the moment enough material has been assembled for the children’s tours. Now I am adding much minutiæ for the in-depth adult tours which I hope will give more context to the art objects.

The text below is very idiosyncratic. Inserted are some personal essays on topics that relate to the art works being discussed, i.e. the Grand Tour, Hercules at NAMA, Mountains in art, Cow paintings, Men in Black (Dutch men, that is), Male Posture - the Renaissance Elbow, Smiling in portraits, Rouge, the Turkish Craze, Stripes in and out of fashion, Venetian Tourism, Mythology in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Masquerade Craze, Ruin Paintings, and Neo-Classicism vs. Rococo. I hope you don’t find these too interruptive or tedious. There is also my overlong study of Poussin, still unfinished, and I would appreciate your feedback on it.

I hope you will find something in this material that is useful....or at least amusing. I love gathering and sharing information with you, and welcome any comments and contributions of YOUR information.

TOUR DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES Visitors will be introduced to almost 200 years of art in Western Europe. They will explore and discuss the varied art styles, subject matter, patronage and social context, and media while observing how changes in religion, society, economics, and technology brought them about. I thank the Education Department for coming up with a good memory aid that works for either children or adults when dealing with Baroque and Rococo art. Just think about 3 “S”s: Subject, Style, and Sales (the latter covering patronage, use, and historical context).

A THEME that might be followed is the increasing diversity of art and the society changes this reflects, as contact and commerce increase between Europe and faraway places of the world, and European living standards and knowledge improve. The result is a rich variation of much more art and types of art in people’s lives, and with the rise of capitalism and the middle class, a much broader patronage. Increasingly more and more people own art and/or have access to it. Even the most modest home might have a print on a wall.

Another THEME that can be introduced where appropriate is the continuing influence of the ancient Classical world. It can be found in all media.

POSSIBLE KID’S GAME-GIMMICK THROUGHOUT: For children, be a student going on the Grand Tour to Europe in the 17th and 18th century. As a finish to your education you are traveling with your private tutor who takes you to different European countries to see the different cultures, manners, customs, fashions, art, historical sites, and to polish the foreign languages you have learned. Pretend some of the objects we see are for sale. What will you bring home with you as souvenirs of your trip? Why? What would you want to bring home as a present to someone you love in your family?

“THE GRAND TOUR”: The first mention of this phrase appeared in a book by an English classics scholar, Richard Lassels’ “An Italian Voyage, or a Compleat Journey through Italy,”
published in 1679, but in reality the concept had been in existence at least since 1572 when Sir Philip Sidney made such a journey, and English fellow nobles followed his trail. A teacher of classics, Lassels wrote that the ultimate goal was Italy (“Nature’s darling”) in order to understand Livy and Caesar. He escorted many young English noblemen across Europe, usually aged 15 or 16. To many it was the obligatory finish to a gentleman’s education. It was not exclusively a British phenomenon, but particularly in the 18th century they were the people who could afford it. [Trease, Geoffrey, “The Grand Tour,” Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York Chicago, San Francisco 1967, pp. 1-3.]

BAROQUE ART

DEFINITION: In the Italian language since the Middle Ages, the word Barocchio indicated shady financial practices. A similar sounding Portuguese word was in use since the 16th century to describe an irregular pearl. In the 18th century Neoclassic critics of Italian art used the word Baroque to describe art devoted to strange, bizarre things, the equivalent of bad taste. It was German art historians of the 19th century who used the word without negativity for the period of art made from roughly 1600 into the 1700s.

GALLERY P15

Essential art works to be covered: Caravaggio and Rubens. Maybe a close comparison of d’Arpino and his pupil Caravaggio. Also a few of the Caravaggisti. “This gallery is one of the best Baroque galleries in the United States.” [Curator Ian Kennedy, Gallery Reinstallation docent lecture Jan. 10, 2006.]

COUNTER-REFORMATION ART: Except for one portrait (by Van Dyck), all the paintings in this gallery can be said to be Counter-Reformation art (counter here meaning “against”) The Baroque art style flourished with the Counter-Reformation program of the Roman Catholic Church. In the preceding century (16th century, time of the High Renaissance) the one Church of Western Europe had violently split into two with the Protestant Reformation. Accordingly the Catholic Church held the Council of Trent (1545-1563) to decide how to deal with it. Following this, administrators of the Church headquartered in Rome promoted a big building program of churches and the proper art to be in them. The Church wanted to win back the many people who had turned to Protestantism, and to reinvigorate the devotion of Catholic worshipers. Part of their Counter-Reformation program to bring them back was to make religious art more persuasive. Churches were to be places of sensual beauty reflecting the glory of heaven, with visions of splendor, gorgeous music, and the perfume of incense. This brought excitement, drama, emotion, and spectacle into the drab lives of a people who existed before there was photography, television or cinema. [Curator Peter Bowrens, docent lecture, Oct. 1, 1978.]

SOME CHARACTERISTICS AND AESTHETICS OF BAROQUE ART: Most 17th century artworks, Catholic or Protestant, were didactic (i.e. they teach something). In Catholic countries the importance of Mary, the saints, and heroes of the Church as art subjects was reemphasized, since Protestants didn’t believe in them as intercessors. Since most of the people in all countries were illiterate, symbolism continued to be used as it had been in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, to help the viewer identify the subject and the message. In the Baroque period
the subjects were presented with more drama and with more emotional impact on the viewer. To emphasize drama and emotion, compositions became more complex. The people portrayed were often brought up close and large to the spectator. Side figures are sometimes cropped, enhancing the up-close and large feeling. Cropping also may make the viewer’s mind think that action continues outside the picture frame.

There was a big change from Renaissance lighting which was usually very even with little shadow. Now mood and feeling are often enhanced by a dramatic use of light and dark contrasts that is credited to Caravaggio. [“Chiaroscuro,” - Italian, “bright-dark.” “Tenebrismo” is the Spanish term for an emphatic use of Chiaroscuro reminiscent of Caravaggio’s style. It is derived from a Spanish word meaning “dark” and “gloomy.” In English we say tenebrism.] Through this use of light and shade Baroque subjects traditionally appear to be more plastic, i.e. three-dimensional, so that forms spring out of the mass and almost seem to be protruding out of the “picture plane,” the flat surface of the painting, and into the viewer’s space. [e.g. St. John the Baptist’s elbow]

Many artists and patrons had a new interest in realism - nature raw rather than refined - a characteristic primarily innovated by Caravaggio. It should be noted, however, that many artists such as Poussin, looked down on this new raw realism, and continued to paint in the ideal and classical manner of Raphael and other 16th century painters.

 Patronage (those who paid for the art) consisted of the Roman Church, nobility, guilds (trade unions) and increasingly a middle class that was expanding.

**COMPARISON - CARAVAGGIO & D’ARPINO**

 **CARAVAGGIO**. “St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness,” c. 1604 (52-25). Probably the premier painting in all of the European collection, and arguably now the most famous work in the whole Museum, [Curator Ward, docent lecture] it is the best example of Counter-Reformation art and Baroque innovations in the collection. This painting can be compared to the more ideal and Raphaelesque work by his former master d’ARPINO (c. 1608) which was painted four years later than St. John. This helps to demonstrate some of the changes from High Renaissance compositions and characteristics (triangular, balanced, stable, Virgin elevated and enthroned, the figures more dignified, restrained, idealized) that the students may have seen earlier. However, d’Arpino’s figures are brightly lit from an unknown source upper left and set against dark shadows, a Baroque characteristic that he has picked up from the revolutionary style of his former pupil Caravaggio. [More on Caravaggio below d’Arpino, below.]

 **D’ARPINO**, “Madonna and Child with Saints Peter and Paul,” 1608-9 (91-14). At the same time d’Arpino was painting the “Madonna and Child with Sts. Peter and Paul,” a mosaic was being made of it for Pope Paul V. It was set and can be still seen over the official ceremonial entrance to the Papal Palace where the right arm of Bernini’s celebrated curved colonnade leads up to it. Peter and Paul are the patron saints of the Papacy. Images of these paired Church founders were “ubiquitous” in areas where the religion was Roman Catholic. Usually Peter is favored over Paul, being placed in the position of honor on the Virgin’s right. In this case the reversal of the two saints here may reflect that the artist was specially honoring his patron, a pope named after St. Paul. The painting hung in the Vatican Palace many years, but was removed by the French at the time of the sack of Rome by Napoleonic troops in 1798. Thereafter it somehow
made its way to a Catholic institution in the Philadelphia area [Rowlands, Elliot W., “Italian Paintings 1300-1800,” NAMA 1996, pp. 227-236] where it eventually was discovered, having been covered over with a big map of Africa! [Curator Roger Ward, docent lectures]

Young Giuseppe Cesari, later known as Il Cavaliere d’Arpino [the Knight of Arpino; town of his birth] was a prodigy trained by his father. At the end of the 16th and into the 17th century he became “the most acclaimed painter of papal Rome.” He “enjoyed unrivaled papal patronage,” working for a number of popes, cardinals, and aristocratic families. [Rowlands, op. cit.]


**CARAVAGGIO** (Continued, see above.): In contrast, the painting of St. John by d’Arpino’s former pupil has a far more dramatic composition on the diagonal, and the more intensified lighting for which the artist was known. Through the manipulation of light and color, John’s elbow almost seems to protrude from the painting’s surface. Another of the artist’s innovations was the “proletariat saint,” depicting holy people as members of the working class, as common men and women. He gives us nature raw vs. the nature refined of the Renaissance. Realistically, John’s face and hands are sunburned, and his toenails dirty. Many considered this raw realism shocking, but Caravaggio “was not without powerful supporters in his day and it has since been recognized that he rescued religious art from the nebulous unreality of late 16th century painting.” [Ibid., p. 203.]

Scholars have said this St. John is in the painter’s “monumental Roman style” of 1604-5. The figure is large and up close to the viewer. St. John’s pose was inspired by a much admired ancient sculpture that had been excavated while Michelangelo was in Rome. The dramatic “Laocoon,” which is now in the Vatican. [Rowlands, op.cit.] There is a similarity to some of Michelangelo’s “ignudi” on the ceiling of the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel. [Curator Kennedy, Reinstallation lecture, op.cit.]

Caravaggio’s method of painting was unusual for he made no preliminary drawings. With a live model before him, he took a stylus and incised the outlines of his figure into the still damp underpaint on the canvas. Look at these marks discernable around John’s left leg.

The site of this painting’s creation was Rome, center of Counter-Reformation activities. The patron who commissioned it was Ottavio Costa, the richest banker in Rome and banker to the Borghese Pope Paul V. (d’Arpino’s patron; see above) Behind John is an oak tree (difficult to see; the pigments have darkened over the years) which was well known as the heraldic device of the della Rovere family. It produced two Renaissance Popes, Sixtus IV and Julius II. Ottavio’s daughter had married into the family, and the tree may serve as reference to this illustrious marriage.

There are two interpretations of the large plant at John’s feet. (1) Mullein which was gathered on the eve and feast day of St. John the Baptist, was a potent charm against demons, having the power to ward off evil. [In the American Collection mullein is flowering in the foreground of Cole’s “Old Mill at Sunset.”] (2) Dock, a parched and prickly plant, perhaps is a reference to John’s desert locale. [Rowlands, op.cit.] The plant in the lower left of the painting is the strawberry, a symbol of the righteous man.

Most of the paintings in this Gallery were made for church interiors. The photo on the wall
next to the painting of St. John shows what its intended elaborate Baroque architectural setting looked like, set above an altar. It was a very small chapel about the width of a one-car garage. It was used by the banker’s family in their home town of Conscente in Liguria. They had turned it over to a Misericordia Confraternity (lay social organization for charitable religious activities) whose patron saint was St. John the Baptist, and Costa commissioned the painting to hang in this chapel.

Emotional mood - happy or unhappy? What creates this mood? [deep shadows, downcast eyes]

Primarily the Confraternity used the chapel to provide funerals for the poor who couldn’t afford them. This was considered an important benevolent act at a time when it was believed that not having a proper burial meant the soul would suffer more in Purgatory.

When the painting was finished Costa liked it so much that he kept it and had a replica sent to Conscente. The original painting descended through Costa’s family by inheritance until it ended up on the fortress island of Malta, headquarters of the military order of the Knights of St. John (popularly known as the Knights of Malta.) In the 18th century it was purchased there by an English nobleman, and it remained in England until the Museum acquired it.

There are only 7 paintings by this great master in the United States [old label], and this is the best one. [Curator Kennedy, op.cit.]

Caravaggio was “mad, bad, and dangerous to know.” [Ibid.] He led a “disorderly and dissipated life.” His name and misdeeds appear eight times on the Roman police blotter. He “...had many encounters with the law. In 1600 he was accused of blows by a fellow painter, and the following year he wounded a soldier. In 1603 he was imprisoned on the complaint of another painter and released only through the intercession of the French ambassador. In April 1604 he was accused of throwing a plate of artichokes in the face of a waiter, and in October he was arrested for throwing stones at the Roman guards. In May 1605 he was seized for misuse of arms, and on July 29 he had to flee Rome for a time because he had wounded a man in defense of his mistress. Within a year, on May 29, 1606, again in Rome, during a furious brawl over a disputed score in a game of tennis, Caravaggio killed one Ranuccio Tomassoni.” [Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. “Caravaggio,” 2001 CD.] The painter himself was wounded. Now wanted for murder, he fled Rome, never to return. He couldn’t avoid trouble. Although his arrival in Malta was celebrated and he was even made a Knight of that famous order, he committed another crime for which he was arrested and jailed. He managed to escape, and the Knights of Malta expelled him from the order. Anticipating a papal pardon the artist died on his way back to Rome, either from wounds received in a brawl and/or malaria. He was not yet 37.

**TANZIO:** “St. Jerome,” c. 1627-30 (97-16) The painter is a follower of Caravaggio. You can pick out the Caravaggesque characteristics: raked light, dark shadow, homely realism, and the saint presented to you up close rather than set back in a landscape. [For comparison see the earlier “St Jerome” by the Flemish Master of the Female Half-Lengths in the Renaissance collection, where the holy man is shown as a tiny figure in a vast landscape.]

Jerome lived in the 4th century. He was one of the Four Father’s of the Latin Church, along with Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory. Jerome is often shown as an old penitent beating his breast with a stone to mortify his flesh and chase away lurid hallucinations. He spent four years living in isolation in the Syrian desert where he studied Hebrew and other languages. Of the Four
Fathers he was the most learned. A great scholar (note the books) he collected myriad versions of the scriptures in different languages, and when he had settled in Jerusalem, translated the Old and New Testaments into Latin. This book was known as the Vulgate (common) Bible. It was later declared the official Bible for the Roman Catholic Church by the Council of Trent in the 16th century, and remained so until 1979 when Pope John Paul II updated it as the New Vulgate.

For a while Jerome was secretary to Pope Damasus I. It is probably in recognition of this service that he traditionally came to be shown with the scarlet robe and hat of a cardinal, although that office had not yet been established. [Hall, James, “Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” Harper Row, Publishers, New York, revised edition 1979, p. 168. The later college of Cardinals did not elect the pope until 1059]. While in Rome Jerome held classes for a monastic-minded circle of noble Roman widows and virgins. He vigorously attacked the laxity and hypocrisy of the Roman clergy, and his corrections of Gospel text provoked a storm of criticism and calumny, so after Pope Damasus’ death he made his way to Bethlehem. There one of his wealthy widowed Roman pupils, Paula, built for him a monastery for men under his direction, three cloisters for women under her supervision, and a hostel for pilgrims. [”Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church”]

In Tanzio’s depiction of Jerome, his cardinal’s hat has been stored on edge in a cleft of rock that implies the saint’s remote hermitage. “Jerome’s magnificent left hand rests upon weighty books and a splendidly painted human skull, a reminder that no amount of accumulated knowledge or human wisdom, can forestall the final leveler of all mankind: death.” [Curator Roger Ward, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” Dec. 1997, p. 2.]


STROZZI. “St. Cecilia,” 1620-25 (44-39) Born in Genoa, the painter was active as well in Venice. He was influenced by the quality of light and color in Venetian art, and its sumptuous accessories. His treatment of Cecilia’s pierced blue skirt is especially notable. [Churchman, docent handbook]

After apprenticing with several artists, Strozzi became a priest and entered a Capuchin monastery in Genoa, thus his nickname “Il Cappuccino,” as well as another one, “Il Prete Genovese,” the Genovese priest. He was 17. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 262. Osborne, op.cit., p. 1108.] As a monk he was only allowed to paint religious subjects. [Curator Ian Kennedy, reinstallation docent lecture] In 1610 he was granted leave from the monastery in order to care for his ailing poverty stricken mother, as well as his sister. On the death of his mother 20 years later, the order demanded his return which was greatly against his will. Three years later he made a dramatic escape from the order, and went to Venice where he prospered and received protection. [Rowlands, op.cit.]

In the reinstallation project, this painting has been placed here as a feminine balance to Caravaggio’s male figure. [Curator Kennedy, op.cit.] Strozzi began as a vague Caravaggeschi [Curator Roger Ward, “Italian and French Baroque Art,” docent lecture, September 20, 1988.] The latter’s influence can be seen in the tenebrist backgrounds of a number of Strozzi’s works.

The painter pays a lot of attention to frothy textiles, i.e. the meticulously slashed skirt and lace scarf. He was one of the first Baroque painters to be liked in the USA. His handling of
paint and loose brush strokes are admired, and are somewhat like those of the Impressionists. [Curator Kennedy, op.cit.] Strozzi did series of seated female saints.

St. Cecilia’s head once wore a floral wreath so looked more like a muse, but fugitive paints were used, and the wreath has been lost. All that’s left are some ribbons. Among the saint’s attributes are a crown of roses and lilies. She and her bridegroom Valerian each received one from an angel on their wedding day. They remained celibate until their deaths.

Cecilia was an early Christian martyr of the 3rd or 4th century, and among her attributes are a palm branch, the martyr’s symbol of victory over death. The Church took this image of triumph from the pagan classical world and from Judaism. The plant was part of the lulab nosegay for the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, and regarded as a figure of Paradise. [Danielou, Jean, S.J., “Primitive Christian Symbols, translated by D. Attwater, Helicon Press, Baltimore, 1964. See Chapter I, “The Palm and the Crown,” pp. 1-24.] The Maccabees used it as the emblem of victory on their coins. (2nd century B.C.) [Zohary, Michael, “Plants of the Bible,” Cambridge U. Press, 19982, p. 60.] In the pagan world a palm branch was the first thing awarded to an athlete who won his event at the Olympic Games. It was also carried in triumphs celebrating military victory. Ancient Roman lawyers might be given a palm branch when they won their cases, and Jesus was greeted with them on his entry into Jerusalem.

Only since the 15th century has Cecilia been depicted with musical instruments, in this case a viol, lute, and organ pipes. She is the patron saint of music. Her patronage of music derives from the Church’s account of her “Passion” which tells how the sound of musical instruments accompanied her on her wedding day when she was being led into the house of her betrothed. [Hall, James, “Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” Harper and Row, publishers, New York, 1979 revised edition, pp. 60-61.]

St. Cecilia was a popular subject for Strozzi. He painted sixteen interpretations of the subject. It is believed that the painter’s “St. Catherine of Alexandria” [Wadsworth Athenium] is a pendant to our work. Curiously NAMA’s Strozzi painting started out as a Catherine with her wheel and spikes located where the lute is. For an unknown reason Strozzi changed his mind. Rowland believes the pendants were commissioned by the powerful Doria family of Genoa. The columns in this canvas may represent an attempt to make the painting “blend in” with aristocratic portraits executed by Rubens and van Dyck during their visits to Genoa. In these portraits the columns are standard props for Genoese patricians. [Rowlands, op.cit, pp. 262-267.]

PROCACCINI, “Holy family with the Infant St. John and an Angel,” 1616/18 (F79-4). He began his career as a sculptor but then turned to painting and became one of the most important painters in Milan. There is extraordinary compression of the large figures within the frame so they feel very up close to us, and almost bursting out of the frame. In the Museum’s earlier and Renaissance representations of the subject (see De Credi and Bugiardini paintings) the figures are set further back into the an illusionist perspective so that there is no crowding, and landscapes are visible around the figures. If this painting can be compared to photography, it’s as if the Baroque painter preferred a zoom lens to bring you up close to the action and avoid any distractions. You are there!

The painting shows action. Young John is just rushing in from the left in order to adore his cousin, and Jesus reaches out to embrace him. [Curator Roger Ward, “Italian and French Baroque Painting,” docent lecture, September 20, 1988.]}
The Virgin’s toes almost seem to be in our space. Their foreshortening is odd to our viewpoint the way the painting is presently hung. It was meant to be 3 or 4 feet higher on the wall over an altar. Then her foreshortened toes would look OK.

The Baroque characteristic of light and dark contrast is obvious. Light from an unknown source to the upper left pools on the bare skin areas of Mary, Jesus, and John. These areas are further united by the bright white fabrics that seem to weave in and around them, centering the focus on this triad of heads and limbs. The figures were painted “alla prima” wet into wet over a dark ground. [Curator Roger Ward, “A Bountiful Decade, Selected Aquisitions 1977-1987,” NAMA 1987, p. 114.] Before the paint was dry he dabbed on the white highlights. [Curator Roger Ward, “Italian and French Baroque Painting,” docent lecture, Sept. 20, 1988.]

Procaccini was a master draughtsman. In contrast to the slashing brushstrokes of the blue and white textiles, the head of Joseph is painted with a melting softness, an exceptionally fluid handling of the paint. [Brigstocke, Hugh, “A Procaccini ‘Holy Family’ for Kansas City,” in “NAMA Bulletin,” Vol. V, No. 6, Jan. 1981, p. 6.] The painting is considered one of the artist’s best works.

Mood - happy or unhappy? This is a loving family reunion after the return of the Holy Family from the dangerous Flight to Egypt. The extra figure is an angel whom legend says accompanied the Holy Family on the journey to Elizabeth’s house. [She was the mother of John the Baptist, and kinswoman to Mary.] The story is not in the Bible but in “Meditations on the Life of Christ,” written in the late 13th century, which until the 18th century was thought to have been written by St. Bonaventure. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 140.]

Procaccini’s energy was inspired by Rubens. [2005 label] The angel’s head is after one by Parmigianino that appears in the older master’s “Madonna and Child with St. Margaret and Other Saints” which was in Bologna where Procaccini was born. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 240]

THE SPANISH AND NETHERLANDISH CARAVAGGIISTI.

Ribera, Zurbaran, Baburen, Terbruggen, and Rubens are examples of how the Baroque style spread throughout Europe, and the first four painters are followers of Caravaggio. Rubens can paint with the Caravaggist characteristics, but not so consistently as to be considered one of the group.

In the 17th century the city of Rome was the place where people wanted to study art, and four of these 5 artists did just that. (The exception is Zurbaran). Ribera’s works were sent back to his Spanish homeland, helping to spread the Baroque style there. The term “tenebristi” was used for 17th century Italian painters, chiefly in Spanish-owned Naples where Ribera lived, who were much under the influence of Caravaggio.

After their studies, the two Dutch painters, Baburen and Terbruggen, traveled back to their homes in Utrecht, Holland, taking with them these new Italian ideas about art. There were other Utrecht artists besides these two who made the journey to Rome and were inspired by Caravaggio.

**RIBERA**, “Martyrdom of St. Lawrence,” 1612/13 (88-9) Born in Spain near Valencia, the painter was in Rome in 1613 - 1614 when Caravaggio was all the rage. Ribera settled in Naples which then was ruled by Spain, and he dominated that city’s art world. At that time Naples was
second only to Paris in size as the largest city in Europe. Ribera was knighted by Pope Urban VIII, and had both a townhouse and villa. Because he was small, his nickname was “Il Spagnoletto” (The little Spaniard.)

“He is the greatest painter of the Neapolitan Baroque and one of the giants of 17th century naturalism.” [Curator Ward, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” March 1989.] “The size and squarish format suggest that it was made as an object of private devotion for the chapel of a nobleman’s palace.” [Ibid.] Although he never returned to his homeland, Ribera’s paintings were sent to Spain where they helped spread the new Caravaggesque style of unusual compositions, strong light and shadow contrasts, and realism.

This painting is the artist’s first great masterpiece, and earliest multi figured work. The painting is all autograph. Note the sculptured forehead wrinkles of an executioner. No other artist sculptures in paint at this time. Lawrence was an important saint and popular in art particularly in Spain at this time, since Philip II had defeated the French on the anniversary of his martyrdom in 258. To honor the saint Philip laid out the Escorial Palace in the shape of the martyr’s gridiron. [Professor Craig Felton of Smith College, “Ribera: Rediscovered Baroque Master and Early Masterpiece,” NAMA public presentation lecture, March 15, 1989.]

In this unusual composition the figures circle around the fire which will kill the saint. Ribera painted so many suffering martyred saints that the English poet Byron would later write “Il Spagnoletto tainted his brush with all the blood of all the Sainted” [“Don Juan,” xiii, 71.], but this was the taste of devout 17th century Catholics in the artist’s time. [Osborne, Harold, Edt., “The Oxford Companion to Art,” Oxford U. Press, 1987, pp. 978-979.] The viewers were meant to gaze a long time at the painting, and to think of Lawrence’s life and his brave sufferings for his religion.

Lawrence was a Spanish born deacon of the early Christian church who was martyred in Rome in 258. He learned that the pagan Roman government planned to seize the church’s treasures, so he quickly distributed them to the poor. When the authorities came for the valuables but found none, Lawrence indicated the poor and sick gathered around him, and said “Here are the treasures of the church.” For this he was condemned to be burned to death on a grill which is his major attribute. [Hall, James, “Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1979, pp 190-191.] After being burned all on one side, Lawrence bravely asked to be turned over, claiming he was done on that side. Bravely after being all burned on one side, Lawrence asked to be turned over “claiming he was done on that side. He is the patron saint of the poor, and of restaurateurs and cooks. [Sandoval, Annette, p. 62.”The Directory of Saints: A Concise Guide to Patron Saints,” A Dutton Book, Penguin Group, New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, 1996 p. 62.]

[In the Museum’s Renaissance collection St Lawrence and his grill can be seen with the Virgin and Child and other saints in Buglioni’s Renaissance maiolica altarpiece, and in Santa Croce’s painting of his martyrdom around 1550-55 (40-44/1).]

Ribera had complete mastery of “a rapid and sensitive brushstroke and the ‘alla prima’ technique (wet into wet) with a Divisionist and almost Impressionist manipulation. It was carried on by Velazquez from whom it was inherited by Manet and the ‘virtuoso brush stroke’ school of which the most facile exponent was Sargent. Ribera enjoyed the widest European reputation of any Spanish painter in the 17th and 18th centuries.” [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 979.]
**ZURBURAN** “The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria,” Spanish, c.1636-7 (61-21)

There is a serenity to Zurburan’s compositions. [Ibid., p. 1229.] This painting looks back to earlier aesthetics when a simple balanced composition and plain gold background were preferred, the gold symbolically representing the “lux perpetua,” the perpetual light of heaven. However, the raked lighting, cropping of the angel’s wing, and homely realism of the angels’ faces are characteristic of the Caravaggesque style. [Curator Roger Ward, “Spanish Art,” docent lecture, fall 1984.] The angels have the rough faces of peasants. [Curator Ian Kennedy, reinstallation docent lecture, op.cit.] This altarpiece was inspired by a print the artist saw that had been made from an Italian drawing that is now in England. [Curator Roger Ward, “Spanish Art,” docent lecture fall 1984.]

The artist never traveled to Italy, but he picked up Baroque aesthetics from imported prints and paintings. He was the official painter to the town of Seville, a center of wealth from the Spanish colonies, and he did a number of works around the time of this painting for King Philip IV’s Buen Retiro Palace (now in the Prado).

Although now removed from the Church calendar, Catherine of Alexandria was one of the most popular of all the female saints. Reputedly she was an early Christian virgin martyr renowned for her learning. She, was the patron of learning, students, philosophers, scholars, and eloquence. Reputedly a virgin princess living in Egypt during the 3rd or early 4th centuries during the pagan Roman Empire, she converted the wife of Emperor Maxentius and 200 of his soldiers. In retaliation the Emperor gathered 50 pagan scholars to debate with her. Catherine’s eloquence persuaded all of these scholars to convert to Christianity. To punish her, Maxentius had Catherine tied to a wheel with spikes but miraculously it shattered. She was then beheaded with a sword, the patrician way of death in ancient Rome. Angels carried her body to the Monastery of the Burning Bush on Mt. Sinai for burial, which was and still is an important center of early Christian learning, and claims to house her relics. [Hall, op.cit, p. 58. Today the monastery is more popularly known as that of St. Catherine.]

Zurburan created this painting for a chapel dedicated to the saint in the Church of San Jose in Seville which was owned by the Barefoot Mercedarians. [Churchman, docent handbook.] During the early 19th century Peninsular War (1808-14) which was fought in Spain between Napoleonic forces, the British and others, the painting was taken by Marechal Soult (a field marshal) back to France. It remained there in the general’s family chapel until sold to the Museum. [Curator Roger Ward, “Spanish Art,” docent lecture, fall 1984.]

**BABUREN,** “Christ Crowned with Thorns,” c. 1621-2, Dutch (84-25). The painter was one of many Dutch artists who traveled to Italy and brought back the new style of painting to Holland He was from the city of Utrecht which remained Catholic after the rebellion against Spain, although it was part of the new Dutch republic. In no other Dutch city was Italian culture so pervasive, and Caravaggio’s ideas so abundant. In Rome Baburen did several commissions. The Museum’s painting was created after he had been back in Utrecht for at least a year. There he became a leading proponent of Caravaggism. [Goheen, Ellen, “The Collections of NAMA,” Harry N. Abrams Publisher, New York 1988, p 54.]

This was the artist’s most important work after his return from Rome, and the artist died young in 1624, barely 30 years old. [Ibid.]
The dramatic subject is from Matthew 27: 27-28. “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’”

What is Caravaggesque about this work? The raked lighting, the homely realism, up close view, and an unusual zig-zagging “W” composition.

A number of the figures are in contemporary dress of the artist’s day. A political statement is being made since the ancient Roman soldier actually wears 17th century Spanish armor. The yellow and black sleeve colors identify his regiment. This is a comment by the artist against Spain as an oppressor of the Dutch. [Curator Roger Ward, “Spanish Art,” docent lecture Fall, 1984.] Baburen painted the work for a Franciscan monastery while sharing a Utrecht studio with Terbrugghen. [Goheen, op.cit.]

It is interesting to note that for many years this painting was believed to be by Caravaggio himself. Not until after World War II was it correctly attributed to Baburen. [Curator Roger Ward, docent lectures, and Ward, “A Bountiful Decade...” op.cit., p. 134.]

**TERBRUGGHEN** “The Beheading of John the Baptist, “ 1620s [Churchman, docent handbook date] (64-7) The Dutch artist was among those painters who formed a foreign colony in Rome during the first quarter of the 17th century. He spent almost 10 years there, and was the most talented of the Utrecht bunch, a fact that Rubens noted when he visited Holland. [It is interesting to know that Wtewael, painter of NAMA’s Mannerist “St. Sebastian,” was also in Utrecht during the first quarter of the 17th century, but he continued to work in his Mannerist style. [Haak, Bob, “The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the 17th Century,” Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York 1984, trans. E. Willem-Treeman, p.208-9, 213.] Terbrugghen shared a studio in Utrecht with Baburen after their returns from Italy.

Note the sad young boy who unbinds the dead saint’s hands. It’s touchingly human. Terbrugghen is a master of beautiful color harmonies. [Curator Peter Bowrens, “Baroque Art,” docent lecture Oct. 1, 1978] To some critics Terbrugghen is the greatest of the Dutch Caravaggisti, and one of the most poetic and sensitive of that styles’ followers. The figure of the executioner is taken from a Durer engraving. This painting has the artist’s typical sensitive gray, silvery blue colors and tonalities. [Curator Eliot Rowlands, docent lecture, Sept. 16, 1988.]

“John the Baptist was imprisoned for denouncing the incestuous union between Herod and his deceased brother’s wife, Herodias. Herodias’ daughter Salome so pleased Herod with her dancing at his birthday feast that he promised to grant her any wish. Goaded by her mother, she demanded the head of John the Baptist. Herod sent an executioner to John’s cell, and the head was presented to Salome who gave it to her mother.” [Churchman, docent handbook.]

**FORMATIZED PAINTINGS.**

Unfortunately we do not see the entire scene of John’s beheading as was intended by Terbrugghen. Originally the canvas extended another foot to the right, but it has been cut down so that we miss seeing Salome and John’s bleeding neck. Perhaps that area had been damaged by fire or another misfortune, or the gore offended a previous owner. However, it is of interest to
know that during the Renaissance and into modern times it has not been uncommon that owners reshape the dimensions of paintings to meet their own interior design specifications. In the 17th and 18th centuries, “Of primary import was the decorative ensemble of paintings. A common practice which would cause any museum director or curator these days, not to mention conservators, to suffer instant apoplexy, was that of cutting down or adding to pictures to accommodate them into a room’s decorative scheme. Niels von Holst, in a very appropriate Germanism, terms this ‘formatizing.’ Charles VI, the Holy Roman Emperor ordered a new installation of the Imperial Collection housed in the Stallburg Gallery in Vienna. This work was carried out in 1720-28, and the guiding principle was again decorative. Schools as well as quality were mixed, whilst all the frames were black with gilt rocaille, and around 40 percent of the pictures were ‘formatized.’” [Talley, Jr., Mansfield Kirby, “The 1985 Rehang of the Old Masters at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio, in “The International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship,” Vol. 6, No. 3, Sept. 1987, p. 234. Other examples of ‘formatizing’ are given, among them “An amusing engraving by Daniel Nicolas Chodowiecki, ‘Art Lovers Admiring Dutch paintings.’” (c. 1770) This print shows a boy merrily sawing off the side of a panel while two connoisseurs admire a picture.” [Ibid.]

Among the Museum’s other formatized paintings are the Rembrandt and Titian portraits, as well as Rosa’s “Argus, Mercury and Io.”

**MEHUS.** “Rest on the Flight to Egypt,” c 1675 (52-1). Flemish born, he spent most of his creative life in Italy where his family settled to escape the 30 Years War. He enjoyed the patronage of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and was Superintendent of Painting to the Medici in Florence. His Neo-Venetian style was popular recalling the traditions of Giorgione and Titian. [2005 label]

This work has a calm landscape like Claude’s, suitable to southern Catholic taste. [Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Painting,” docent lecture fall 1982.] The holy family group is much like earlier ones, a reminder that Renaissance aesthetics did not disappear in the 17th century, what with all the innovations of the Baroque style.

The artist’s monogram is visible on the donkey’s left flank. [Churchman, docent handbook.]

**RUBENS.** “The Sacrifice of Abraham,” 1612-13, oil on panel (66-3). “Baroque artists were drawn to subjects showing moments of extreme drama and tension,” Said Curator Peter Bowrens about this painting. [”Baroque Painting,” docent lecture, Oct. 1, 1978.] The subject is from the Old Testament, Genesis 22: 11-18, and is an event important to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. God tests Abraham’s faith by requesting the sacrifice of his son Isaac as a burnt offering. At the last minute an angel is sent to stop the ritual killing, and a ram is provided as a sacrificial substitute for the boy. The angel’s name is not stated, but Judeo-Christian tradition believes he was the archangel Michael. In Islamic belief the angel was Gabriel and the son about to be sacrificed was Ishmael.

To Christians the ram was a prefiguration of Christ. The animal’s entanglement in a thicket was interpreted as a typological parallel to Christ on the Cross. When the ram is shown with its horns entangled in brambles as here, the parallel is to Christ wearing the Crown of Thorns. Of course ram and lamb are closely identified. The lamb, an ancient sacrificial animal for the Jews,

Commenting on the story of Abraham and Isaac, St. Augustine wrote “Who then, was symbolized by that ram but Jesus...” [St. Augustine, “Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans,” trans. H. Bettenson, Penguin Books Ltd., London 1972, reprint 1984, p. 695.] To Christians, it is only through the sacrifice of “the Lamb” that mankind will be redeemed. (John 1:29, Revelation 12.11, 7:9, and 17, 14:4, 22.)

One of the greatest European artists ever, Rubens used Baroque light and dark contrasts on occasion, but not to the extent that he is considered one of the Caravaggisti. This painting has more even lighting and brilliant color. Like Procaccini, Ruben’s large figures, slightly under life-size, seem crowded into the framed area. They are up close to the viewer and the subject is emotional and dramatic, fitting Counter-Reformation subject matter of the Baroque period. The angel’s wing is intentionally cropped, adding to the compression of the figures.

The two humans have the realistic physicality of Caravaggio’s subjects. These patriarchs of the Old Testament are ordinary people. [Curator Kennedy, op.cit.]

Rubens was noted for the brilliance and luminosity of his color which was influenced by his study of the Venetian artists Titian and Tintoretto, but also inspired by the earlier Flemish tradition. [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit. p. 1022.] In docent lectures NAMA Director Ralph Ted Coe called attention to the luminosity of and handling of paint particularly in Isaac’s torso. “Rubens varied the surface texture of this panel by painting thickly the areas on and around Abraham, and by using smooth, thin brushwork on Isaac’s vulnerable appearing body.”[Churchman, Docent Handbook]

The composition is a complex of two sweeping curves and a large parallelogram [See this compositional analysis diagramed over the painting in Fig. 17, Ralph T. Coe, “Rubens in 1614: The Sacrifice of Abraham,” NAMA Bulletin, Vol. 4, No. 7. It might be good to have a laminated copy of this in the gallery to show to the patrons.] The foundations of Ruben’s style were formed in Italy where he studied and painted from 1600 to 1608. This painting he made about 1612 in Antwerp, one of the major works after his return. It “shows the result of his long study of Italian art.” [Churchman, op.cit.]

At the time this work was made Rubens did not yet have a huge workshop with many assistants, and it is believed the work is “autograph,” i.e. all from the artist’s own hand. The surface is still so fresh and un-abraded that there are remains of hairs from Ruben’s brush that are stuck in the paint. This is one of the premier paintings in the Museum’s collection. [Director Coe, docent lectures. Curator Kennedy recently agreed; it’s all by Rubens, Reinstallation docent lecture, op.cit.]

Both of the Museum’s works by Rubens show how artists in this period often use (borrow, appropriate, quote) earlier images by other artists. During his extensive travels in Italy he made innumerable sketches of images he saw which he later worked into his own paintings. While in Rome he saw Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel ceiling in the Vatican. The angel’s hand is that of Michelangelo’s Adam. [Kids may know Spielberg’s film “ET” which cribs both Adam’s and God’s hands about to touch.]. Isaac’s torso is after one of Michelangelo’s marble statues for the tomb of Pope Julius II, now in the Louvre. The massive red robed Abraham resembles an
Abraham by the Florentine High Renaissance painter Andrea del Sarto of Florence. [Coe, Ibid., and Coe, “Rubens in 1614...”, op.cit.]

I would like to add that there also are considerable similarities to Lorenzo Ghiberti’s famous trial piece on the subject of Abraham and Isaac, that won the competition for the great gilt bronze doors of the Florence Baptistery. Ghiberti made it over 200 years before Ruben’s painting. The grouping of the figures and the angel’s posture are much the same. [Made 1401-2 and now in the Bargello. See illustration on p.10 in Clark, Kenneth and Robinson, George, “The Florence Baptistery Doors,” The Viking Press, New York, 1980.]

Rubens was one of the most successful artists who ever lived, and in his own day was recognized as the leading artist. Highly educated, his artistic talent, charm, manners, and linguistic skills made him welcome in all the courts of Europe he cared to visit. He wrote “I regard all the world as my country, and I believe I should be very welcome everywhere.” This was no exaggeration. He was court painter to the dukes of Mantua, painter and art advisor to Kings Philip III and IV of Spain, painter to the Spanish Viceroy's governing Flanders who were members of Hapsburg royalty, painter to the Queen of France, Marie de Medici, to her son King Louis XIII, and to King Charles I of England who gave Rubens a knighthood. In addition he served as a diplomat between the kings of England and Spain. [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 1022.] Rubens was a great celebrity of his day, comparable to a top rock star in our time. [Curator Ian Kennedy, docent lecture on gallery reinstallation.]

The Museum’s two works by Rubens are on wood panels which are still sometimes used by painters today. In “Abraham...” the planks are birch. He did many of his important early works on panel. [Curator Roger Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Painting, docent lecture, fall 1982.] If the light is right you can see how many boards are joined together in the painting of Abraham and Isaac.

By Ruben’s day many artists had switched to canvas. This probably started with making church banners. No one knows who invented painting on canvas but it came into use during the Renaissance. [Was Mantegna the first noted user? He died in 1506.] The textile support is seamless and easier to handle and transport. In a large wood panel painting this size the many boards may shift against one another with changes in temperature, humidity, and moving the work, so that the paint may be stressed and starts to fall off in the areas where one board joins another.

**RUBENS,** “Battle of Constantine and Licinius,” oil on panel, 1622 (55-40). With the exception of the nearby portrait by Van Dyke (who at one time was an apprentice to Rubens) ALL paintings in this gallery are inspired by the Christian religion. As in earlier Medieval and Renaissance art, most of important 17th century art was didactic and had a purpose. Where Catholicism was the religion, the purpose of many works was to enhance religious teachings and history.

The Rubens battle sketch is of an important event in the history of early Christianity, a victory against pagan forces by the first Christian Emperor Constantine. The pagan leader Licinius, although he was Constantine’s brother-in-law, was a persecutor of Christians and a rival for supreme power. Appropriately the victor Constantine rides a white horse and wears a laurel crown signifying victory.

In 1622 Rubens was called to Paris to paint a series on the life of the Queen Mother of
France, Marie de’ Medici (now in the Louvre). While there he was commissioned by her son King Louis XIII, to design a suite of 12 tapestries on the life of Constantine. This is his brilliant sketch for one of them, which in spite of its small size evokes cinematic grandeur. Such a conception is easily translated into the grand scale of a tapestry. Since the weaving of the textile will be done from behind it, the modello is the reversed image of what will be the finished work. Here the warriors are left handed, but they end up right handed in the finished tapestry.

“One can almost hear the clashing swords, the terrified horses, and the shouting men and smell the smoke and blood. It is as close to the effect of a moving picture as art will get until the 20th century.” [Goheen, Ellen, “The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art,” Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York and NAMA, p. 58.] This oil sketch was well received at the French court. Ruben’s friend Peiresc was present and wrote to the artist that among the sketches presented “the Battle has been given first place...everyone has been amazed at the figure of the dead man lying beneath his horse. In every way the entire composition has aroused amazement.” [Churchman, docent handbook]

As often was Rubens’ practice, he has quoted images he saw in a much admired work by an earlier artist, in this case the “Battle of Constantine and Maxentius at the Ponte Molle,” painted by Giulio Romano, 1523-24. During his stay in Rome Rubens saw this in the Vatican. He adapted the images of Constantine, his horse, and the corpses beneath its hooves from Romano’s painting. [Held, Julius, “The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens,” Princeton U. Press, 1980, vol. I, p. 81.]

The Renaissance art historian Vasari had written of Romano’s battle painting, “...it has become a guiding light for all who had to paint similar kinds of battle after him...” [Gombrich, E. H., “The Style all’antica: Imitation and Assimilation,” in his collected essays “Norm and Form, Studies in the Art of the Renaissance,” Phaidon Press, London 1966, p. 124.]

While on the topic of artists being inspired by other art works, it is interesting to note that Romano was adapting his battle painting’s images from an engraving by Marc Antonio Raimondi who in turn was using as a source for this print Michelangelo’s “Battle of Cascina” (1504). Additionally, Romano’s painting also owes something to the ancient relief of Trajan’s victory over the Dacians in the passageway of the Arch of Constantine [Ibid.], and two Roman sarcophagi reliefs: a battle scene and the Fall of Phaeton. [Vermuele, Cornelius, “European Art and the Classical Part,” Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1964, p. 75.]

“COPYING” versus “ORIGINALITY” is pretty much a modern issue. In Ruben’s day the borrowing of elements from another’s work was considered homage to the earlier artist, and an intellectual pleasure for the patron and viewers to decipher. Today this practice has been revived in the Post-Modernist movement.

**Van Dyck.** “Portrait of a Man,” c. 1620–22 (51-69) At the time this was painted the artist was barely 21 and still working in Ruben’s studio where he had been a child prodigy. Rubens called him “the best of my pupils.” [Churchman, docent handbook] This was one of Ruben’s chairs and shows up in some of his other works. [2005 label, Curator Kennedy op.cit]

Eventually Van Dyck would set the style for aristocratic English portraiture lasting generations down through John Singer Sargent. In England he was enormously successful. King Charles I knighted him, named him principal painter and gave him a London house, pension and every possible mark of regard. He is buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral, London. [Churchman, docent
Van Dyck slightly elongated his figures to flatter them in his courtly aristocratic style. [Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Painting,” docent lecture Fall 1982.]

**MORTAR AND PESTLE.** 1668, German, bronze (F59-61). The inscription in German states “Johan Christian Quinckhelberger cast me for Jacob Sontag Apothecary in Benfeld 1638.” At the time this was made, Benfeld was a German speaking village in the Duchy of Lorraine and part of the Holy Roman Empire. (Now it is French owned).

This would have been used by apothecaries near Strasbourg. [Curator Ward label] When first made it was polished and very bright. It would have been used to crush ingredients for medicines, and to mix them. A mortar this large and fine was a luxury item. The pestle is undecorated and whether original to the mortar not known. The dolphin handles and band of foliated designs “on the body of the mortar are decorative motifs characteristic of 17th century bronze mortars.” [Curator Catherine Futter, Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture Jan. 5, 2006, and handout.]

Atypical is the band of war-like Tritons with shields, swords, and wearing turbans in the lower band of relief. Tritons are minor ancient sea deities, part of the retinue of the sea god Neptune (Poseidon), often depicted as half-fish. [In NAMA’s ancient collection Tritons appear on both ends of the Roman sarcophagus (33-38) and as supports of the ancient bronze candelabrum (58-5).] The turbans they wear reflect the Holy Roman Empire’s political concerns with the Turks in this period. The Empire was Europe’s major defender against aggressive Turkish military expansion. Turkey occupied much of Eastern Europe, and her armies were twice at the gates of Vienna, 1529 and 1683. In the Mediterranean her navy was also formidable.

**GALLERY P14 (This gallery is not on the school tours for children).**

In contrast to the Caravaggism that dominates Gallery P13, in this gallery one sees the other major side of Baroque painting, continued Classicism and idealism, and nature refined rather than raw. Poussin is a major figure of this new Classicism. There are also eclectic artists who pick and choose elements from these two sides of the Baroque and from various past styles. In the 18th century “eclectic” was a label given to the Carracci and other Bolognese painters, among them Reni and Guercino.

During the Baroque period many patrons and artists preferred classicism. They felt that Caravaggio and his followers slavishly copied nature which was often homely and/or ugly. They disliked raw realism and believed the subject should be elevated and idealized. They preferred images that were classicized, clarified, and idealized. In general exaggerated light use was avoided. It could be said this was a continuation of the standards set by Raphael and his followers in the 16th century.

**POUSSIN,** “The Triumph of Bacchus,” c. 1635-6 (31-94). [Much of the following is from a very long unfinished paper I hope someday to publish. It is still rough and not completely sourced. Note I use the Latin Bacchus and Greek Dionysos names of the god interchangeably.] “It is arguable that Poussin is the greatest French painter of all time.” [Curator Kennedy, Reinstallation lecture Jan. 10, 2006]. During a discussion of Poussin at the Academie Royale,
the Director Charles Le Brun called Poussin “the glory of our time.” [The painting was “The Gathering of Manna”. Raben, Hans, ‘An oracle of painting;” re-reading Poussin’s letters,” in “Simiolus” (Netherlands quarterly for the history of art), Volume 30, No. 1/2, 2003, p. 32, n.95."

This is one of the painter’s great masterpieces and commissioned by a great patron, the French statesman and prime minister Cardinal Richelieu.

Poussin was called the French Raphael. [Blunt, Anthony, “Nicolas Poussin,” Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1995 edition, p. 357.] He detested the realist Caravaggesque style. “It was the classicism of antiquity, not the drama of Caravaggio, that made the greatest impression on him.” Ancient sculpture and Raphael’s style were the strong influences that shaped him. “Themes from ancient mythology figured frequently in his work, particularly after 1630” [Goheen, op.cit., pp. 58-9.] When he died in 1665 an unfinished painting of Apollo was on his easel. Many of his non-mythological works are infused with idealized figures in ancient settings. It should be noted that he also did a large number of religious paintings.

Although born in France, he spent most of his life in Rome where he first went in 1624 to study art as had so many other young painters from northern Europe. For a time he and the Flemish sculptor Duquesnoy (see below, this gallery) lived, studied, and copied art works together. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Poussin preferred to work on easel paintings in his own studio with little assistance, rather than large sized wall and ceiling projects with a crew of helpers. After the success of his “Richelieu Bacchnals” and other works sent to French patrons, he was called to Paris by Louis XIII in 1640 to supervise the decoration of the Louvre’s Grande Gallerie. Poussin did a number of drawings for the project, but he was not accustomed to collaborating with so many artists who were at the French court. Disturbed by their jealousy and intrigue as they jostled for place, in 1642 he pled his wife’s illness as an excuse and fled back to Rome. There he lived the rest of his life. Despite his absence from France he had many French patrons, and it was his style that set the standards for the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture that was founded by Louis XIV in 1648. Generations of artists were trained to meet them well through the 19th century. Even Picasso was influenced by his art, painting a bacchanal after another of Poussin’s works for Richelieu, while Paris was being liberated at the end of World War II.

Poussin has been long considered one of the most learned painters because of his knowledge of a large number of authors identified as sources for his paintings. It has been presumed that he read widely in history and myth. However Raben proposes that perhaps it was his intellectual friends and learned patrons in Rome who were his direct sources. They may have advised him regarding literary works, subjects, and their allegorical meanings. [Raben, op.cit., p. 52] Regardless of whether or not he originated his pictorial ideas, some of his paintings are unusually complex in their references and allusions.

Poussin was a “history” painter, the most esteemed and highest rank of subject matter at the time. This category included real historical events, fictional literary events, religious subjects, and mythology. In an age when art was meant to be didactic, a number of his works have multiple meanings and many are political. [For examples see Bernstock, Judith E., “Poussin and French Dynastic Ideology,” Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, Bern 2000, passim.]

As was customary for artists at the time [exception, Caravaggio], Poussin made many preliminary drawings. Several have survived that relate to this painting. NAMA has a (54-83)
showing almost all the details of the finished painting, except that the god’s retinue is larger. Included in the procession are three elephants, their riders and three camels. This makes the drawing a triumph of the god in India, whereas the geographical setting of the finished painting is not known. Bacchus was believed to have traveled around the known world, establishing his cult and vine cultivation, and particularly he was noted as a conqueror of India, as were Hercules and Alexander. [The drawing is illustrated in Ward, Roger, “Durer to Matisse: Master Drawings from the NAMA,” KC, Mo. 1996, Cat.No. 24, text pp. 95-96.] Another of Poussin’s preparatory practices was to make small ephemeral 3-dimensional forms of his figures, and arrange them in a box or miniature stage-like setting, adjusting their placement, lighting, and posture. [Thomas Hart Benton sometimes did this, too!]

His early Rome works show the influence of Venetian painting, particularly the light and modeling of Titian. A number of Titian’s mythological paintings were in Rome at that time. In the 1630s his work changed to more clarity, precision, firmness of form, and order.

The painting’s composition is very stable in the tradition of High Renaissance painting. The picture plane is divided into three horizontal strips: The distant sky with mountains and Apollo, then the god’s big parade, and thirdly the up-front area with two spectators, a child and a reclining man. The composition is very centered vertically with Apollo at the top, the amphora crossed with a palm at the bottom, and Hercules in the middle. [There’s a reason for Hercules’ central placement. See below.]

Poussin doesn’t crop his figures with the exception of a portion of the lead bacchante’s blue robe. [Contrast to the more extreme practice of many Caravaggisti painters. Cf. Gallery P15: Procaccini, Ribera, Zurbaran, Baburen.] This does impel the parade farther to the right and out of the frame, implying continued movement. Otherwise the subject is completely contained within it. The weight of the god-carrying chariot with the child below at the left side of the painting, is counterbalanced by the reclining man and dancing women on the right. A large centered compositional “V” line can be imagined, the left top being the god’s head, and traveling down his knee to the front edge of the chariot and then to the lowest point, which is the hock of the male centaur. From there the right arm of the “V” moves upwards under the centaurs’ bellies and terminates with the pinecone finial of the bacchante’s raised thyrsos. The strongest lighting plays across the middle horizontal strip, illuminating god, car, Cupid, Hercules and centaurs, while the foreground strip is somewhat muted, and the background’s details even more so in spite of that area being praised over by the god of light. In fact the top background strip could almost be a painted backdrop for the parade viewed by the two spectators. The bright light on the parade comes from an unknown source on the left and not from the sun god. This is evocative of a staged theatre performance. Stage-like, too, are the rising clouds which resemble the designs of theatre machinery that supported ascending and descending god characters in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The painting is evocative of a staged performance, and it is noteworthy that Richelieu was important in fostering the French theatre in this century of lavish spectacle. [I am very grateful to Jennifer Martin, Hall Professor of Theatre, UMKC, for calling my attention to some of these details.]

Several museum patrons have commented that the clouds are volcanic. [The first was my friend Herbert Tiedemann, retired NASA geologist and university geology teacher.] Not far from Poussin in Rome, Mt. Vesuvius near Naples underwent a huge eruption in CHECK YEAR. Poussin’s friend Gabriel Naude, secretary to ? wrote a pamphlet describing it. Attention was
called to the cloud formations and the fact that ashes fell as far away as Athens. [LATTER IN MY OTHER VESUVIUS BOOK?] The ashes in the sky would have created memorable clouds and color..... The same cloud formation appears in Poussin’s “Triumph of Venus” which is also similar in its composition. CHECK P’s paintings this period for more colorful skies than in later works? The Aurora???

Poussin is the master of mimesis. Like Rubens, he often makes quotations from earlier art works. This practice pays homage to them and their makers, but was also a delight for the patron and cogniscenti to identify. Being “original” versus “copying” is a modern argument of the late 19th into the 20th century. Post Modernism now feels that “quoting” is perfectly acceptable again.

A considerable number of Roman sarcophagi show Bacchus in triumph, proceeding with his retinue from left to right. Bacchus is usually in a chariot or festal car pulled either by centaurs or leopards. Cupid is sometimes his charioteer or rides one of the centaurs. Hercules is a frequent companion to Bacchus, appearing with him on sarcophagi and other art works. They both traveled the known world, conquered India, and were shown drinking together.

Bearded Hercules, striding in profile was on ancient reliefs. [Blunt cites one carrying a tripod.] Here he carries the golden tripod on which sat Pythia, Apollo’s priestess at Delphi. He stole it when she refused to give him a prophecy he wanted, but later he returned it and was reconciled to Apollo. Ancient paintings and reliefs also show Bacchus’ female followers, the Bacchantes or Maenads. Among the postures they assume are the stock type with her profiled head thrown back, in this context signifying ecstasy. Another stock Bacchante is the callipygian beauty [Greek: beautiful buttocks] who dances in a quarter turn with her back to us. [Rick’s photo of such very similar one on a Bacchic sarcophagi... in Vienna - or Munich? Check.]

In ancient art and literature Pan is a frequent member of Bacchus’ retinue. (As are similar looking fauns and satyrs, the latter names now considered interchangeable). Here he wears an ivy crown, the god’s sacred plant. Among Pan’s attributes are the shepherd’s crook and the musical instrument made of varying length reeds known as the pan pipes or syrinx. [For this myth see ivory pokal in Gallery P17 below.] Like Priapus and the satyrs similarly associated with fertility, he may be shown with an erection.. This one is rather discreet.

The facial profile of Pan is that of an ancient sculpture the artist had seen in Rome and sketched. [Blunt ..insert source] Pan was called “beak nosed.” [Hymn to? I have this somewhere]

The cheerful male centaur carrying a Bacchante on his back has the twisted torso and bearded head of the well known ancient sculpture Laocoon, although his facial expression can be interpreted as one of happiness. rather than pain. [INSERT from “Taste & the Antique” Laocoon history] Artists usually quoted the Laocoon as an “exemplum doloris,” but the Renaissance writer [ ?ARETINO, DOLCE? In one of my books] knowingly observed that the Laocoon’s agonized facial expression and the joyful grimace of experiencing orgasm were one and the same.

Poussin is not limited to quoting ancient art works. In this painting Apollo in his chariot surrounded by the zodiac band is from Marcantonio Raimondi’s famous and influential Renaissance print, the “Judgment of Paris.” [The same print that influenced Manet’s work in the 19th century.] Raimondi himself was quoting from a much abraded sarcophagus relief mounted on a wall at the Villa Medici in Rome. [Insert Blunt] The Cupid serving as charioteer is in the
exact posture of the love god in a print by the Renaissance artist known as “Master of the Dies.” [This print is in NAMA’s collections. NEED ACCESSION # . At first I thought it’s size was exactly the same and speculated that Poussin had pounced it. NAMA Conservator Was kind enough to measure for me the two seemingly identical Cupids. The Is slightly larger. GIVE DIMENSIONS] The composition of Poussin’s Bacchic parade, anchored by a figure in each lower corner, one reclining, one with hefty buttocks, was taken from the much admired parade showing “Bacchus and Ariadne” by the early Baroque painter Annibale Carracci from his series on “The Loves of the Gods” in the Gallery of the Farnese Palace. [insert Blunt source] In the 17th and 18th centuries these paintings “ranked with Raphael’s “Stanze” and the Sistine ceiling as the third of the great classic decorations of Rome.” This project had begun in 1597 and was of great influence on the Baroque grand manner. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit.. 208.] Poussin presents the three musical instruments in the same order as in the Carracci triumph. From left to right appear in succession the pan pipes, tambourine, and horn.

Poussin’s painting was one of three Bacchanals he painted in Rome [Triumph of Priapus, Triumph of Silenus] and sent to Cardinal Richelieu in France who had commissioned them. He made a number of other works for this patron. Richelieu was the prime minister of France, and the paintings would hang with the Cardinal’s collection of earlier mythological paintings by Renaissance artists in the grand chateau he was building for himself in the French countryside at Poitou [??Check Richelieu Art & Power for the King’s Chamber?].

The artist often depicted ancient subject matter and objects, and the details of this painting are in accordance with ancient Bacchic cult, literature and art. I suspect only two anachronisms, the chariot and horn. The triumphal vehicle more resembles Renaissance festal cars than ancient chariots. The serpent horn wasn’t in use in ancient times, but does appear in the Renaissance and 17th century. [Insert Grove source] [Note: Jacque Louis David sketched this same vehicle. It appears in .his sketchbook .No. ......cite Rosenberg’s works on David’s drawings, and his confirming letter to me.].

We are meant to hear noise, the sound of the musical instruments, and the shouts of the god’s followers, “Evoe,” a cry of rejoicing peculiar to the cult. Evoe is inscribed on the standard held by one of his retinue.

Bacchus is crowned with grape leaves and carries an ivy clad spear-thrysos as opposed to the pinecone thrysos carried by a bacchante at the head of the parade. The thrysos was specifically a Bacchic cult accessory. A river god in the right foreground is shown as they usually were in antiquity, an elderly bearded man in a reclining posture and with a big jar to indicate potable water. This one wears a crown of ivy and holds a branch of it, while a grapevine grows behind his back. The grape vine also grows on the bank and is clutched by a child of toddler age . [putto, Italian: little man. See below, in this same Gallery, Poussin’s friend Duquesnoy , a sculptor who specialized in them.] Both plants were sacred to the god, the ivy because it is evergreen in the Mediterranean climate where it never seems to die. Therefore it represents eternal life. [Both plants moved into Christian iconography, and the shape of the ivy leaf was then in addition associated with the Trinity.] There are female centaurs in ancient literature and art. Their race is susceptible to wine and riotous behavior, and therefore appear often in the god’s retinue. . This female centaur holds aloft flowers and is girded with them. “Bacchus loves flowers,” wrote Ovid (“Fasti,” V, 345).
Garland girded centaurs are seen on Bacchic sarcophagi. The centauress holds a burning torch which was associated with the night time procession of Mysteries initiates led by a representation of Dionysos, as they walked and danced in celebration together from Athens to the holy city of Eleusis.

When centaurs or other beasts and monsters are reined in or ridden by Cupid they represent wild barbaric impulses tamed by Love, that still familiar adage “Love conquers all.” [I think it originated with Virgil, “Eclogue” 10.69, “Amor Vincit Omnia.”] The woman riding the male centaur wears a leopard skin. This was an animal Bacchus was fond of and which often appears alive with him. Sometimes it serves as his mount or pulls his chariot. The leopard was said to dance as well as the Bacchantes. In the late 18th century when this painting was in England, the woman riding the male centaur was believed to be Ariadne, the god’s bride, a princess from Crete. [In the Carracci Bacchic parade which was one of Poussin’s inspirations, Ariadne rides in a chariot.] In Poussin’s painting, driving the sun chariot across the heavens is Bacchus’ half brother Apollo, god of light, truth, intellect, prophecy, knowledge past and present, who controls time and the seasons (inferred by the zodiac band. In several other paintings Poussin paints Apollos with the band around him signifying this control. At Apollo’s holy city Delphi the sun god’s cult and that of Dionysos were closely associated. The tomb of Dionysos, a god who dies and returns, was in Apollo’s temple, and when Apollo was away during the winter months, his half brother reigned in Delphi. The Thyiades [CHECK SPELLING in “Way to Delphi”], the wine god’s Athenian female worshipers, would walk and dance their way to Delphi to resurrect the god as a baby in their rituals held above the town on Mt. Parnassus. There has survived a Dionysos-Apollo statue of a handsome beardless god with the attributes of both. [Have this somewhere, anc.art book. Check Blunt, P’s painting.]

Steeped in ancient lore, this painting should rejoice the heart of any antiquarian.

POUSSIN: TWO ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

(Still very rough. I rarely have a tour group sophisticated enough to use what follows except for Richelieu’s very personal identification with Hercules. Be careful. I shocked an elderly Catholic priest who didn’t know much about art. Some Fundamentalists might be offended, too.)

Allegory was very important in the use of pagan mythic subjects in Christian Europe. This Greek term means “other speaking.” [Rollinson, Philip, with Matsen, “Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture,” Duquesne University Press., Pittsburgh, Pa. 1981, p.3.] If an instructive meaning and/or moral could be applied, then pagan stories were quite acceptable. Myth was malleable and the pagan gods could be used in different ways depending on the context and desired message. [i.e. Pan as the Devil and in other works Pan as Christ.Cite book on Pan] Christianity and pagan stories were melded in many humanist minds. Members of the intelligentsia were very creative in reading hidden meanings into myth. In this manner the Jesuits used mythology in their educational system as a teaching tool.

Long before the Middle Ages myths were moralized and also given “hidden” Christian messages. [See my essay on Hercules below, Gallery P16. See also, Allen, Don Cameron, “Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance,” the Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore and London 1970, passim.] To us today Bacchus usually means sensual indulgence and pleasure. We have forgotten that in antiquity he was much more complex, and a major deity associated with the Mysteries that offered the
initiates a happy afterlife. A famous initiate, Cicero, wrote that the Mysteries taught one “to live with joy and to die with hope,“ and that the Mysteries cult was the best thing that Athenian civilization had given to the world. [CHECK THIS, essay source...the one on Athens??] That is a reason so many Bacchic subjects appear on ancient sarcophagi and other art works.

This god was born of a divine father, and a girl of a royal line. He was noted for having female followers. He was persecuted and killed, yet he rose up again. His followers were assured of a happy afterlife. His blood and body were consumed by his worshipers in the form of wine and the grape. “All of this was irresistible for Christian allegorists, and very early on Bacchus came to be regarded as a type of Christ...As early as the 2nd century, Justin Martyr likened Christ to Bacchus in this connection ...and...we find Bacchus appearing on Christian funerary monuments as early as the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Bacchus’ signature grape vines and ivy also were appropriated to Christ.” [Brumble, David H. “Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings,” Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut 1998 p. 49.] The French Benedictine monk Pierre Bersuire (Latin name Petrus Berchorius. Died 1362) wrote that “Bacchus is Christ” in his influential book “Ovidius Moralizatus” (Ovid Moralized). [Ibid.] This author was one of the most influential of many allegorical writers on Ovid.

In their interpretative works Apollo-Sol was likened to God. He represented full knowledge of everything past and present, prophecy, truth, and light. The sun god could be used as a typological parallel for the Christian deity. “...the true Light which lighteth every man.” (John 1:9.) Poussin and his circle knew the writings of Plutarch, a priest at Delphi, whose prolific writings were mined for information about antiquity. Plutarch wrote that Apollo embraces origin and end in one”, he being the “one and one alone.” This parallels Scripture: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,” and “The Lord our God is one Lord. In another text Plutarch stated that Dionysos was the god of the Jews. [in my Plutarch notes INSERT ]

In several prints Durer transformed pagan Apollo into Jesus, and the German artist wrote that artists could find a model for Christ in the beautiful form of Apollo. A very popular source book for Counter-Reformation artists was Cesare Ripa’s “Iconologia” where in several instances the sun is used to signify God and his virtues. [See Pentecost, Lee Ashley, “Ancient Sources for Velazquez’s ‘The Forge of Vulcan’: Plutarch and Homer, with some Observations on Solar Iconography,” in “Pantheon,” [International Annual Art Journal] Sonderdruck aus Jahrgang XLIV 1986, pp. 50-52, notes 13-26.] The papacy used Apollo to represent both God and their illuminating leadership. [FIND THIS IN MALCOLM BULL] If details in this painting are read in this manner, Apollo is God in Heaven and Bacchus is Jesus, God on earth.

Hercules was also seen as a suffering and saving Christ figure. He also could represent the Christian soul struggling for heavenly perfection. Hercules labored to deliver people from evil monsters and tyrants. Although he suffered greatly on earth, he was eventually deified and raised to heaven. In this manner Hercules’ image appeared in the interiors and exteriors of churches during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. [See my essay on Hercules, below in Gallery P16].

Cupid represented love, usually carnal, but in many instances this form of a winged child was used to represent pure and Divine Love. Poussin’s Cupid can be read as Divine Love reining in carnal love represented by the centaurs. [Today we tend to call this winged young “good” figure a cherub.]

[INSERT PAN allegory as Christ; see “Pan the Goat--God: His Myth in Modern Times”
notes.

The two foreground corner figures can be also be given Christian interpretations. The child crawls up out of water as if from Baptism which cleanses him from all sin. [Poussin, by the way, was noted for his focus on the subject of Baptism. Blunt and others] He is crowned, a sign of victory in antiquity. [Read the writings of Paul for many allusions to crowns as a sign of salvation.] Looking upward, the child’s intent is to join the god’s followers. He grasps a grape vine growing on the bank. “I am the true vine,” said Jesus. The child can be read as a young initiate of the Christian faith. In the opposite corner, the other spectator of the procession is old. He holds a cut branch of ivy. The leaves are starting to wither on the edges, but the vine bears fruit, a sign of life to come. This figure can be read as an older member of Faith with a promise of continuing life.

River gods are usually shown close to their water jars or resting on them, but Poussin has moved the jar to the center foreground. [INSERT Yeats quote about P’s river gods] The amphora can also represent a wine vessel, holding the blood of the god, i.e. the saving blood of Christ. Poussin has deliberately laid a palm branch on it so that it “crosses” the jar. The palm is an ancient symbol of victory. [Winners at the ancient Olympic games were given a palm branch immediately after their event QUOTE palm info under Strozzi above.] Like the grape and the ivy, this plant also passed into Christian iconography signifying Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the victories of the Christian martyrs over death. The tripod can refer to the Trinity.

Serpents figure in Bacchic art as a motif of overcoming death. They can be held by the god’s followers or worn as ornaments, or emerge from containers, usually a basket. As a serpent goes into a hole the grounds so do the dead, but they emerge and live. The serpent also renews itself by shedding its skin. In this way it is a symbol for ever lasting life.[Campbell ] Raised on a staff, the serpent became a a well known Christian symbol for the promise of eternal life through Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Moses’ raising of the brazen serpent, which in the Old Testament is a sign of healing and salvation, (Numbers 21:4-9) was interpreted in the New Testament as a typological parallel to Christ. John 3: 14-16 states, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man [meaning Christ] be lifted up [on the cross is implied] That whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Therefore the Serpent Raised signifies both the Redeemer and redemption for mankind. The Serpent Raised with John’s meaning was used not only in Catholic art but in Protestant Wittenberg where it appeared on many title pages of Martin Luther’s writings, on coins, and in works by Cranach and his workshop. [Ehresmann, Donald L., “The Brazen Serpent, A Reformation Motif in the Works of Lucas Cranach the Elder and His Workshop,” in “Marsyas,” Vol. XIII, 1967, pp. 32-47. It is interesting that Cranach used a serpent as a signature, although it is not raised. He was a very close friend to Luther. They were godfather’s for each other’s children.] If the painting is read in this manner, the distant building on the right can be seen as a church.

The painting can be given a second allegoric interpretation that is political. Multi-leveled allegories with more than one hidden message are hard to pull off successfully, but Poussin manages it. [Edmund Spenser’s “Fairie Queen” is the most richly layered work I know of.] Both Apollonian and Herculean imagery were commonly used to represent the powerful ruler in Renaissance and Baroque art. [ADD more on French kings’ use from my essay below, next
gallery? The patron who commissioned this painting in particular was noted for using Hercules as a favorite symbol of himself. Many writings, propaganda, art works, his palace decorations and inscriptions made this connection as does Poussin by placing Hercules in the very center of the painting. “Cardinal Richelieu was extravagantly celebrated as Hercules in verse and in the decoration of the Chateau de Richelieu which included an ‘Apotheosis of Hercules’ and a picture of Hercules and the Hydra, accompanied by anagrams identifying the Cardinal with the hero.” [Bull, Malcolm. “The Mirror of the Gods,” Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 96. See also Richelieu: Art & Power, pp. ] Poussin’s version of Hercules is not a portrait of his patron but is after the weary, bearded type of Hercules originated by Alexander the Great’s sculptor Lysippos. [ For more on Herculean images see my essay, below, Gallery P16. ] However there is a portrait of Richelieu as Hercules commissioned from Claude Vignon a year earlier in 1634. In this portrait the Cardinal himself stands in triumph over many of the monsters conquered during the god’s famous Labors. The picture is titled “The Triumph of Hercules.” Toting the club and half nude, the prince of the church wears only a skimpy lion skin exposing his torso, legs, and one arm. [Goldfarb, Hilliard T., Edt., “Richelieu, Art and Power,” Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2002. NAMA’s painting is illustrated Cat. 126, text 292-294; Vignon’s portrait is Cat. 133, pp. 305-307. See also pp. 254, 282, 127-135. ]

Poussin’s Hercules carries the golden tripod, an ancient three-legged stand to support a basin. In my limited viewing of tripods the basins are round or flat bottomed. This vessel looks like a large removable cup with its own attached pedestal foot. Separated from the tripod, it could stand on its own. It then resembles a chalice, which given a Christian interpretation, could hold the blood of Christ. Richelieu long battled French Protestantism which denied the transubstantiation of the wine of the mass into Christ’s real blood.. The Cardinal’s sound defeat of the Protestant forces and their stronghold at La Rochelle in the late 1620s [CHECK THIS DATE] was one of his greatest achievements, helping to centralize the power of the French monarchy, and the security of Catholicism in France. So here in the painting’s center is prime-minister Richelieu-Hercules, victor over the Protestant forces, defender of the Faith and of its belief in transubstantiation. .

The theme of Triumph, based on ancient Roman descriptions [INSERT my book on Roman triumphs], was common in propagandistic art of Renaissance and Baroque rulers. It implied rulership. Triumphal entries were held when rulers traveled from town to town. Unfortunately most of the allegorical art created for these great public spectacles has not survived. Ancient myth was widely used in these ephemeral political celebrations. [INSERT BERNSTOCK, info on ”Poussin and French Dynastic Ideology, ”her interpretations of other Pousin political allegories]

[INSERT “CARDINALATU” notes, late Renaissance Tridentine instructions on how Cardinals should live with their art works having secret messages - art for the elite, and not meant to be understood by commoners.]

[ADD ? Profile equitation portraits of young Louis XIII? P’s Bacchus profile more like him than Antinous as previously claimed?]

Poussin write that painting should appeal to the mind rather than the eye. [Curator Peter Bowrens, “Baroque Art,” docent lecture October 1, 1978]. Can I find this in Blunt?

[INSERT BERNINI’s remark that his contemporary Poussin painted with his intellect or brain. Is this in BLUNT?? Or my Bernini book?]
Epilogue: I hope this Poussin information is useful, or at least entertaining to read. Your feedback is appreciated. All rights reserved, Pentecost, 2006. Citation permitted if I am indicated as the source.

* * * * *

**Claude**, “Landscape with a Piping Shepherd,” 1667, French (31-57) and “the Mill on the Tiber,” c. 1650 (32-78). The artist is also called Lorraine after the French duchy where he was born. At age 12 he was in Rome as a pastry cook to the Italian painter Tassi, but soon became his studio assistant. He spent most of his life in Rome where he was a friend of Poussin. [insert Blunt]. He enjoyed “immense success in his own time,” [1993 label by Curator Ward ] and was an “enormous influence on landscape painting” [2005 label] which continued pervasively thereafter through the 18th and 19th centuries. (Cf. NAMA’s Corot and Cole works. Turner and Constable were among many artists he influenced.) In addition, around the middle of the 18th century his work inspired the creation of “natural English gardens” where estate owners moved around their lands to create vistas resembling his paintings.

Claude painted idealized scenes inspired mainly by Classical pastoral poetry by ancient writers such as Virgil and Theocritus. “His profound sensitivity to the tonal values of light and atmosphere lent an unpremeditated Classical harmony to his pictures.” For the French ambassador in Rome he painted in the late 1630s a pair of landscapes “with the unusual effect of representing the sun itself on his canvas and letting it shine straight out of the picture. These works brought him rapid success,” so much so that other artists tried to fake his works. In fact as early as 1634 Bourdon tried to pass off one of his paintings as a Claude. To prevent frauds, Claude published a book with sketches of his pictures, the “Liber veritatis,” which is a great help in verification. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 247.] Both of NAMA’s paintings were published in it.

Both of these works are the same size and were made for one of the artist’s major patrons, Don Antonio Ruffo, the Duke of Bagnara in Sicily. According to inventories, he seems to have thought of them as pendants although they were painted more than a decade apart.

Claude was the first artist to successfully paint the sun, and “Landscape with a Piping Shepherd” is one of these works. [Curator Ross Taggart, docent lectures]. It is hazy and atmospheric. In his art “light is the prime agent which defines a world that is ordered, spacious, and serene - a sublime realm for the men and animals who inhabit it.” [1993 label by Curator Ward.] He sketched out in nature but returned to the studio to carefully manipulate and compose the finished work. His is a cool and silvery light, one of exquisite and unparalleled transitions of tone and color. [Curator Peter Bowrens, “Baroque Art,” docent lecture, Oct. 1, 1978.]

A quality that made Claude’s images famous was his sense of depth. Often the vanishing point was in the center of the picture, while trees and/or ruins framed the foreground, and the midground shaded into the background “creating for the viewer the illusion of looking out over a vast expanse. The view, the painting implies, is limited only by the human eye’s inability to see farther.” [Loizeaux, Elizabeth Bergmann, “Yeats and the Visual Arts,” Rutgers U. Press, New Brunswick and London, 1986, p. 56.]

“The Mill on the Tiber’ is one of the loveliest small canvases executed during the period of
Claude’s ‘grand manner,’ when he was well into his middle years. The painting has a formal dignity and sense of atmospheric expansiveness, qualities which evoke so convincingly the tranquility and timeless quality of the Roman countryside.” [1993 label by Curator Ward] The young man teaching a girl to play his pipe is an erotic theme going back to antiquity.

**RENI:** “St. Francis Adoring a Crucifix,” 1631-32, Italian (F86-32) A very talented Bologna school artists, Reni was one of the most successful painters in Europe during his own lifetime. He was called “Divine,” an epithet shared only with Raphael and Michelangelo. Until the mid-19th century when Baroque painting was viewed negatively (thanks to reappraisals by critics such as Baudelaire and Ruskin) “his reputation as a painter was second only to that of Raphael.” His popularity is attested to by the hundreds of copies of his paintings which were thought to be originals.

When he came to Rome he was promoted by d’Arpino, and like him worked for the Borghese Pope Paul V. [See d’Arpino above, Gallery P15.] For a time Reni lived in the palace of the pope’s nephew Cardinal Scipione Borghese, a great patron of the arts. [Bernini’s “Daphne and Apollo” was made for this prince of the church.] For the Cardinal’s villa on the Quirinal hill (now Palazzo Rospigliosi-Pallavicini) Reni painted what is perhaps his most famous work, the “Aurora” ceiling fresco. He also worked for the Barbarini Pope Urban VIII. He had different ways of painting, and is a Baroque eclectic. Characteristic of Baroque style in this work are the saint presented up close to the viewer, with realism and intense emotion. Like St. Francis, the viewer is encouraged to identify himself with Christ’s suffering. Reni’s technique is immaculate in this work.

Some of Reni’s works use Caravaggesque light. Here it illuminates St. Francis from an unknown source at the upper left. It is interesting to note that Reni also worked for Caravaggio’s patron, the papal banker Ottavio Costa, painting a “St. Catherine of Alexandria” in 1607 [cerca two years after Caravaggio painted “John the Baptist.” See above.] Some of Reni’s works are so Caravaggesque that “Caravaggio is said to have threatened Reni’s life for what he considered stylistic plagiarism.”

After Caravaggio fled the city in 1606, and the death of Annibale Carracci in 1609, Reni was the pre-eminent painter in Rome. Unfortunatelty his unbalanced temperament brought him into conflict with patrons. He also was a compulsive gambler, and suffered mental illness, but demand for his work was unceasing and he continued painting with many assistants until his death. [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 270-272, and Rowlands, in Ward, Edt., “A Bountiful Decade: Selected Acquisitions 1977-87,” NAMA 1987, p.154.]

Francis of Assisi is one of the most beloved saints. (1182-1226) In 1210 he received papal authority that he and his companions be known as the Friars Minor, their mission to be “roving preachers of Christ in simplicity and lowliness.” [Attwater, Donald, “The Avenel Dictionary of Saints,” Avenel Books, New York 1981 edit. (Reprint of 1979 Penguin Books), p. 136]. Their small group developed quickly into a major religious order with many members. In 1224 while praying on Monte La Verna there appeared upon his body 5 wounds like those on the crucified Jesus. [In the Museum’s medieval collection this scene is depicted in the panel painting “St. Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata,” 1385/95 by Master of San Jacopo a Mucciana (35-328). See Rowlands, “Italian Paintings...,”op.cit., pp. 65-67. There is also an antiphonary page with this subject.]
Reni has portrayed Francis wearing a robe of the Capuchin branch of the Franciscans that wasn’t founded until 1526 or 1528. It is one of the most austere branches, and takes its name from the hood part of the members’ robes. We’re all familiar with the beverage cappucino which was named for the robe’s café au lait color. “Reni was considered one of the most brilliant colorists in the history of painting. His St. Francis is unusual for its more monochromatic palette. The more one contemplates this beautiful image, though, the more its subtle colors become apparent...” [Rowlands, in Ward, Edt., “A Bountiful Decade...”, op.cit., p.154.] The quiet, muted tonalities seem appropriate for the austere, beloved saint who abandoned all property for poverty.

Reni was very devout, and this is a small devotional work, an intensely religious picture and famous in its day. There are 6 known copies. [Curator Roger Ward, “Italian and French Baroque Painting,” docent lecture, Sept. 20, 1988.]

When he was in the Bologna area, Reni often prayed before the revered painting of the Virgin and Child that Guercino replicated in his “St. Luke” painting that hangs nearby.

**GUERCINO.** “St. Luke Displaying a Painting of the Virgin,” 1652-53, Bolognese School (F83-55). From infancy Giovanni Francesco Barbieri had a squint in his right eye. He was nicknamed Guercino, “the little squinting one.” As a young man he worked in the city of Bologna which at that time was second only to Rome as the artistic capital of Italy. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 244..] He was very successful. Among his patrons were the Medici Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Duke of Mantua, cardinals, and Pope Gregory XV. During his successful career he turned down court appointments offered by Charles I of England, Marie de’Medici, Queen Mother of France, and a later offer by her son Louis XIII. Pope Gregory summoned him to Rome where he worked two years until that prelate’s death. “He is rightly seen as one of the founders of the High Baroque style.” [Ibid., p. 245] There he painted a huge altar work for St. Peter’s (“St. Petronilla’s Burial and Heavenly Reception,” now in the Capitoline) and fresco projects for several palaces. In 1642 when Guido Reni died (see his “St. Francis” hanging nearby) Guercino went to Bologna and filled Reni’s vacated position as the city’s leading painter. He made a number of works for Don Antonio Ruffo of Sicily who was a major patron of Claude (and who was the first owner of Claude’s two NAMA landscapes hanging nearby). [Ibid., p. 245.]

“Guercino ranks as one of the finest painters of 17th century Italy.” [Ibid., p 246. The artist was a Baroque eclectic, sometimes making works of vivid naturalism with exaggerated lighting, but after 1642 becoming increasingly classical in style which was Poussin’s influence. However, this composition emphasizes the diagonal and the lighting is from the right creating murky shadow in the mid-ground, which are Caravaggistic. To enhance the impression of three-dimensionality of the scene the artist intentionally “composed the lower register of the picture so that all these feet, whether of furniture or people, form a semi-circular arc, within its most forward-projecting plane directly in the center...” [Curator Ward quoted by critic Hoffmann, “KCStar,” June 3, 1984, p. 11 D.] The realism of St. Luke’s portrayal reflects the Baroque interest in showing saints as ordinary people. [Curator Kennedy, Gallery Reinstallation lecture Jan. 10, 2006.]

In Guercino’s painting, the image of the Virgin and Child is after a revered painting believed to be painted by Luke, and located at Bologna in the Santuario della Madonna San Luca where it is still venerated today. Legend told how a 12th century Greek pilgrim found it in
Hagia Sofia in Constantinople, and brought it to Bologna. However, it is actually a late 13th or early 14th century panel in the Byzantine style. The artist Guido Reni prayed before it weekly when in Bologna. [Rowlands, op.cit. pp. 299-300]

Why the angel’s presence? Legend said that while Luke was working on another painting, a full length portrait of Jesus from life, he had difficulty with it and an angel was sent to finish the work. This much revered painting, reputedly brought from Jerusalem by the ancient Roman emperor Titus, is in the Sancta Sanctorum (Holy of Holies) of the Lateran, Rome. [Kessler, Herbert L. & Zacharias, Johanna, “Rome 1300: on the Path of the Pilgrim,” Yale U. Press, New Haven & London, 2000, p. 60.] Many Catholic churches from Poland to Portugal have claimed to have paintings by St. Luke. [Curator Ward, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” 1984, p. 2.]

There is no textual source for Luke as a painter, but images of the Virgin attributed to him are in Eastern Orthodox sources as early as the 6th century. The subject of Luke in the act of painting or displaying his completed work wasn’t shown in western Europe until the late 14th century. One of the earliest of these was displayed in the Florence guild of doctors and druggists, to which also painters belonged. Luke was the Guild’s patron because St. Paul had spoken of him as “the most dear physician”. (Colossians 4:14). [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 297.] There were artists’ academies named for St. Luke in Florence, Rome, and Paris, and the subject of Luke painting sometimes is a vehicle for the self-portrait of the artist.

To the right on the table are an inkpot, quill pen and a statuette of an ox resting on a book. The ox is the Evangelist’s symbol derived from Ezekiel 1:45 and Revelation 4:7. The other objects refer to his writing, the Gospel that bears his name and “Acts of the Apostles.”

A fortress stands in the background. It is part of Immaculate Conception imagery: Mary’s chastity and purity are as an impregnable fortress. [In the background of NAMA’s “Virgin and Child” by Bellini is a castle with the same meaning.] In Guercino’s painting St. Luke’s hand gesture calls our attention to his just completed work. He is seated on a bench, but the posture of his lower body resembles that of genuflexion, the movement of veneration that a Roman Catholic assumes on seeing an altar with the Host, Christ’s consecrated body. The act of painting is here paralleled to worship.

The painting was commissioned for the high altar of a Franciscan church some 35 miles away from Bologna, in Reggio Emilia. The theme was appropriate because the church of San Francesco had first been dedicated to Luke. In that city lived the artist’s friend Aurelio Zaneletti, who appears to have acted as the go-between for a number of Guercino’s commissions in Reggio Emilia. [Ibid., pp. 300-301.] This painting of St. Luke is a portrait of Zaneletti. [Curator Roger Ward, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” June 1984, p. 2, and NAMA public presentation lecture, June 3, 1984.] In Guercino’s letter to the Franciscan community he tells how he has made as a gift an additional painting of two small angels which was to be placed over the painting of St. Luke. Such separate unattached paintings made to go over others are called “sopraquadri,” and Guercino made other ensembles like this. [Rowlands, 301-304]. In the smaller over painting, the “Two Cherubs on a Cloud” peer downwards intently so that they are observing St. Luke and his art work. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 300, Fig. 34b; now in a private collection.]

The colors in “St. Luke...” are rich and saturated, and the size is monumental in order that the painting could be seen and read easily from a long distance down the church nave according to Curator Ward. [Hoffmann, Donald, “Guercino fills a gap at gallery,” in “KCStar,” June 3, 1984, p. 11D.]
It is believed that the painting was acquired by the Honorable John Spencer when he was on the Grand Tour in 1725-27, and it was inventoried at the Spencer country home Althorp in 1750. One of his descendants was Princess Diana, first wife of Prince Charles and the mother of Princes Harry and William. The family estate at Althorp was Diana’s childhood home, so she grew up looking at this. It was sold in 1983 through dealers to the Museum, but the little “sopraquadri” of two watching angels went elsewhere.

**GUERCINO** “David with the Head of Goliath,’ c. 1618, fresco. (F75-48)I This was painted about 34 years earlier than “St. Luke...” (immediately above) when the artist had just taken on his earliest known fresco projects. “David...” is a trial piece in a medium that was new to Guercino. Fresco [Italian - “fresh”], so important in Renaissance art, continued to be used for large walls and ceilings throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. This is a rare example in the United States since most frescoes are still attached to European walls and ceilings. Even rarer, this is a study piece, and today they are almost nonexistent. It utilizes both “buon fresco” (painted on wet plaster) and “secco” (painted on dry plaster). The tree areas are mostly “secco.” It is fragile. The support consists of two vertical wood boards on which a flat layer of marsh reeds has been laid horizontally. The reeds are attached in places to the wood with nails. A crisscross overlay of thin rope is wound from nail to nail to assist in holding the reeds in place. Over this several layers of plaster were troweled. Only a few Italian Baroque examples exist of this type of reed support which is, rare in fresco painting. [See Rowlands, op.cit., p 246. Fig. 28a shows a cross section of this support.] The rough frame is original. There are four preparatory drawings for the work. [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 248-9, Figs. 28b,c,d, and c recto.]

At this time in his career Guercino, a Baroque eclectic, was influenced by Titian’s color and his “dynamic rendering of movement” which are characteristics of this painting. [Ibid., p. 250.]

David with his sling and stone [lying beneath Goliath’s head] has just knocked Goliath down and then beheaded him with his own sword. [I Samuel 17:32-37.] He is in the act of picking up the head for his triumphant return from battle. The subject of David’s victory over the Philistine giant Goliath was popular in the Renaissance and a favorite Counter Reformation image during the Baroque era, inferring the victory of the Church over its enemies. The shepherd boy was seen as the embodiment of manly courage and virtue. He became the 2nd King of Israel, wrote the Psalms, and was a direct ancestor of Christ. Theologians saw his triumph as a prefiguration of Christ’s victory over the devil. [Ibid., pp. 248-249]

[Curator Ward wanted to sell this, and Curator Kennedy said if you do “you’ll get into trouble.” Kennedy, Reinstallation docent lecture op.cit.]

**CHAMPAGNE,** “Christ on the Cross,” c. 1655, French (70-1). Although born and trained in Brussels, the artist as a young man moved to Paris and became a naturalized French citizen. There he became a life-long friend of Poussin. He was a court painter to the Queen Mother Marie de Medici, and later was a favorite painter of King Louis XIII. A major patron was Cardinal Richelieu who commissioned him to decorate the Palais Royal, the Cardinal’s Paris home, to paint frescoes in the Sorbonne church dome, and many portraits. Champagne enjoyed great success as a portraitist and painter of large scale altarpieces. [Jean Churchman, old docent handbook]
Although a brilliant success his personal life was sad. He lost wife and children except for one daughter who became a Jansenist nun. From 1643 on he was influenced by Jansenist teachings [a reform movement in the Catholic church which was declared a heresy in the next century] and his works acquired “an austere and imposing simplicity...He moderated the Baroque idiom of Rubens to a simplicity and restraint which exemplified the classical severity of French artistic trends at the middle of the 17th century.” [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 218.] Champagne withdrew from society, became very religious, and considered his art to be mainly an expression of his deep faith and piety. [Churchman, op.cit.] This painting is of that later period.

“The Nelson-Atkins painting is a highly finished ‘modello’ for a large altarpiece in the Grande Chartreuse (Carthusian convent) at Grenoble” that was executed in 1655. [1993 label] Eventually the artist gave the modello as a gift to his sister Marie, a nun in a Brussels convent. On the back of the canvas is his handwritten inscription in Flemish, “to my beloved sister Marie de Champaigne, religieuse...Brussels.” [Jean Churchman, docent handbook]

A theatrical unreal Baroque light illuminates Christ’s body. The painting unites two traditions, the smooth, brushless, meticulous technique of the early Netherlandish masters and an austere classicism as exemplified by Poussin. [1993 label].

“The death of Christ on the cross is the central image in Christian art and the visual focus of Christian contemplation.” However it wasn’t represented by the early church. It is in the 6th century that his body appears on the cross. Its artistic presentation varies over the centuries. In western Europe under Byzantine influence Christ is shown alive, open-eyed and a triumphant Saviour wearing a royal crown. [See small metal figure in NAMA’s “Treasury” Gallery P6.] In the 11th century there appeared a new image, one of suffering, the often emaciated figure with the head fallen on one shoulder, and later shown wearing the crown of thorns. [See large Spanish wooden corpus on the wall in Gallery P5 See also El Greco’s “Crucifixion” not yet reinstalled.] Up to the 14th century the usual number of nails piercing the body was four, but thereafter with few exceptions one foot was nailed over the other, using only three nails. The foot rest or “suppedaneum” was invented by Medieval artists. In Roman times a “titulus” (or inscription) was hung around the condemned’s neck as he went to execution. Afterwards it was fixed to the top of the cross. John (19:19-20) tells of Pilate writing the inscription reading “Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews” in Hebrew Latin, and Greek. In Renaissance art this is usually appears only in Latin, “Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum,” which may be abbreviated to “INRI.” Counter-Reformation painting often shows the full inscription in three languages. [Hall, “Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” op.cit., pp. 81-82.]

In the background of this work stands a pyramid. In Renaissance and later painting it (or an obelisk, or combination thereof) was used to symbolize the city of Jerusalem. Whereas the people of classical antiquity thought Delphi was the center of the world, Christians believed that Jerusalem was the “umbilicus” or “omphalos mundi.” Psalm 73 (Douay Catholic Bible; King James is Psalm 74.12) states “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” [Sinding-Larsen, Sstaale, “St. Peter’s Chair in Venice,” in “Art the Ape of Nature, eds. M. Barasch and L.F. Sandler, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York 1981, notes 34, and also n. 32.] An aqueduct and fortress were known to be in Jerusalem during Roman rule.
**MURILLO**, “The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception,” c. 1670 (30-32). In the 19th century Murillo’s work sold as the most expensive in the world. Probably this was due to his fascination with the subject of the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine that was centuries in developing but only made universal throughout the whole Roman Catholic Church in 1854. [Curator Roger Ward, “Spanish Art,” docent lecture fall 1984.] Whether or not Mary was Immaculately Conceived (without sin) in her mother Anne’s womb had been hotly debated in theological circles since the Middle Ages. [Franciscans pro, Dominicans con]

In 1644 the powerful Spanish branch of the Roman Church independently adopted the belief as part of Spanish theology, two hundred years before the rest of the Church followed suit. The Spanish event was greatly celebrated, and Murillo set out to paint the popular subject over and over. He painted it at least 66 times, and is “acknowledged as the supreme painter of the Immaculate Conception”. [Dunne, John J., “Our Lady of the Galleries,” in “Our Sunday Visitor,” Vol. 76, No. 33, Dec. 13, 1987, taken from new book “The Life of the Madonna,” St. Paul Books and Media, Boston.] Often Murillo’s model for the Virgin was his daughter who was in her early teens.

With the Spanish Church authorities, Pacheco (a painter who was Velasquez’s father-in-law) codified in 1649 a new iconographic image of Mary to represent the Immaculate Conception. It was based on St. John’s writing of his vision of a woman whose manchild would save the world. (Revelation 12) She was standing on the moon. Pacheco, art censor to the Inquisition, added to this that Mary was to appear as if 12 or 13 years old, dressed in a white robe and blue cloak, hair hanging loose, [representing her virgin state], her hands folded on her breast in humility and/or the attitude of prayer, and standing on the crescent moon. The latter had been a symbol of virginity since the Greeks’ goddess Artemis. [Roman: Diana. Hall, op.cit., pp. 326-327. There are further variations.: She can be clothed with the rays of the sun, wear a 12 starred crown, wear the Franciscan belt of chastity with 3 knots, and/or crush at her feet the Devil in form of serpent or monster.] There is also a political message in the crescent moon during Murillo’s time. Much of Roman Catholic Europe was at war with the Turkish Empire whose emblem was the crescent. After the Christian Allies crushed the Turks at the great naval Battle of Lepanto in 1571 which ended Turkish supremacy in the Mediterranean, Mary standing on the crescent moon served as a symbol of triumph over the vanquished Turkish state, as well as representing her Immaculate Conception. [Spence, Jonathan D., “The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci,” Viking Penguin, Inc., New York 1983, p. 35 and n. 26.]

Murillo’s subtle color, light, and shade show the influence of Renaissance Venetian painting, which also influenced some other artists of the Baroque. [e.g. Ricci. Curator Peter Bowrens, Baroque Art, docent lecture, Oct. 1, 1978.] The painting is in a fine original frame, circa 1670. [Curator Roger Ward, “Spanish Art.” docent lecture, fall 1984.]

**SCULPTURE in GALLERY P14**

**LUCIUS VERUS**, Italian, late 16th or early 17th century from the Barbarini collection, major patrons of the arts in 17th century Rome. [2005 label]. Lucius lived in the mid 2nd century A.D. He was the adopted son of Antoninus Pius, and later co-emperor with his brother Marcus Aurelius. [2005 label] When purchased by the Museum the bust was thought to be ancient. Careful study of the carving technique in the hair area indicates it is in the Baroque style of
sculpture.. [The curls have “Baroque bounce,” according to Curator Ross Taggart, docent lectures.]

From the Renaissance on it was a fashionable decorative scheme to have an ensemble of busts of ancient emperors and other worthies on display in one’s palace..

**DUQUESNOY.** “Putto,” 1630s (66-26/2) Flemish, but mostly active in Rome. Duquesnoy was the son of a sculptor and became one. Like Poussin he traveled from northern Europe to Rome as a young man and spent most of his creative life there. He and Poussin were good friends and lived for a time together in Rome. Together they studied and copied ancient and more recent works of art that they saw in the area. Although Duquesnoy did some important large religious works, he also made a number of mythological ones as did Poussin. Duquesnoy, too, worked on Dionysian themes, and his famous relief “Bacchanale of Children” (1626, Doria-Pamphili Gallery, Rome) was much copied by other artists. One of his favorite themes was the young child motif, and these works of his were sought by collectors and artists alike. Among his portrait busts were Poussin’s wife (lost) and Poussin’s patron Cardinal Richelieu. [Turner, Jane, Edt., “The Dictionary of Art,” Grove, Macmillan publications, New York, 1996, Vol. 9, pp. 408-411. Also Curator Roger Ward’s label.]

Our figure is a wingless Cupid playing with his deadly weapons. Putti (Italian, “little men,” usually wingless) and Cupid images (usually winged) increased during the Baroque and Rococo periods. Indeed, it has been said that some artists were afflicted with “puttomania.” [I think this is in Held & Posner, “17th and 18th Century Art,” but have yet to relocate it.] Is there a bare spot in your canvas or relief? Fill it with a putto or two - or more! [You will notice that Poussin also frequently inserted putti into his paintings. “The Triumph of Bacchus” has both types, winged and unwinged Some of Poussins paintings have many more than two.]

Like Poussin, Duquesnoy was invited to France by Louis XIII for a court appointment, but the sculptor fell ill and died before reaching Paris in 1643.

**ALGARDI.** “Baptism of Christ,” c. 1646, Italian (47-34) Along with Gianlorenzo Bernini, Algardi was the most important sculptor active in Rome in the middle years of the 17th century. Their contemporaries thought of them as both equals and rivals. One of them, the art critic and biographer Bellori saw Algardi and Duquesnoy as the principle advocates of classicism, as opposed to the High Baroque style of Bernini, but this notion of Algardi as a Baroque “classical” artist is really more complex. [Turner, Jane, Edt., “The Dictionary of Art,” Grove, MacMillan, New York 1996, Vol. 1, pp. 625. 631.]

In looking at this work it is easy to see how “High Baroque” Algardi could be with the twisting postures of his protagonists, and animated drapery. [Lee’s opinion.]

Algardi was favored by Pope Innocent X of the Pamphili family. He made many religious works and portrait busts of the pope, cardinals, and Roman nobility. The sculptor was also an architect like Bernini, and the palace he built for the Pope’s nephew Camillo was at the time considered the finest residence in Rome. [Ibid., p. 628.]

Our bronze cast of the “Baptism of Christ” is one of ten still extant, of which the finest is in the Cleveland Museum. Unfortunately lost, the first cast was made in silver for the Pope around the time of his election. In the Vatican is Algardi’s terracotta model for “Baptism of Christ,” a rare survival.
John the Baptist was Pope Innocent’s namesake and patron saint. (Before coming to the papacy he was Giovanni Batista Pamphili). [1989 label; Turner, op.cit., p. 628. The terracotta model minus the little angel can be seen in “The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York 1982., Illustration 30, text pp. 887-89.] After his death Algardi’s reputation was overshadowed by Bernini’s, but a large number of casts were made from his models and widely used throughout Europe as teaching material for artists, as well as being esteemed art works. [Turner, op.cit. Vol. 1, p. 631.]

**BERNINI**, Gianlorenzo (replica by unknown German artist) “Apollo and Daphne,” 17th century, boxwood (F61-39) A noted architect as well, Bernini is commonly held to be the greatest sculptor of the Baroque period. Osborne’s “Oxford Companion to the Arts” claims that he “was the outstanding figure of the Italian Baroque and the greatest formative influence within it.” [Ibid., p. 131.] During the period of the Papacy’s ascendancy, Bernini was the principal artist at two Papal courts. In addition he was a brilliant wit, a writer of comedies, and a painter for his private pleasure although few pictures survive. Ibid., pp. 131-132.]

One of his masterpieces is the large white marble sculpture of Daphne and Apollo in the Villa Borghese, Rome, made between 1622-25. It was hailed at that time as one of the great marvels of the day due to its illusionist qualities, lively movement and technical virtuosity.

Smaller versions by other artists paid homage to the fame of the original, and this replica was made during Bernini’s lifetime. [Old Label by Curator Roger Ward and his docent lectures.] Replicas in different sizes of “Apollo and Daphne” were desired by many admirers over the centuries. Today small ones made of synthetic materials are available in tourist shops and in the USA. [See Eleganza Ltd. advertisement in “Smithsonian,” March 1986, Vol. 16, No. 12, p. 152.]

The popular subject has been depicted over the centuries by many artists in many media. [See in NAMA’s Renaissance collection the 16th century cassone. (33-459).] The nymph Daphne, daughter of the river god Peneus, was the first girl that Apollo loved. Cupid hit the god with a gold arrow that caused Apollo to passionately desire her, but the love god hit Daphne with a lead arrow causing her to flee from all thoughts of love with repulsion and terror. Determined Apollo was just about to catch her when she cried out to her father Peneus to save her, and he turned her into a laurel tree. Apollo loved her still and claimed the tree as his, the laurel to adorn his hair and lyre and the heads of victors. [Ovid, “Metamorphoses,” Book I, lines 450-591.]

Apollo was also the god of poetry and literary endeavors. At the sporting and literary games held in his honor at Delphi, the prizes were wreaths of laurel. Therefore we say that winning poets and other victors “rest on their laurels.”

This story of unrequited love was told and retold in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and it became a subject for the performing arts. The very first opera was on the subject, composed in Florence in 1597. [“Dafne,” music by Peri, libretto by the poet Rinucci. Another “Daphne” opera would be composed by Handel in 1706.] Ancient myth and history were the major subjects of opera and ballet in the Baroque period. The myth was allegorized and variously moralized. [On NAMA’s wedding chest Daphne would be an inspiration to the bride for chastity - except for the attentions of her husband, of course. Daphne’s chastity was much commented on in Medieval and Renaissance literature.]

Bernini made his statue for Cardinal Scipio Borghese. If the amorous subject and beautiful male and female nudes seem unusual for the collection of a prince of the Church, let it be known
that in addition to his big collection of contemporary masters, Borghese had the best collection of antique pornography in Rome. [Wallace, Robert, and Editors of Time-Life Books, “The World of Bernini,” Time-Life Books, New York 1970, pp. 17-18.] On completion of the sculpture there were some concerns over Daphne’s nudity. To allay these alarms Cardinal Maffeo Barbarini (later Pope Urban VIII and also a Bernini patron) wrote a moralizing epigram in Latin which was inscribed on the statue’s base. “He who lusts after passing beauty will reap nothing but dry leaves or bitter fruit.” Moralizing the myths made the ancient fables acceptable in the Christian world.

**GALLERY P16**

This area is left out of the children’s tour on 17th and 18th century art. There are wonderful works, but they’re not as illustrative of tour themes, styles, etc. However, this gallery is used on the children’s “Tales...” tour. The art works here represent a change in patronage at the end of the 17th century, when wealthy men of commerce and nobles increasingly were the patrons. In Italy the “Ecclesiastics were still the richest patrons...but the aristocracy now multiplied palaces faster than churches, courted posterity with portraits, and dowered it with collections of art.” [Durant, Will and Ariel, “The Age of Louis XIV,” Part VIII of series “The Story of Civilization,” Simon and Schuster New York 1963, pp.432-433.] The smaller scale of the paintings and their more secular worldly subjects reflect this patronage. [Gallery text panel 2005]

**CRESPI,** “Young Man with a Helmet,” 1725-30 (44-45) The 17th and 18th centuries were filled with warfare, and military subjects were popular. This is not a serious portrait; the face lacks a serious expression. [See essay on SMILING in portraiture under Hals in Dutch Gallery P17 below] This is more an informal and momentary masquerade in armor. The robust realism and painterly style reflect Rembrandt’s works, an artist that Crespi greatly admired. [Curator Kennedy, reinstallation lecture, Jan. 10, 2006]. The expensive black and white ostrich plumes were a traditional helmet accessory of the knight [See the Renaissance collection’s parade armor for man and horse featuring ostrich plumes.]

Crespi was born and worked primarily in Bologna. He was fortunate to find a prosperous merchant patron who arranged to buy any picture he produced, and who also funded the artist’s study trips to Venice, Parma, and Umbria. Then came many other patrons, particularly the Medici. In Bologna he established his own drawing school. Crespi “ranks as the greatest painter in early 18th century Bologna, an assessment that was shared by his contemporaries....The immediacy of his images and preference for fresh, painterly surface, so unlike the polished effect in the work of more mainstream artists...have endeared his art to modern eyes.” [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 349-351] He shows the continuing interest in chiaroscuro, and he was a famous teacher.. [Osborne, “Companion to the Arts,” op.cit., p. 290.]

**HESCHLER,** attributed to, “Hercules, Deianeira, and Nessus,” and “Hercules, Antaeus, and Gaia,” 17th century, Flemish but active in German, 2 ivory placquettes (59-75). These are of very high quality and have the muscular energy typical of German carving. [2005 label] In one plaque Hercules rescues his wife Deianeira from an evil centaur Nessus who attempted to ravish her. The plaque’s maker has confused the mythological animals of centaur and satyr. This goatish, cloven hoofed creature with two legs should instead have horse hooves and four of them.
Nessus the centaur was equine, not caprine. In the other plaque Hercules encounters the evil giant Antaeus who could never be defeated while he was touching the earth since Gaia the earth goddess was his mother. Hercules had to lift Antaeus into the air and crush him while Antaeus had no contact with the earth. Gaia is here wonderfully conceived as an elderly creature of the earth with root like fingers. Even one of her breasts seems to grow a root into the earth. Hercules sports his usual lionskin apparel and olive wood club, the most typical of his attributes. [Another German sculpture of Hercules wrestling Antaeus is in the Renaissance collection (c. 1560/70, bronze, 70-54).]

Hercules was a popular subject in all of European art, including Germany. According to the ancient historian Tacitus, Hercules went to Germany, and it was claimed that one of his sons was the founder of Nuremburg.

HERCULES IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM:
MEANING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT
by Lee Pentecost, June 15, 2006. All rights reserved. Citations permitted if credit given.

Preface: This is not a retelling of the man-god’s extraordinary and many adventures. For a good quick short summary of them see Hall, James, “Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” Harper & Row, Publishers, New York 1979, pp. 147-153. This essay is to explain why these images were made and their historical context. I use both Greek and Latin names for the man-god interchangeably.

Hercules is one of the most popular subjects in European art and literature. This superman who became a god never totally disappeared with the collapse of the ancient world and rise of Christianity. We could call him the god who never died because he has never left European culture. In antiquity he had been a protector, savior, liberator, bringer of peace, defender of justice, and conqueror of death. He harrowed Hades to rescue Theseus, and he raised Alcestis from the dead. He underwent many trials and sufferings. He defeated monsters and tyrants everywhere. He was faced with vital choices between a life of vice or one of self-sacrifice and virtue. [A popular art subject in later centuries is “Hercules’ Choice” or “Hercules at the Crossroads.” The moralizing story is thought to have first been told by the sophist Procidus in the 5th century B.C. and then by Xenophon, “Memorabilia,” ii, 1.21ff. See Brumble, H. David, “Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings,” Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut 1998, p. 155.] The ancient Athenian middle class felt Herakles was their champion against tyrants and claimed they were the first to have recognized him as a god. The Cynic philosophers and later the Stoics “used him as a symbol of the human aspiration for final peace achieved through great effort.” [Pollitt, J. J., “Art in the Hellenistic Age,” Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 52.]

The Etruscans loved him, and took him as a god along with their earliest adaptations of Greek culture. “As in Greece his image itself was ever an analogy for human perseverance...Herakles stands as everyman and in the aspirations of the religiously susceptible, the hero, much like the deceased Etruscan, was carried off to a different state of living, as demonstrated in his apotheosis by chariot.” [Moon, Warren G., “The Priam Painter, Some
Iconographic and Stylistic Considerations” in “Ancient Greek Art and Iconography,” the University of Wisconsin Press, 1983., p. 9, 98, 101, 102."

Two Etruscan works that may show him are in NAMA’s ancient collection. Definitely Heracles is the little Etruscan bronze wearing the lionskin with its paws neatly tied around his neck, and holding a club and bow. (49-76) Also in the collection is “one of the great surviving bronzes of Etruria” (30-12); [“Apollo,” all NAMA issue, XCVI, December 1972, p. 15.]. This standing figure clutches a sword in its scabbard, probably held a now lost spear with the other, and wears a little triangular cloak with punch marks to represent the stars of heaven. This was a garment which Etruscan kings wore. Among the various Etruscan deities this figure might represent has been suggested Hercle, the Etruscan Herakles. (The others are Tinia, Maris, and Laran, or a king figure.) [Kozloff Arielle P. and Mitten, David Gordon, “The Gods Delight: The Human Figure in Classical Bronze” The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 1988, pp. 223-224.]

Herakles was one of the most popular Etruscan deities, “his name invoked by Etruscans for protection not only for themselves but for springs, mountains, streams and gateways His image

frequently decorated the pediments of Etruscan temples, stood over gables and appeared as a badge of protection on coins from city mints. He was the most frequently represented hero in Etruscan art...Hundreds of bronze statuettes of him were found in the many sanctuaries and shrines and must have been offered as part of religious ritual or as thank offerings...For the people who settled on the hills to the side of the Tiber River in what eventually became Rome, Herakles was one of the most venerated gods. His name was Latinized to Hercules, but his image and myth remained essentially


The Romans absorbed Herakles along with the Etruscan and Greek cultures that so favored him, but called him Hercules. The popularity of the greatest of ancient heroes was international. His cult and images were everywhere in the Graeco-Roman world, and many worshipers tithed to him. The identification of the ruler with Herakles began with Alexander the Great. His sculptor Lysippos made a portrait head of him wearing the Nemean lionskin cap. [Ibid., p. 12.] The noble houses of antiquity were descended from him, because while conquering tyrants around the world he usually slept with a noble woman living in that area. The kings of Troy, Aeneas the ancestor of the Romans [Tanner, Marie, “The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor,” Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1993, passim.] Alexander the Great, the Hellenistic rulers of Egypt, the Julio-Claudian line of Caesar and Augustus, the later Roman emperors, and other rulers around the Mediterranean claimed him as an ancestor and took on his attributes in literature, public art and propaganda, as did even some lesser ranked men.

As an example of an ancient ruler portrayed as Hercules, there is in NAMA’s ancient collection a fine bronze figure (46-37), probably a Roman copy made in the Augustan or Julio-Claudian period. The face is a portrait of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), and was identified because of the strong resemblance to portraits of Antiochus on his coinage. [Vermuele III, Cornelius C., “The Gods Delight: The Human Figure in Classical Bronze,” organized by A. P. Kozloff and D. G. Mitten, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1988, pp. 172-175.] This was the
tyrannical and intolerant king of Syria whose terrible persecutions of the Jews led to their Hasmonean Revolt in 167 BC, and eventually their victorious celebration of Hannakah. [Among his barbaric treatment of the Jews were his decrees of death for observing the sabbath and the ritual of circumcision. Antiochus profaned the Jerusalem Temple by having swine sacrificed to the statue of Zeus he erected in it. He even put an image of himself there. Prof. Jim Falls, Lecture 9: The Seleucids, “The Hellenistic Age,” UMKC course. See also Eban, Aban, “Heritage; Civilization and the Jews,” Summit Books, New York 1984, pp. 76-7.]

NAMA’s statue of Antiochus as Herakles carries on one arm the impenetrable skin of the monstrous Nemean lion that the hero had slain by strangulation. This was his first great Labor. Usually in art both ancient and later, the skin is his only clothing. The other arm of this statue probably once held a club now lost. The lionskin and his favorite weapon, a club of olive wood, have always been the two most common attributes of the god. [Vermuele, op.cit.] The Antiochus-Herakles statue wears a simple royal diadem. This type of head ornament “became the single exclusive symbol of Hellenistic kingship...” [Bullock, Anthony, Edt. Et Al, “Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1993, p. 207.]

There is also in NAMA’s ancient collection a stone head of the older bearded “weary” type of Hercules originated by the ancient Greek sculptor Lysippos. (34-79) In our representation he wears the lion’s head as an uncomfortable cap with its teeth pressing into his forehead.

In ancient drama Hercules was considered to be the quintessential tragic hero because of his almost endless trials and sufferings. The tragic muse Melpomene often holds his favorite weapon, the club that he carved out of olive wood. It is her usual attribute. In our collection the 3rd century Roman sarcophagus presumed to have belonged to Praecilia Serveriana shows this muse with the club in one hand. Her other hand rests on the mask of the Hercules character which is curly haired and bearded. [87-21]

The earlier sarcophagus [33-38], 2nd century, shows a Melpomene also with club and a mask, although the latter does not portray the Hercules character. It is a generic tragic type mask with the high hair dress that was introduced into theatre by Aeschylus.

Much of mythology survived the collapse of the Roman world. Many Christian writers believed that the ancient stories held hidden truths connected with Christianity, such as the 5th and early 6th centuries AD Christian Latin writer Fulgentius, a mythographer and allegorical interpreter of Virgil. [Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., CD 2001] Myths were important in teaching didactic truths. One had only to interpret the old stories correctly in this light. [See Allen, Don Cameron, “Mysteriously Meant, The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance,” The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore & London 1970, passim.]. Allegory is Greek meaning “other speaking.” Allegories are things or stories that have a hidden, underlying meaning., so they speak on one level but also on another. Symbol or symbolism is often used as a synonym for allegory today.. Even in antiquity many of the myths had been interpreted allegorically by pagan writers. [Rollinson, Philip, “Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture,” Duquesne University Press, 1981 pp. 3, 8.] Christian writers continued this practice which came to fruition in the Middle Ages and was prolific in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Thus Hercules flourished in later Europe. The occasional blunders and misdeeds of the ancient pagan man-god were mostly ignored since mythographers and allegorists concentrated on
his virtues. He was paralleled to the Biblical heroes Joshua and Samson. [Allen, op.cit., pp. 66-67, n. 43 & n. 44, 70.] He was seen as an allegory for the labors and sufferings of Christ for the betterment of mankind, a harrower of hell and a reviver of the dead. As a Christ metaphor he continued his ancient role as a protector, savior, liberator, dispenser of justice, and the conqueror of death. He was also seen as a symbol for the struggling but persevering Christian soul itself, an “exemplum” of virtue for the average man who must make difficult choices between virtue and vice and struggle for a better world, as Hercules had done in the pagan past. He was emblematic of one of the four Cardinal Virtues, Fortitude (signifying strength, endurance, and courage).

Among ancient texts that survived Ovid was particularly admired by the literate in the Middle Ages. Indeed some literary scholars of that period have even called the 12th and 13th centuries “the age of Ovid.” During the Renaissance humanists published unending editions of the poet’s work from 1471 on, and it was taken for granted that an educated man knew his and Virgil’s writings. “In the 15th through the 17th centuries it would be difficult to name a poet or painter of note who was not in some degree indebted to him.” ["Ovid: Influence,” in “Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. CD 2001.”]

The French Benedictine monk Pierre Bersuire (Latin name Petrus Berchorius; died 1362) wrote an influential book “Ovidius Moralizatus” (Ovid Moralized) which was translated into French (“Ovide Moralise”). This author was one of the most influential of the many allegorical interpreters of Ovid, who later followed him. He saw in myth a Christian typology, and he found that Hercules in Hades was Christ harrowing hell and defeating death. [Brumble, op.cit., p. 160] It is for these reasons that a number of Hercules images began appearing on the exteriors and interiors of church buildings in the Middle Ages. [Seznac, Jean, “The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art,” Bollingen Series XXXVIII, Princeton University Press, 1953, p. 30] A medieval example that alludes to Hercules in NAMA’s collection is the “Lectern Support” (47-35). This marble sculpture from an Italian church interior dates to around the 1160s. “The theme of a man struggling with, or attacked by a serpent is a medieval adaptation of one of the numerous representations in antiquity of the mythological hero, Hercules, who as an infant killed a large snake and as an adult slew the multi-headed monster Hydra. For Christians the motif would have been instantly understood as a depiction of mankind’s eternal struggle with Sin, embodied in the serpent.” [old label by Curator Roger Ward. He also made this point in docent lectures.] This Herculean support holds up the Eagle of St. John the Evangelist, of which only the claws remain. Upon the bird’s back would have rested the Bible and other texts used in church services.

In the 16th century the French court poet Ronsard wrote “Hercule chrestien” in which the deeds of Jesus and the Hercules were paralleled in harrowing hell and bringing back the dead. [Bull, Malcolm, “The Mirror of the Gods,” Oxford U. Press, 2005, p. 126.] The Jesuits taught that myth was edifying, aiming at “the greater glory of God.” It was a body of important moral precepts cunningly hidden under the mask of fiction. [Ibid., p. 276.] Myth was taught by the Jesuits so as to reveal the moral lessons hidden in them. On great feast days tapestries showing Hercules’ Labors might be hung in churches. [Ibid.p. 276 n. 68.] Hercules was worked into the program of frescos in the interior of the Cathedral at Orvieto. In the Renaissance many other writers wrote moralized myth versions with Christian interpretations. Hercules’ many deeds conquering monsters and evil doers were seen as Christ victorious over the Devil and sin. The monstrous Hydra was easily approximated to the traditional dragon representations of evil and
the Devil. The final suffering of Hercules, followed by his ascension and apotheosis — "especially since Christ, too, was taken up into heaven from a mountaintop...was...yet another way in which Hercules and Christ were associated. His apotheosis, "soaring off to heavenly glory" became a popular subject in painting. This subject was often on ceilings of important rooms so one had to look upwards as he ascended to heaven. [Bramble, op.cit., p. 164] , often appearing on ceilings so one had to look upwards as he ascended to heaven.

The Council of Trent’s Counter Reformation decisions (met 1545-1563) frowned upon so much interest in pagan deities especially in any church context. There were sermons and tracts against pagan imagery in secular contexts, too. There was a resulting diminishment in the use of myth in art. Pope Pius V (1566-72) removed many antique statues considered improper from the Vatican’s collection, and from the villas of earlier popes. Some were destroyed but fortunately most of them were eagerly acquired by princes and nobles. Expanding on the Council’s reforms, Cardinal Paleotti wrote an influential work (1584) with almost the total condemnation of mythic subjects which were to be allowed only to the scholar in his private study. [Hall, James, “A History of Ideas and Image in Italian Art,” Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1983, pp. 284-293.] That style of ancient Roman decoration now called grotesque ornament, the Cardinal condemned as having “actually been invented as an aid to subterranean devil worship.” [Bull, Malcolm, “The Mirror of the Gods: How Renaissance Artists Rediscovered the Pagan Gods,” Oxford U. Press, 2005, p. 81.] However, in the decorations of their palaces and their collections, a number of bishops and cardinals ignored him.

At the end of the 16th century myth made a full and grand return when a Farnese cardinal sponsored the Carracci brothers’ great pagan allegorical program for the Farnese Palace. This project began around 1595, and much of it had to do with love affairs of the gods. In the 17th century these paintings became as greatly admired as Raphael’s stanze, and were a “must” for other artists in Rome to study and sketch. [See NAMA’s Poussin, above Gallery P14. The composition of his “Triumph of Bacchus” is based on the Farnese ceiling painting.] Hercules predominated in the palace’s study known as the Camerino. The Farnese villa outside Rome at Caprarola was decorated with allegorical myth, including Hercules who was considered an ancestor of the family. Myth was back big time. If no longer inside churches, Hercules was frequently used as a defender of the faith outside, and to represent the political power of cardinals and bishops. [Hall, op.cit., pp. 284-293.] Later in the 17th century Algardi, an artist favored by Pope Innocent X, was chosen to build a palace for the Pope’s nephew. It had a grand “Gallery of Hercules.” Like the Farnese, this pope and his Pamphili family traced their descent from Hercules. [Turner, Jane, Edt., “Dictionary of Art,” Groe, MacMillan New York, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 628.]

The use of Hercules in political allegory was strong from the late Middle Ages through the Baroque periods. As in antiquity, he was a symbol for the ruler. [Curiously this would even be seen during World War II. See below, Hitler and Mussolini.] Following in the tradition of ancient pagan rulers, the Christian royal houses of Europe and much of their aping nobility worked up fantastical genealogies to prove they were descended from the god. These princely pretensions are seen at least as early as 1390, and soon the dukes of Burgundy believed that Hercules was the founder of their dynasty. It was claimed that on his many adventures the super hero passed through France, Germany, and Burgundy and met the noble Alise in the latter. They were wed and from their union issued the Burgundian noble line. [Seznac, op.cit., p. 25] The
Hapsburgs ruling Spain and much of the rest of Europe, the French monarchs, the Medici, and lesser rulers and nobles including some of the papal houses, made the same claim that Hercules was their ancestor. A most influential book on mythological imagery by Vincenzo Cartari went through many editions and was consulted by generations of artists throughout the Renaissance and Baroque periods. (“Le Imagini con la sposizione de i dei de gli antichi,” Venice, 1556). He wrote that Jupiter was the symbol of the good sovereign required to govern with justice, and his son Hercules was the prince He also wrote of Hercules-Sol as representing a ruler’s sovereignty and power over others. The lionskin was symbolic of the “virtues of soul” and his club reflected “His just and honest works.” [Utz, Hildegard, “The Labors of Hercules and Other Works by Vincenzo de’Rossi,” in “Art Bulletin,” LIII, 1971, pp. 358-360.] There were other compilers of mythological imagery and meaning as well, one of the early Renaissance being the Italian writer and poet Boccaccio (died 1375). Another important compiler whose book was used by many artists was Ripa. Hercules was often “a vehicle for portraiture to demonstrate the virtuous nature of a prince or an eldest son...” [Hall, “A History of Ideas...”, op.cit.p. 293.]

The city-state of Florence adopted Hercules as a symbol of and protector of the state against its enemies. From 1281 he appears on the great seal of Florence used by the Signoria, and he was prominent in the Republic’s civic art. [Seznac, op.cit. p. 20, n. 27. See also Bull, Malcolm, “The Mirror of the Gods: How Renaissance Artists Rediscovered the Pagan Gods,” Oxford U. Press, 2005, pp.72, 86.] Especially the French kings were celebrated as Hercules beginning as early as Francis I. Increasingly in art, the performing arts, in literature and propaganda, the powerful men of western Europe took on the attributes of Hercules. “It is not surprising that the great ones of the Renaissance should have exulted in comparisons of themselves with Hercules. This was especially the case with monarchs, who rejoiced to think of themselves as opposing tyranny and as leading their subjects by their eloquence. Several poems by the French court poet Ronsard compare the French King Charles IX to Hercules ‘at embarrassing length.’ ” [Ibid., p. 166]. Throughout Europe innumerable flattering panegyrics were written, comparing the virtues and great deeds of Hercules to those of the current ruler whether he be English, French, German-Austrian, Spanish, or Italian. It was common for the Renaissance and Baroque leader to represent himself in art and the performing arts and public propaganda as Hercules. The Hapsburg rulers of the German states and of Spain, the Medici and members of some of the great pope producing families in Rome, many French kings [especially Henri IV, Louis X11I and Louis XIV; for some representations of Henri’s and Louis XIII’s Herculean art, see Strong, Roy, “Splendor at Court: Renaissance Spectacle and the Theater of Power,” Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1973., pp. 119, 198, 245.] used images of Hercules to represent themselves. Copying their betters, countless petty rulers and nobles were portrayed and praised as the god.

In early Renaissance art Hercules was the topic given entire rooms at palaces in Padua and Ferrara, long before any of the other ancient gods received a room dedicated to only one deity’s exploits. [Bull, op.cit., p. 87.] In the 15th century Hercules was all over Europe. [Bull, op.cit., p. 89.] During the 16th century most rulers created a “Hall of Princely Virtue,” usually their grandest reception room. It was a vehicle for the expression of political imagery and Hercules took the major role in these halls. [Brown, Jonathan, “Velazquez: Pinter and Courtier,” Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1986, pp. 109-111.] The 16th century Florentine art historian and painter Vasari wrote that he wanted his Hercules representations to be understood
“as a model for princes, and that the labours were to be interpreted in terms of the qualities and achievements of his Medici patrons.” [Ibid., p. 88. I’m here quoting Bull, not Vasari himself.]

NAMA has a 16th century tapestry from a set believed to have been owned by the Renaissance French Queen Catherine d’Medici. It shows “Pheidias’ Olympian Zeus, One of the 7 Wonders of the World” (30-33). That ancient ivory and gold statue is shown in the background. In the foreground an Olympic game event is proceeding, and in the background is a statue of the games’ founder Hercules.

The personal emblem of three crescents on the grandstand full of spectators is that of Henri II, Catherine’s husband. Also in the collection is a French square Limoge plaque, the center showing Alexander the Great. Two of Hercules’ endeavors are shown in the lower corners. (45-32/1).

Unfortunately much of Herculean allegorical imagery was ephemeral - the ballets, plays, and spectacles. Temporary art works made for accessions, weddings, city entries, and other courtly and civic celebrations have not survived.

Imagery of the god was so prominently used that it was not uncommon for him to appear in festivities connected with important weddings. There he usually represented the bridegroom and his virtues. Just three examples: Ercole [Hercules] d’Este of Ferarra married Eleonora of Aragon. As the bridegroom’s name indicates, Hercules was one of his ancestors. In 1473 on the bride’s journey to the groom’s domain she stopped in Rome. There she was greeted with the Labors on three big pastries as well as paintings and wall-hangings on the subject. [Bull, op.cit., p. 91.] Also edible, the Labours of Hercules was the theme of one of the banquet courses during the wedding festivities of the French King Henri IV and Marie de’ Medici in 1600. Henri had often been praised as Hercules. Many of these consumable table sculptures were made by Pietro Tacca, the most important of Giovanni Bologna’s assistants. During the entries of the bride into Avignon and Lyon, her husband under the image of Hercules was shown as protector of the Catholic faith. [Strong, Roy, “Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650,” Boydell Press, Suffolk Great Britain 1984, pp.146, 71.] Plays and ballets celebrated aristocratic bridegrooms as Hercules. In 1653 as part of the wedding festivities of Christian Ludwig, Duke of Brunswick and Luneburg, the portly bridegroom danced in a ballet with his nobles. His role was Hercules, and he battled the Hydra during an exuberant fireworks display and explosion during which the monster was destroyed. [A print of this event is replicated on p. 20 in Boorsch, Suzanne, “Fireworks! Four Centuries of Pyrotechnics in Prints and Drawings,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, Summer 2000.]


Protestants admired and allegorized the super hero in much the same way. Although Martin Luther wrote “I hate allegories” and that they “originated from stupid and idle monks,” [Allen, Don Cameron, “Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and
Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance.” The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore and London
1970, p. 240.] this leader of the Protestant Reformation was portrayed as Hercules in a woodcut print. [Bull, op.cit., p. 93] The new Dutch Republic (mostly Protestant) used him as a defender against the tyranny of Catholic Spanish Hapsburg rule. The association of Hercules with righteousness was such that the Swiss Protestant leader Zwingli (a classical scholar and former Catholic priest) wrote to the Catholic French King Francis I in 1531, that “thou wilt one day see God Himself and near to Him thou mayest hope to see Adam, Abel, Enoch, Paul, Hercules, Theseus, Socrates, the Catos, the Scipios...: [Seznac, op.cit.,Ibid., p. 23.]

In the 17th century Poussin’s patron, the great 17th century French statesman and prince of the Church, Cardinal Richelieu was noted for using Hercules as a favorite symbol of himself. Many writings, propaganda, art works, his palace decorations and inscriptions made this connection, as does Poussin by placing Hercules in the center of NAMA’s “The Triumph of Bacchus” (31-94), a work commissioned by the Cardinal as part of the famous “Richelieu Bacchanals” to hang in the grand palace he was building for himself. [Alas, no longer standing.] The face of Poussin’s Hercules does not resemble Richelieu. It is after the “weary” types of the god that had been popularized by the Hellenistic sculptor Lysippos. [He was also the sculptor who had portrayed the young beardless Alexander as Herakles. See above.] However, there is a recognizable portrait of Richelieu that the Cardinal commissioned about a year earlier in 1634 by Claude Vignon, titled “The Triumph of Hercules.” [Goldfarb, Hilliard. T., Edt., “Richelieu, Art and Power,” Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2002, pp. 254, 282, 294, 127-135, 305-7. NAMA’s painting is illustrated Cat. 126, text 292-294. Vignon’s portrait is Cat. 133, pp. 305-307.] In this painting Richelieu himself stands in triumph over many of the monsters conquered during the god’s famous Labors. Toting the club and half nude, the Cardinal is wearing only a skimpy lionskin that exposes his torso, legs, and one arm. “Cardinal Richelieu was extravagantly celebrated as Hercules in verse and in the decoration of the Chateau de Richelieu, which included an “Apotheosis of Hercules” and a picture of Hercules and the Hydra, accompanied by anagrams identifying the Cardinal with the hero.” [Bull, op.cit., p. 96.]

Not surprisingly Hercules became a guise for King Louis XIV in his court and civic art, ballet, other festivities, and propaganda. A large statue of Louis was made showing him destroying the Hydra [no longer extant] Here Hercules-Louis was defending Catholicism, the many heads of the monster representing various heretical Protestant deviations from the true faith. Hercules was worked into the interior design schemes for the Louvre Palace. Poussin was one of the artists involved but left Paris before they were carried out. It was planned that his contemporary Bernini would make for Louis XIV a pair of colossal Hercules statues, each standing guard with his club, to flank the main entrance of the Louvre palace. “The facade was to be understood as an ascent of the ‘Mountain of Virtue’ by Louis in the guise of Hercules,” but the project wasn’t completed. [Avery, Charles, “Bernini, Genius of the Baroque,” Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, and Little, Brown and Co., New York, 1997, p. 241.]

Not to be outdone by Louis XIV, Augustus the Strong liked to be called “Hercules saxonius,” the Saxon Hercules, and it is Herculean motifs that dominate his self-representations. As some examples, the god was the subject of the ceiling in the audience chamber of his Dresden palace. A number of commemorative medals were made showing Augustus with the club, and almost nude except for the lionskin, while performing Herculean tasks. [Mississippi Commission for International Cultural Exchange, Inc., “The Glory of Baroque Dresden: The
State Art Collections Dresden,” exhibition catalogue, Mississippi Arts Pavilion, Jackson, Miss, March 1 - September 6, 2004, pp. 27-8, 134, 224-5, 250, 281, 283. It’s of interest that also like Louis, Augustus on occasion impersonated the god Apollo, and he used the Apollo head motif as a decorative motif on some of his possessions. [Ibid.]

[Augustus was called “the Strong,” appropriate for a Herculean figure, and liked to show off his strength by bending horseshoes with his bare hands. The Mississippi-Dresden exhibition which I cited above, was accompanied by a film showing one of the horseshoes that Augustus kept around him to show off his strength. It had been weakened at one spot so that he could more easily bend it when he wanted to impress the public!]

Hercules is everywhere in Renaissance and Baroque art. In Pigler’s famous study on art subject matter, of all the many mythological figures in the art works he lists, the most depicted deity from the Renaissance through part of the 18th century, is Hercules. [Pigler, A., “Barockthemen: Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen Zur Ikonographie Des 17. Unde 18. Jahrhunderts,” Vol. II, Akademidi Kiado, Budapest, 1974, pp. 107-133. Pigler does not state this. I do from counting the Hercules entries and pages devoted to him.]

The god appears in every medium. He ornaments many decorative art objects. Particularly he and his emblems are featured on “prunk” (ostentatious, especially luxurious) parade armor belonging to the high and mighty. [An astonishingly magnificent Herculean suit was in Augustus the Strong’s armory collection. See Mississippi...”The Glory of Baroque Dresden”, op.cit]

To reiterate, Hercules is a major character in art, court entertainments, accessions, royal entries, civic festivities, and appears in operas, ballets, and plays. In the 17th century even a Cardinal - Giulio Rospigliosi wrote a play about Hercules that was performed in Rome. [Blunt, Anthony, “Poussin,” Pp.153-4.] A distinguished man of letters, a poet and famous as a dramatist, this Cardinal eventually became Pope Clement IX.

In complimenting each other, many European potentates sent gifts of art works, often small sculptures showing Hercules. [Curator Peter Bowran, docent lectures.] The gift implied that the recipient was like the hero-god. This political gift exchange must have employed many artists. It’s not out of line to speculate that many sculptures of him in museums around the world were made with this intent.

NAMA’s three small German sculptures of Hercules possibly could have been part of political gift giving. In the collection are the two 17th century ivory plaquettes attributed to Hechsler (59-75) and the small bronze “Hercules Wrestling Antaeus” circa 1560/70 (70-54) Hercules was prominent in German art. The ancient historian Tacitus had written that Hercules journeyed through Germany where he was especially venerated. He was considered the progenitor of many early German tribes, was claimed as a German king, and one of his multitudinous sons was the legendary founder of Nuremberg. The German Emperor Maximilian was also a descendant. [Kaufmann, Lynn Frier, “The Noble Savage: Satyrs and Satyr Families in Renaissance Art,” Studies in Renaissance Art History, No. 2, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbot, Michigan 1984, p.50 and n. 28.] Renaissance humanists interpreted Hercules killing Antaeus as an allegory for Virtue subduing earthly Lust, or similarly, Reason overcoming an evil life of the Senses. [Stringer, Charles L., “The Renaissance in Rome,” Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1985, p. 273.] Another political gift may have been the 16th century French Limoge plaque mentioned above with two of Hercules’ endeavors in the lower corners. The center is dominated by Alexander the Great. (Ca. 1540, workshop of Colin
Nouailher, French, enamel on copper. Enamel on copper. 45-32/1. This work is illustrated in color in “NAMA Member Magazine,” Spring 2006, p. p. 4.). Because of its portable size, NAMA’s bronze of “Hercules, Deianeira, and Nessus,” by de Vries, c. 1603 (44-53) may also fall in this category.

During the 18th century Age of Enlightenment aristocratic pretensions to fabricated Herculean ancestry were quickly dropped, but state power symbolism continued. In 1736 Louis XV was presented with an extraordinary ceiling in the “Salon d’Hercule” at Versailles showing an immense apotheosis of Hercules, the traditional metaphor for the French monarchy. [Le Leyzour, Philippe, “Myth and Enlightenment,” an essay in Bailey, Colin B., “The Loves of the Gods: Mythological Painting from Watteau to David,” p. 21.] For the new American republic Benjamin Franklin proposed that an image of Hercules as an infant in the cradle be made showing him strangling two serpents, one of them representing the defeated Burgoyne, and the other Cornwallis. [Gummere, Richard M., “The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture,” Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1963, p. 129.]

Curiously the affiliation of Hercules and the state did not die out with the beginning of the Industrial Age. Hercules appears in art and propaganda of the French Revolution as defender of the people against the monarchy. In 1793 the painter Jacques Louis David, then a deputy to the Convention, presented a proposal for a colossal statue of him representing the people, as the official emblem of the Republic. In one of his hands was to be the club, and in the other were nestled against each other the figures of Liberty and Equality. This project did not materialize, but during the French Republic Hercules appeared frequently in government art. Now the traditional symbolic meaning was reversed. No longer representing the monarchy, the god now was champion of the common citizenry as he had been in ancient Athens. Now the Hydra and other monsters represented the tyrannical monarchy and other enemies of the Republic. [Solomon-Godeau, “Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation,” Thames and Hudson, pp. pp. 207-8, Figures 99 - 103.]

Napoleon who wished to create a new empire on the order of Rome, saw himself as Hercules and was painted conquering the Hydra by Girodet. Hercules’ attributes were often a decorative motif during the French Empire. In NAMA’s collection is a pair of French candelabra by Thomire made around 1810. They feature military motifs, among them the club of Hercules. (F69-12) There is also a French mantle clock (82-8) by Lepaute’s workshop made around 1810-15 with ancient military trophy designs, among them a shield with the head of Hercules wearing his usual lionskin cap.

Allegory wasn’t always inferred. A non-political work of the Napoleonic period, is NAMA’s bronze of “Hercules and Lychas” by the Neo-classical sculptor Antonio Canova. (89-30) This was cast in 1834, after his famous large marble statue of 1812 that proved an international success, so popular that at least five smaller bronzes after it are recorded. The story was taken from Ovid’s “Metamorphoses,” Book 9, lines 212-20. [See “NAMA Calendar of Events,” May 1990, p. 3.] The great marble was one of Canova’s most famous works. One of its admirers suggested that it was an allegory showing the French Republic overthrowing the monarchy, but Canova said not so, it was just Hercules and Lychas. Political overtones were usually absent from this artist’s mythological figures. [Hall, James, “A History of Ideas and Images in Italian Art,” Icon Editions, Harper and Row, publishers, New York 1983, p. 147.]

44
Towards the end of the 19th century the Prince Imperial, young son of Napoleon III, was sculpted as Hercules. Even as late as the 1940s two Fascist leaders used the Hercules theme politically in art. Adolf Hitler often turned to antiquity and mythology for state art and architecture of the Third Reich. His grand Fuhrer Building was built in Munich for official receptions and its biggest hall hung with nine large tapestries of Hercules’ deeds. [Adam, Peter, “Art of the Third Reich, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York 1992, p. 236.] Hitler’s ally the Italian dictator Mussolini planned that his new Foro Mussolini in Rome would be dominated by a gigantic statue of himself, so tall that it would overlook St. Peter’s. He was to be half-naked in the tradition of Hercules’ portrayals. One hand would hold the club, the other was to be in the posture of the old Roman but now Fascist salute. Due to the pressures of World War II the statue was never executed. [Bondanella, Peter, “The Eternal City: Roman Images in the Modern World,” The University of North Carolina Press, 1987, p. 199.]

My further investigation of the god in the 20th century is very limited, since thus far I’ve not encountered any NAMA representations of that time. One of the largest British airliners of the early 1930s was named Heracles with the name painted prominently on it. It was noted for its luxury and reputation for safety, and flew throughout the empire. [Dick, Ron and Patterson, Dan, “Aviation Century: The Early Years” Boston Mills Press, Boston 2003, p. 172.]. During World War II the Hercules Powder Company produced munitions in Kansas City. [”Over Here,” KCPT (PBS) television program, May 28, 5:30 PM.] During the Red Alert against a possible Al Quaida attack on British Airways overseas flights, Mayor Michael Blomberg announced that the New York Police Department had a special Hercules Team working on the crisis. [”The News Hour with Jim Leher,” National Public Television (KCPT broadcast), August 10, 2006.] No doubt there are many examples of secular and commercial uses I’ve not explored.

The field of entertainment has kept Hercules in the minds of most of the general public. Since 1959 there have been seven Hercules movies** (one of them Disney animation; see concluding note **below). The TV series “Hercules: The Legendary Journeys” was one of the top rated weekly series in syndication beginning in 1994. [Marin, Rick, “A Caring Demigod Kicks Butt,” in “Newsweek,” June 5, 1995, p. 65.] For all I know these may be playing endlessly somewhere on cable television.

It is to be expected that Hercules will show up soon in our 21rst century, and if you see him please keep me informed!

*        *        *        *        *


Dear Patient Reader, This paper has been concerned primarily with Heruclean imagery through the centuries, but for those interested in further exploration of literary parallels I recommend Galinsky, G. Karl, “The Herakles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the 20th Century,” Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Totowa, New Jersey 1972.
I appreciate any comments you care to make! (913) 262-8501

For some information about other mythological subjects in NAMA’s collection see Pentecost, “The Classical Tradition Tour,” June 1988, and “Supplement to the Classical Tradition Tour,” January 1996.

* * * * *

GALLERY P16, continued

CASTIGLIONE, “Vanitas” c. 1647-49, (F61-69). The painting is signed at the lower right but it is extensively abraded. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 290.] The artist was the leading painter of Genoa in the 17th century. [2005 label] “Castiglione was one of the most original artists in 17th century Italy. Most of his subject matter is unique for that time.... he was also a master draftsman.” [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 288] Born in Genoa he studied briefly with Van Dyck when that master was there. He was influenced by Poussin, Rubens, and Rembrandt. He is also remembered for his artistic innovations: the development of a manner of drawing with thin oil washes, and the invention of the monotype, a unique print made by painting directly on a copper printing plate. [Churchman, docent handbook.]

“Vanitas” was painted when the artist was in Rome in the late 1640s. [Rowlands, op.cit, p.290] It is one of the artist’s outstanding works, and was engraved twice during the 18th century. [Chuchman, docent handbook} It is also one of the artist’s most complex works and was meant to be carefully read and talked about by its viewers. As with much 17th century art, it delivers a moral lesson. It is a type of didactic painting popular in the 17th century called a “Memento Mori” (Latin, reminder of death) and/or “Vanitas.” (Latin, emptiness, worthlessness). The scriptural basis for the latter is Ecclesiastes 1:2 “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity,” which is repeated in Ecclesiastes 12: 8.

Almost centering the composition is a large stone urn on a pedestal. In antiquity the urn frequently was used as a container for the cremated remains of the dead. A skeleton and the word “Vanitas” are carved in relief on the stonework that supports the urn. The abundant objects heaped on the ground around it, and the activities of the persons shown are ephemeral, transient, and worthless in the face of death which will come to all of us. Heaped up are arms and armor, a sculptured head of Apollo representing man’s higher instincts, the tools of painting, a drama mask, and scientific instruments. (compasses, dividers, theodolite - a surveying instrument with a compass at center - and T-square, armillary sphere and terrestrial globe.) Among the musical instruments are a lute played by a standing boy, a type of cornet played by a turbaned bearded man, and a soprano recorder held by the satyr at the right.. On the ground rest a natural trumpet, small hunting horn, cittern, violoncello, and an overturned lute or mandolin. Flowers languish in a tipped over vase. Among them are daisies, hollyhocks, narcissi, peonies, roses, tulips, and white lilies. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 289-293] Flowers were a frequent symbol for the fragile and short life of mankind. Once cut they soon wither and die. [See below, Van Huysum in the Dutch Gallery P17 for “Memento Mori” flower symbolism.]

The ideal life of a man who would be invested in these pleasurable leisure activities included the favorite male pass time of hunting (dead animals). And then there is the serious noble occupation of warfare for his superiors, through which one can gain fame and fortune (note armor pieces). All these endeavors are worthless.
Castiglione and Poussin were in Rome at the same time, and the former was influenced by the success of the latter’s many Bacchic revels. The many Bacchic elements in this work represent sensuous pleasures. At the top right is a satyr, one of the god’s followers and a symbol of lust. Over his shoulder grows the god’s grape vine, and this had lascivious connotations in Renaissance portrait imagery. The central Bacchante wears a myrtle wreath and the same plant with delicate white flowers is at her feet. It was a plant sacred both to Venus, goddess of sexuality, and Bacchus. These gods were the parents of Priapus. His herm-form statue is in the left background.

“Vanitas” was owned by a French family that sold it to English aristocracy in the 18th century where upon it was inherited by various relatives until passing by inheritance to Edwina Ashley who in 1922 married Louis, Earl of Mountbatten of Burma. It hung at their estate Broadlands until 1951. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 296.]

CAVALLINO, “Europa and the Bull,” c. 1645 (3l-50). Little is known of this Neapolitan painter’s career because he worked primarily in small scale and his paintings were intended for private patronage. His career was short lived. He died during the great Neopolitan plague of 1656. [Churchman, docent handbook] He was a remarkably gifted painter. His quiet, almost subdued exaltation of feminine beauty explains why such pictures were coveted by cultivated patrons. [1993 label] He did know the works of Artemesia Gentileschi and appears to have collaborated with her. [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 281,282] Caravaggio, Van Dyck and Titian influenced his style. [Osborne, “The Oxford companion to the Arts,” op.cit., p. 212] The Baroque interest in the play of Caravagesque light is evident.

The artist made a number of poetical works in the 1640s and painted the subject of Europa at least 3 times. [1993 label] His treatment of the story is refined and elegant, and his colors rich. [1989 label] The ancient poet Ovid, a popular source for painters, tells of the princess Europa, daughter of the King of Phoenicia, who went to play on the beach with her companions. Zeus saw them, fell in love with Europa and appeared in the form of a gentle white bull. The girls garlanded him with flowers. When Europa climbed on his back for a ride, Zeus leapt with her into the sea, carrying her against her will to the isle of Crete where he seduced her. There she became the mother of the judges of the underworld, and established the Creten royal line. [Metamorphoses,
Originally the artist had planned something else for this canvas, but changed his mind and painted out the head of a figure which is now slowly reappearing as a “pentimento” between Europa’s and her attendant’s heads. The two coarser background figures at the left were painted by an assistant. [Rowlands, op.cit.]

**MAGNASCO**, “Campfire Scene with Vagabond and Musketeer,” c. 1715 (33-485) Wealthy patrons were curious about lives of the dispossessed. [2006 label] Magnasco painted lowlife vagabond and military themes often. Constant European wars kept vagabonds and soldiers in public view. This paralleled literary taste of the time. “By the early 18th century the rootless and dispossessed had also become a favorite subject in literature.” Encampment scenes occur regularly in such writing, “And one of the recurring props in these tales was the military drum set up as a table on which to play cards or dice - or dine.” [Rowlands, NAMA Italian Paintings, op.cit, p. 346.] The painting shows a seated vagabond smoking a long pipe and a musketeer with a drum upright in between them. It is serving as a makeshift table for the musketeer’s steaming hot meal. Around them are strewn the implements of a military encampment: armor, another drum, shield, rifle, and makeshift tents. [Ibid.]

The Genoese painter’s style was unique in his day, with its figures abstracted by slashing dabs of paint, and flickering light. His vigorous style had some influence on Guardi’s work. [Oxborne, Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 680. Compare this brushwork to Guardi’s in the latter’s small Venetian scene in Gallery P19.] Appreciated by some connoisseurs in his time, after Mascagno’s death he was quickly forgotten. The small scaled works remained in private collections, and were largely unseen by the public. In addition, his virtuoso brushwork made his subjects hard to read. Taste had changed and his lowlife subjects were deemed unappealing. However, in the early 20th century he was rediscovered with the modern interest in brushwork, expressionism, and abstraction. His and El Greco’s unusual styles enjoyed a great vogue with American museums and collectors. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 345.]

**GENRE PAINTING and BAMBOCIATTE PAINTING**

In the 18th century the French coined the word GENRE, and began to identify works in this category of subject matter which is everyday life. This type of work began to flourish in Italy and almost simultaneously in the Lowlands, but mostly in Italy in the early 17th century. Our collection has no early Italian genre paintings. Magnasco’s painting is early 18th century, the same time as Ricci’s “Marriage at Cana.” Ricci’s front figures and dog are genre types although his is a history painting. [Curator Roger Ward, “Genre, Manners and Morals,” Docent lecture, Jan. 31, 2001. Also included in this lecture on NAMA’s genre works were our Brughel the Younger, Vinckeboon, Steen, Van Mieris, Pater, De Troy, Lirotard, Vigee-LeBrun, Greuze, Aubry, Traversi, Daumier, and Monet’s “Boulevard....”]

**BAMBOCIATTE PAINTING:** Magnasco’s type of genre is in the tradition of the Bamboccianti painters, mainly Flemish and Dutch artists based in Rome in the 17th century. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 346.] The word “bambocciate” meaning small scenes of lowlife and peasants was taken from the nickname of Dutch artist Pieter van Laer, called Il Bamboccio (“Large Baby”) because of his malformed body. While in Rome c. 1625-27 he painted small
pictures of low life, and his nickname became the word designating this type of small picture with its subjects of the low rungs of society, a genre popular in the Netherlands and Italy. The second half of the 1640s was one of the liveliest periods in the history of Bambocciate. Dilapidated ruins and modest domestic architecture are sometimes integrated into these scenes.

Because these painters depicted the lower classes sometimes in humorous or even grotesque ways, court critics and the leading painters of the classicist-idealistic school condemned them as indecorous and ridiculous. Salvator Rosa disliked them commenting on these paintings of “baggy pants, beggars in rags, and abject filthy things.”


**MAGNASCO.** “Elijah Visited by an Angel,” c. 1730 (F88-8) This painting is about 15 years later in the artist’s career. [See above.] It has been proposed that Magnasco took up landscape around 1725, although as background for other subject matter. He also studied Tintoretto’s works in Venice. The elongated figure types characteristic of this period in his career, recall those of the Venetian master. He painted a number of works showing eremitic holy persons with an angel, and it is believed these were done for private collectors rather than for church or monastery settings. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 371.] The subject is from III Kings 19:1-6. The prophet Elijah firmly resisted the cult of Baal, brought into Israel by Queen Jezebel and her Israelite husband King Ahab. This brought on him their wrath. For safety the elderly prophet fled to the wilderness, and there rests exhausted and utterly dejected awaiting death. He has not yet noticed the appearance of an angel who will miraculously produce a hearth cake and water for his survival. [Ibid., p. 368.] The angel sustained him in the wilderness for 40 days. Jezebel is eventually defeated, pushed out of a window, trampled by horses, and eaten by dogs. After other deeds Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot.

**RICCI,** “The Marriage Feast at Cana,”’ 1712/15 (59-2). Trained in Venice, Ricci was heavily influenced by Veronese (c. 1528-88), an important Renaissance artist who did much work there of opulence and beauty which appealed to both Baroque and Rococo tastes. Ricci worked successfully in Italy, England, Germany, and France before returning to Venice.

He had an untidy private life commented on by his contemporaries, and he was thought of as “a young man with an unstable mind.” He also was considered a glutton. He was jailed twice, in Venice and then Bologna, for seducing virgins, one of whom he tried to poison when she became pregnant. One jail sentence included an execution sentence, but high patronage (including the Duke of Parma) obtained his releases. Eventually he married the mistress of a deceased patron. [Rowlands, “Italian Paintings” p336. Also children’s tour “Tales They have to Tell,” NAMA Education Dept. 2005, and Turner, Jane, “The Dictionary of Art, Grove, MacMillan Publishers, New York 1996, Vol. 26, p. 320. Whatever character flaws he had, he seems to have been a great success with patrons.
In the Veronese tradition Ricci shows how impressive religious subjects could be secularized in a grand palatial setting. [Rowlands, op.cit.] The foreground activities where a servant pours the water as it turns into wine, a child seeking a drink of it, the mother holding on her shoulder a baby that looks at us, and the three boy musicians are genre. [Curator Roger Ward, “Genre, Manners and Morals,” docent lecture, Jan. 31, 2001.] We are meant to hear music. Another group of musicians is on a red draped balcony to the right.

It was the custom at important Renaissance and Baroque festivities to show off the family treasures, so large silver and gold plates and vessels are on exhibit at the right. [Curator Ross Taggart, docent lectures.]

While Ricci worked abroad the “splendor of his settings appealed to the ruling classes whose homes often had similar grandiose exteriors.” [2005 label] He took the Venetian style to half of Europe: Florence, Milan, Bologna, Piacenza, Rome, Vienna, London, Paris. The French made him a member of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture.

So successful was he with commissions in England that he spent 10 years there. [Durant, Will and Ariel, “The Age of Louis XIV,” from series “The Story of Civilization,” Volume VIII, Simon and Schuster, 1963, pp. 433-434.] This painting has always been dated to the period of Ricci’s stay in England, and has a distinguished provenance. Presumably it was painted for the 3rd Earl of Burlington [who was building grand edifices; Curator Kennedy, op.cit.], and passed on by marriage of his daughter into the Duke of Devonshire’s collections until purchased by NAMA through a dealer. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 337-342.]

Christ’s first miracle was to turn water into wine at a wedding in Cana when his mother pointed out to him that there was not enough for the celebration. (John 2:1-11) The tradition of showing the Wedding at Cana as a luxurious event goes back to Veronese whose Biblical banquet scenes feature crowds often in contemporary costume and in elaborate settings of classical architecture.

Wearing a rosy red robe and blue mantle, and with a faint cruciform halo, Christ sits facing us. Mary is either seated to his right, the place of honor, and wearing a gold colored head covering, or she is the central standing woman in the foreground holding a glass of the miraculous wine. Opinions differ. In many of her representations with Jesus she appears young and about Jesus’ age. (e.g. Michelangelo’s Pieta sculpture in St. Peter’s). Being immaculately conceived, sinless, and immortal she is incorruptible and not afflicted by the signs of old age which lead to death.] The man seated on Jesus’ left probably represents St. John the Beloved. (The Gospeler, the Divine). To the left are seated the bride and groom before an impressive golden salt or spice container. The bride holds a fork to her mouth. Behind Christ stands Ricci himself in contemporary dress. His self portraits appear in at least four religious works, probably motivated not by religious piety but by self promotion. [Veronese also put himself into biblical scenes, e.g. the Museum’s “Christ and the Centurian” in the Renaissance collection.]

Prominently placed at the left is a woman with a child on her shoulder whom Ricci has adapted from the Renaissance Venetian painter Tintoretto’s “St. Mark Freeing the Slave” of 1548. [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 340-2.] Ricci’s drawing of this woman is at Windsor Castle. [“Handbook of the Collections,” NAMA, 4th edition, 1959, p. 73.]

Ricci has crisp, lively brushwork. [Curator Ian Kennedy, reinstallation lecture, 2006.] The light rakes in from the upper left as in so many Baroque paintings but is not exaggerated as in works by the Caravaggisti. The style is that of the Renaissance painter Veronese who died in
1588, more than a century earlier than this work. The Veronese-Ricci tradition of pretty and wealthy people enjoying themselves will influence French 18th century Rococo art. Ricci has been called a harbinger of the Rococo. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 337.]

[Docent Kathy Rosser has called my attention to the details of the women in the upper right windows. Curiously one sits on the windowsill with her backside to the festivities and the miracle occurring below. Thanks, Kathy!]

**ROSA**, “Mercury, Argus, and Io,” 1653-4 (32-192/1). Born near Naples, Rosa studied there and one of his teachers was Ribera. [The latter’s “St. Lawrence” is in Gallery P15.] Rosa traveled throughout Italy and his works were widely admired. Among his patrons were the Duke of Modena and the Medici family, but he turned down invitations to paint for Queen Christina of Sweden and King Louis XIV of France. In his own time he was lauded as one of the greatest landscape painters of the day alongside his contemporary in Rome, the French landscapist Claude. He has kept this stature. Gradually his landscapes became darker and more storm tossed. His influence on 18th century landscape painting and thereafter was profound. [Rowlands, op.cit., pp.307-9] “Rosa was lionized in the 18th century for his vast panoramas wherein mankind, trivial and doomed, seems ominously dominated by the sheer ruggedness of nature.” [Curator Roger Ward, “Durer to Matisse: Master Drawings from the NAMA, AMA, Kansas City, Mo. 1996, p. 170.] He is as famous for his rugged wild landscapes as Claude is for his quiet and idealistic in Arcadian settings. The original owners of this painting, the famous Chigi family of Rome, hung it as a pendant to a calmer Claude scene. [Rowlands, op.cit.]

The British avidly collected both of these painters and re-landscaped areas of their estates to resemble them. [Curator Ian Kennedy, reinstallation lecture 2006] These painters both influenced landscape and garden design in opposite ways.

Rosa was a fascinating, flamboyant, sophisticated 17th century personality. In his day he was also known as a poet, a popular actor, and musician. Like Bernini, he wrote comic plays which he stage managed himself, paid for the production, painted the decor, and sometimes took part in as an actor. [Stolpe, Sven, “Christina of Sweden,” The Macmillan Co., New York, 1966, p..280.] One of his literary works of 1639 satirized his famous Roman contemporary, the sculptor and architect Bernini which made the latter a powerful enemy. It caused such controversy that Rosa left Rome to work for the Medici in Florence where he also acted. While there his own home became the center of a literary, musical, and artistic circle. He stayed away from Rome for ten years. [”Rosa” in “Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 2001 CD.”]

A good self publicist, he placed his paintings in the annual Pantheon portico exhibition to celebrate the feast day of St. Joseph on March 19. The occasion was to pay homage to the saint, but it provided great exposure for an artist whose unsold works were mixed among works by older masters lent for the occasion by the great Roman families. Admission of an artist’s work to the show was juried, but the subjects usually didn’t have to be religious. It was a great opportunity to increase one’s reputation. Pictures were not sold on the spot. Would-be buyers had to wait for the artist to take his canvas home before they made an offer. Several other Roman churches had similar exhibitions throughout the year. Now all of the Roman public was able to take an interest in art.

Rosa hated to work on commission and kept a studio full of finished pictures to show and sell. He asserted the painter’s right to artistic independence, refusing to take any advance deposits.
He said it was because he wouldn’t “enslave his will” by committing himself to a project when something more interesting might come up. “I do not paint to enrich myself but purely for my own satisfaction. I must allow myself to be carried away by transports of enthusiasm and use my brushes only when I feel myself rapt...” A price wouldn’t be set until the picture was finished to his satisfaction. This unusual attitude was not followed by his 17th century peers and was to be appreciated only by the 19th century Romantics. [Haskell, Francis, “Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque,” revised, enlarged, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1980, pp. 126-130, 15, 22-23.]

The myth of Io was popular in 17th century painting. She was the a princess and a priestess of Hera whom Jupiter seduced by embracing her in the form of a great enveloping cloud The god then tried to hide Io from Hera by transforming the girl into a lovely white heifer. His wife Hera suspected what was going on, and demanded the cow as a gift. She then set her vigilant friend Argus to guard the heifer since his 100 eyes never slept at the same time. Longing for Io, Jupiter sent Mercury to kill Argus and free his inamorata which Mercury did by charming Argus to sleep with his music. All the eyes closed in sleep and Mercury cut off his head. Grieving, Juno collected the eyes and as a memento to Argus put them in the tail of her bird, the peacock. [The story was variously told by a number of ancient authors, but particularly a source book for artists was Ovid’s “Metamorphoses,” which has been called the Bible of painters. Bk 1, lines 590-750] Jealous Hera then sent a monstrous gadfly to torture Io so that the frantic heifer fled around the known world including the Ionian Sea which was named for her. In Egypt she found refuge and returned to her natural form. Ancient authors identified her with the conflated Egyptian goddesses Hathor and Isis. Io and Jupiter were ancestors of the Egyptian and other royal house lines including that of Hercules, according to Greek writers. [Different ancient poets vary on incidents in the story and the number of Argus’ eyes. It is curious that I have never seen a 17th century representation of Argus with more than two. Perhaps a multi eyed monstrosity did not fit in with the notion of Baroque decorum. What do you think?]

Rosa introduced drama into landscape, and his formula which would be called “romantic” landscape would have a great influence. [Bazin, Germain, “Baroque and Rococo,”, Frederick A Praeger, publishers, New York, Thames and Hudson, Great Britain 1964, p.45] His wild and desolate mountains with brooding storm clouds sold well, but he longed to be a great “history” painter. By assigning classical names to the figures in this painting, rather than leaving them as cowherds, he has elevated the work’s status from the lowly category of landscape and/or genre to the top rank which was history painting. The myth here carries no profound or complex message. It “dressed up” what was otherwise a simple landscape painting. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 310.] Question: How much work did it take Rosa to make this painting tell us about a popular Greek myth, instead of it being a remote country scene with cattle and lowly cowherds? Just the wings on Mercury’s hat.

This particular work has been admired throughout its existence. It was among the chief treasures of its original owners, the Chigi family of Rome. It hung in their palace, and was mentioned in guidebooks to Rome. It inspired several copies and a print. The print indicates that the right edge of the painting originally extended a bit further to the right, showing more trees, so the canvas has been cut down on that side. [Rowlands, op.cit, pp. 312-314.] This is another example of a painting that has been “formatized” to suit a patron’s interior design ensemble. [For FORMATIZED PAINTINGS see Terbrugghen in Gallery P15 above.]
It’s very interesting to know that Rosa originated the frequently repeated motif in landscape painting of the up-front lightning blasted tree. [Curators Jan Schall and Deborah Emont Scott in conservation with Pentecost, March 24, 2006.] This long lasting tradition can be seen in Boucher’s 18th century landscape in the French collection, and in Thomas Cole’s 19th century landscape in the American collection.

MOUNTAINS IN ART

I want to try and take you in to the mind of a viewer of this painting 350 years ago. A murder is about to take place. Argus’ red robe will soon be saturated with his blood of that color. The remoteness of the area, the mountains, the stormy dark sky, the dying and lightning blasted trees intensify the mood of imminent disaster. Rosa painted this to be a scary picture!

Today our mountains have been tamed by superhighways, railroads, and air transportation. We think of them as pleasurable vacation spots, away from the crowded dirty, noisy activities of our urban lives. We idealize them as safe havens that preserve interesting vanishing species and lovely vistas untouched by signs of civilization. This was not so in the 17th century.

At that time people looked on mountains with a very different attitude in mind - horror and terror. Except for a few holy retreats, they were godless wastelands filled with brigands, witches, ghosts, wild hairy men descended from ancient satyrs, and monsters, and particularly dragons. In the 1600s there were lists of dragon sightings. Important Roman families and popes collected dragon bones and exhibited them. [Kircher, Athanasius, “Mundus subterraneus, in XII libros digestus,” 1678, Liber VIII, Caput II, Sectio IV, pp. 94-108, facsimile reprint Arnaldo Forni Editore, Bologna, 2004.] Earlier in the 16th century, mountains were called things like “Accursed” or “Unapproachable” and were a source of terror and superstition. Some of the travelers who had to use the dangerous passes were carried bundled up in furs and blankets, tied into litters carried by teams of porters, and blindfolded since the scenery was considered so overwhelmingly awful. The mountain upper reaches were by all accounts home to a race of malformed and malevolent sub-humans. [Fleming, Fergus, “Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps,” Atlantic Monthly Press, New York 2000, pp. vi, 4-6, 24.] Intrepid literary English travelers on the Grand Tour described them as “Strange...horrid...fearful...”(John Evelyn, 1645), and “shuddering at this most misshapen scenery...so rash an undertaking” (Joseph Addison, 1701), and “horridly grand” (Boswell, 1765). [Trease, Geoffrey, “The Grand Tour,” Holt, Rinehart and winston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco 1967, pp. 110, 134, 172.]

Even in the 18th century Age of Reason and Enlightenment, it was believed that demons, witches, hairy men and other subhumans lived there. In the 18th century a respected scientist quite seriously enumerated the different species of dragons to be found in the Alps. [Fleming, op.cit.]

In the 18th century Grand Tour travelers began to show a change in attitude. In 1741 two Britons started a trend for English climbing and exploring, using the adjectives “Delicious” and “Terrible” for what they saw. The enormously influential Rousseau, the apostle of noble savagery, started a craze for rugged scenery. His 1761 novel “La Nouvelle Heloise” described the emotional impact of the Alps, their magic and supernatural quality that is entrancing to the senses. This set off a wave of tourists but they were mostly lookers, not climbers. In the last half of the 18th century a number of serious scientists made serious ascents carrying out experiments and documenting their findings. Removed from crowded urban life, the air was considered clean and a boon for health. Tourism and health spas flourished in the valley resorts and lower reaches,
attracting European nobility and hoards of British aristocrats. The English Romantic poet William Wordsworth found mountains “sublime” and “beautiful.” In 1790 he and a friend spent a Cambridge vacation walking in Switzerland. [Treas, op.cit., p. 183] Shelley’s first view of Chamonix roused him to “a sentiment of ecstatic wonder not unallied to madness.” His friend Byron was similarly moved by “the majesty, the power, and the glory, around, above, and beneath me.” These English Romantic poets - the rock stars of their day - created a wave of enthusiasm for mountains. The English painter Turner produced 400 sketches of the Alps from which he developed vibrant paintings. Later in the 19th century, “Ruskin’s writings eroded the belief that mountain areas could be areas of horror, ugliness, and danger.” He wrote of the spiritual element he found, inspiring people “to think of mountains in semi-religious, transcendent terms.” [Fleming, op.cit., p. 144.] Mountains were now meant to be marveled at, as God’s creation that was still in its pristine state. Britons began to climb mountains at a prodigious rate. Led by them, mountaineering became a sport. [Ibid, 170.]

Today many of us share the Ruskinian attitude towards mountains, but in the centuries before it was very different. However, whether threatening and scary or sublime and beautiful, Rosa’s mountain paintings have kept in fashion. [The Landscape and the Mountains Tours contrast European and American attitudes towards mountains with the Chinese and Japanese attitudes which have more benign religious and philosophic associations.]

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**MAZZONI** “The Sacrifice of Jephthah’s Daughter,” 1655-60 (F61-64) A highly individualistic artist with a theatrical and operatic style, he worked mainly in Florence and Venice. Rushing, writhing figures in elaborate architectural settings can be found in his other paintings. He used exaggerated contraposto to relay emotion. The roundness of his forms as well as his fine brushwork have been noted. His luxurious architecture recalls Veronese. Like Veronese, it is presumed he had a hand in set decorations, a frequent sideline of 17th century painters in Venice which was rich in theatrical entertainment. It is also thought that he dabbled in the field of architecture. A writer of sonnets, he wrote a volume in 1665 comparing the merits of Florentine versus Venetian painting. A contemporary described him as “extremely odd, proud, and contemptuous.” Mazzoni stated “I am poet and painter and [so] doubly mad.” [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 318-319]

The subject is from Judges 11:30-40. When the Ammonites were at war with the Israelites, the latter beseeched the great warrior Jephthah to lead them in battle. He acquiesced and on the eve of battle vowed that, if victorious, he would offer as a holocaust sacrifice to the Lord whatsoever should first come forth from the doors of his house to meet him when he returned in peace from the battle. The first thing he encountered was his daughter and only child who came out dancing in celebration to honor him. He rent his clothes in grief, but she insisted on his vow being fulfilled. [I find it curious that the name of this heroic girl isn’t even mentioned.]

The scene is filled with Baroque drama and movement which is caught in arrested action like a quick snap-shot.. Baroque light spills from the high left into the temple to illuminate the central protagonists. Against the serene static classical setting which is stage-like, the other people twist and turn in agitated motion and suffering. This is Baroque emotion at its height. Another Baroque characteristic is the cropping of figures at both right and left edges which increases the
feeling of mass and movement. At the left of the sacrificial altar stands Jephtha in an exaggerated contraposto stance, his eyes rolled pleadingly towards heaven. On the right of the altar stands his daughter, head cast down in virginal modesty and resignation. Behind the altar is the high priest. [In European painting priests of the Jerusalem Temple often are so indicated by wearing hats resembling Christian bishops’ mitres.] One imagines the cries and anguished protests of the writhing crowd, some of them on the ground, and what might be shouted by the man rushing in from the right..

This subject was regularly depicted by 17th century painters and plays were written about it. It also was musically commemorated in one of the century’s greatest oratorios by the Roman composer Giacomo Carissimi sometime before 1646. Although the specific commission of the painting is unknown, Old Testament themes were especially popular in Venice, and history paintings of this size frequently decorated the reception rooms of Venetian patricians. The theme of human sacrifice in the 17th century, whether Judeo-Christian or pagan (e.g. Iphigenia, Polyxena, also virgins) was a favorite of the age, “for it satisfied the century’s love of melodrama while alluding to the responsibilities of power.” [Rowland, op. cit, p. 320, quoting Haskell, “Patrons and Painters,” op.cit, p. 256. ] I am puzzled by the placement of a single fluted larger orange column at the right. Any explanation?

COBAERT, attributed to, “St. Matthew and his Angel” and “St. Mark and his Lion,” early 17th century, Flemish, bronze (69-42/1,2) Each small figure is depicted with books representing their scriptures. Probably there were two more depicting Luke and John. These are two smaller versions of the sculptor’s series of the four gospellers for the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome. [2005 label] The small scale indicates they were designed for a private collection although sometimes bronzes of this scale adorned complex altarpieces in Northern chapels. [old label during Curator Roger Ward’s tenure] Note the Baroque interest in light in its play over the convoluted drapery.

DUTCH ART. How different are the paintings in this gallery from those above that were made mostly in Italy. Now we deal with works made north of the Alps in Holland. Dutch art reflects the major changes there that have taken place in religion, government, politics, economy, and society. The Netherlands of Europe (the low lands) split in a great revolution (against Spain) into Holland and Flanders. Flanders which was Rubens’ homeland, is where the modern country of Belgium is today. It remained Roman Catholic and under Spanish rule.

The new Dutch Republic was unique. It was the first truly tolerant nation in Europe. Refugees from all over lived there. Ideas were freely exchanged, flourished, and science blossomed. [”The Day the Universe Changed,” PBS, Nov. 1986] “Protestant Holland practiced the widest religious toleration in Europe of that day.” The English Puritans settled there, and so did thousands of French Huguenots when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes. The city of Utrecht was allowed to remain mostly Catholic. Many persecuted Jews found refuge in Holland. Dutch newspapers were read throughout western Europe because they were known to speak freely. Elsewhere the press was controlled by church and state. “The watery, flat, tiny country emerged as the center of European banking and commerce and as the nexus of a colonial empire that extended from Indonesia to Brazil.” [Stapen, Nancy, “Country Fare: Masters of 17th Century
Dutch Landscape Painting,” in “Art News”, Vol. 87, no. 6, summer 1988, p. 152.]

In 17th century Holland art was quite affordable. Even humble farmers had paintings or at least prints. [Curator Eliot Rowlands, “Dutch Painting,” docent lecture, Sept. 10, 1990.] Art was now sold on the largest open art market in Europe. Without specific advance commissions as was common in the past and elsewhere, artists now increasingly had to decide on their own the subjects they thought would sell well when displayed to the public.

For the first time there was an entire society devoted to middle class capitalism. In this culture of consumerism the middle class wanted “pictures of THEMselves, of THEIR homes, THEIR cattle, THEIR ships, THEIR farms. There was an extraordinary boom in portraiture.” [Curator Roger Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Painting,” docent lecture, fall 1982.] The cost of art was low and there was plenty of it, so many artists had to work at painting part-time with more secure employment in other fields. Many painters tended to specialize in one type of subject matter such as landscape, still life, flowers, portraiture, genre - or even cows. [For COW subject see Ruysdael below.]

During the 17th century, Holland’s “Golden Age,” this small nation became one of the most advanced countries in Europe in its science, foreign trade, and freedom of thought. Remember that our Pilgrim Fathers, religious refugees from English church oppression, went to Holland first! However, for all of its liberties compared to the rest of Europe, Holland was the biggest European slave trader in the 17th century. The British would surpass them in the 18th century.

There was no one authority or all powerful church to dictate art’s style and content, so subject matter was much more varied. Note there are no devotionally religious pictures in this gallery. The Dutch were mostly Protestant and many followers were against religious imagery in churches. Of course there was some religious art. Rembrandt often chose subject matter from the Bible. [See his famous “100 Guelder Print” of Christ healing the sick which sometimes is on exhibition.] Many artists were active in Utrecht which remained a Catholic city, and where religious commissions continued.

**VAN VLIET.** “New Church at Delft,” c. 1660-70 (70-17). This church interior may look like a religious painting but isn’t. It lacks a theological message. It’s a patriotic painting and also a “Memento Mori.” A native of Delft, the artist spent the first part of his career as a portraitist, but then turned almost exclusively to the subject of Delft churches. Particularly he focused on the interiors of the “Old” Church and the “New” Church. In this Gothic interior Van Vliet’s interest in light is a Baroque characteristic.

The “New” Church was the second one to be built in Delft, therefore its name. Its origins go back to the 14th century when it was of wood. A stone Gothic replacement begin to rise in 1420. During the Protestant iconoclasm of 1566 nearly all the religious imagery was destroyed, and in 1572 it was taken over by the Dutch Reformed Church. Calvinism was now ascendant. The austere interior has been stripped of its religious imagery, and the stained glass windows replaced with plain glass. [Docent Janice Stuerzl, “The New Church at Delft.” Thanks, Janice!]

The only decorations are the emblems of the guilds, corporations and families who support the church [Churchman, Docent Handbook] and the elaborate tomb of William the Silent, Founding Father of the Dutch republic. In the 17th century this was the most painted interior in Holland because of his burial there. In the newly established nation, this painting subject sold well. The ornately Baroque stone and gilt bronze tomb has a number of allegorical statues. The
personification of “Liberty” can be seen. There are two statues of William partially visible. The recumbent dead representation is of white marble. Seated at its head but with his back to the corpse is the gilt bronze live representation. [Ibid.] The elaborate tomb was probably the most venerated monument of its time in Holland. [1993 label]

The painting is a patriotic political statement of admiration for the great leader who died leading his people to independence from Spanish rule. Delft was William’s headquarters during much of the war, and he was assassinated there by an agent of Spain in 1584. King Phillip II had offered a reward of 25,000 ecus and a title of nobility to anyone who killed him. Holland’s rulers are still buried in this church, along with other Dutch notables. The royal burial vaults are behind and beneath the monument. [Stuerzl, op.cit.] The people in the painting can be thought of as patriotic pilgrims coming to see William’s tomb, rather than worshipers.

**MEMENTO MORI:** 17th century paintings are often filled with silent messages if we know how to read them. In the foreground of the painting paving stones have been removed for a new grave, but are not yet replaced which reminds the viewer that death comes to all of us as it did for the nation’s hero. The broom reminds viewers that we all will come to dust and will be swept away by death. [”For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Genesis 3: 19] The message is that we should prepare ourselves for it and live accordingly. This type of subject matter is called a “Memento Mori,” a reminder that death is coming. [Other “Memento Mori” paintings in the collection are those by Mabuse, Castiglione, and Steen.]

The presence of dogs reflects a current problem churches had. The animals often strayed inside and dirtied the interiors. Other artists’ paintings of this church’s interior show dogs lifting their legs on the pillars. The strays were such constant nuisances that, to rid them from houses of worship, some churches had the staff position of “hondenslager.” (dog slugger) [Ibid. Thanks, Janice!]

**LANDSCAPE:** Before the 17th century landscape was a backdrop for figures in the foreground, and the viewer was to focus on the actions of the latter and not on the background scenery. Dutch painters made the landscape the subject. The Dutch created “the landscape of fact,” although of course some are “ideal” with imaginary components. Landscapes now are seen for themselves and are often actual places. In 17th century Holland “proliferating mercantile wealth paved the way for the unprecedented phenomenon of a vigorous middle-class art market whose most favored genre was landscape...The number of landscapes produced is staggering.”

The land was newly won, from the Spanish oppressors and from the encroaching sea. [Stapen, op.cit, p. 152] It has been said that Dutch landscape is a bourgeois art form of political and philosophical motivation. It portrays the recognizable country which the Dutch had fought so hard to liberate from both Spanish tyranny and the constant dangers of the invasive sea. Their war for independence from Spain (very bloody and filled with ghastly atrocities on both sides) lasted more than half a century, and their massive engineering projects to control water were unending. There was a patriotic admiration of the dearly won land. In addition Nature, God’s creation, was seen as a reflection of God’s power, and there were literary parallels as well. [Haak, Bob, “The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the 17th Century,” Harry N. Abrams Publishers, New York, 1984 trans. E. Willems-Treeman, pp. 136ff]
RUYSDAEL, Salomon van, “Landscape with a Ferry,” 1644 (F61-72). The painting is signed and dated on the ferry. The artist was “among the best known and most prolific of Dutch landscape painters.” [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 1028.] His diagonal compositions feature Dutch waterways, [Ibid.] reminding us of the nation’s massive water control projects including a complex network of waterways for inland transport. Many canals were built in this period, but bridges were rare and ferry boats necessary. [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture, Jan. 10, 2006. 2005 label]

The canvases of Salomon and his nephew Jacob van Ruisdael [spelling sic] “are suffused with evanescent green, brown, or silvery tones.” They are “tonal landscapists.” [Stapen, Nancy, “Country Fare,” in “Art News,” Vol. 87, No. 6, Summer 1988, p. 152, p. 152] “His (Salomon’s) palette was almost monochromatic, and the skies he depicted were always overcast with delicate tonal harmonies - subtly modulated shades of grey, cool greens or yellows.” [Churchman, docent handbook] His “sweeping natural vistas and restrained coloring [were] of major interest to European masters of the 18th and 19th centuries. Fragonard, Constable, and Turner as well as the Impressionists must have been inspired by the Dutch master’s command of shimmering surfaces, reflections, and atmosphere.” [1989 and 1993 labels] The original coloration of the painting was more green. Old Dutch works tend to “brown out.” [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture Jan. 10, 2006.]

“In any Dutch landscape virtually two-thirds of the composition is sky,” claimed Stapen [Ibid., p. 153], but this is dramatic overstatement. The sky here is less than half the picture plane. The composition is strongly diagonal. Note the small details that enliven the picture. A variety of people populate the ferry boat and shore. On the left bank bloom two yellow irises. Behind them in the background is a religious building, and in the mid ground at the ferry crossing is another. The latter has been identified as the village church in Wassenaar, now a suburb of the Hague. [Churchman, docent handbook] Storks have nested on top of it. Waterfowl paddle in the water, and on the bank is a cattle herder with his dog. Two of his charges are copulating. !

COW ART: Ruysdael was not a cow specialist but some painters were. Dutch art has traditionally expressed a genuine interest in rural domestic animals The people had a special affection and admiration for cows, and many artists painted them.. By the 1650s this had become a theme of its own in art, the many works ranging in mood from Italianate pastoral to commonplace realism. Karel van Mander, the first art theorist to give attention to these cow depictions, said “their round, full flanks make you happy just to see them.”

In many paintings and in allegorical literature of the time the cow signifies Dutch prosperity, natural abundance, and the bounty of the earth. A Dutch text in 1604 pronounced that the cow represented Earth. There were allegorical political meanings, too. A painting of an ox attacked by a wolf represented the Dutchman hard-pressed by foreigners. During the struggles for independence a late 16th century propaganda print showed the Netherlands as a cash cow milked by the Duke of Alba, hated leader of the occupying Spanish forces. [Spicer, “ ‘De Koe voor d’aeerde statt’: The Origins of the Dutch Cattle Piece,” in “Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann,” Davaco Publishers, Doornapijk, 1983, pp. 251-256.]
HOBBEMA. “Road in the Woods,” 1670s (31-76) A friend and pupil of Jacob van Ruisdael [nephew to the above Ruysdael] Hobbema lived in Amsterdam. Unfortunately during his own lifetime he had little success as a painter. To maintain his artistic career he had to work in the wine trade for 40 years, and he and his wife died as paupers. [2005 label] By the time of his death in 1709 the demand for his type of landscapes had greatly decreased. Nevertheless he is “one of Holland’s greatest landscape painters. The brooding trees overshadow man and his creations, resulting in a distinctly personal and emotional interpretation of nature.” [1989 label]

Ours is one of the best Hobbema works in the USA. His usual settings are woodland or pastoral, and his paintings are more lush and on a larger scale than those of other Dutch landscapists. [Curator Roger Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Painting,” docent lecture, fall 1982.]


His figures of all ranks, poor to wealthy, enliven the scene. I propose that the man with the special rack carrying many birds is either taking them to market, or they are falcons for hunting game. What do you think?

This is a very early Museum acquisition that was purchased from the famous dealer Lord Duveen. [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture Jan. 10, 2006.]

STILL LIFE: Holland’s booming trade and economics influenced the development of still-life painting. The English term for this category of subject matter comes from the 17th century Dutch word “still-leven” denoting a motionless aspect of nature. [Paradoxically, the French call it “nature morte.”] Before the 17th century this subject matter was largely ignored. It was believed that artists should use their intellectual abilities to paint great ideas, “history paintings,” a category that included mythological and religious subjects. It was felt that still life required no deep thought. In opposition to the aesthetics of his time, Caravaggio said that it took as much skill to paint flowers as it did to paint figures.

It was Dutch middle-class taste that popularized the still life later in the 17th century. [Greer, Germaine, “The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work,” Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 1979, p. 228.] “The Middle class collectors had no use for altarpieces and not much more for vast canvases full of incests, martyrdoms, riots and rapes; a small, exquisite still life or flower piece was much more likely to appeal to the nascent consumer society.” [Ibid.]

Many of the objects shown such as plants, foods, and table accessories have been imported, reflecting Holland’s global reach. She has the greatest mercantile fleet of the century, and her trade ships are going around the world, to Asia, Africa, and the western hemisphere to bring back things new to Europe.
INSTALLATION NOTE: The Ruysch and Huysum flower paintings have been hung on either side of the church interior painting because the church would have had flowers in it. [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture, Jan. 10, 2006.]

**RUYSCH**, Rachel, 1664 - 1750, “Still Life of Exotic Flowers on a Marble Ledge,” c. 1735 (10-1998, Moffet loan) There were many women artists in the Netherlands who concentrated on flower painting, botanical illustration, or flower designs for textile and porcelain manufacturers. [Greer, op. Cit.] This niche seems to have been an acceptable one for women, most of whom had older male artist relatives. In Holland women who painted flowers were eligible for guild membership, and Ruysch became a member of the guild in The Hague. [Ibid., pp. 228, 241, 242]

She is widely believed to be the best woman artist in the history of floral and fruit painting. Her fame was wide reaching during her own lifetime, and 11 contemporary poets paid tribute to her. Her patrons were highly placed, and she was long-lived (86 years), working at least until the age of 83. She was happily married for half a century to the portrait painter Juriaen Pool, and they raised 10 surviving children. Both Ruysch and her husband were appointed court painters to the Elector Palatine.

She was born into a family of wealth and distinction. Her father Frederik Ruysch was a talented amateur artist, a noted collector of natural curiosities, an MD, and an eminent professor of both anatomy and botany at the University of Leyden. [Turner, Jane, Edt., “Dictionary of Art,” Grove, Vol. 27, 1996, p. 454.] He was famous throughout Europe for preserving bodies with chemical injections. Many foreign visitors came to see his collections, advanced laboratories, and to hear him lecture including Peter the Great of Russia. As a botanist he studied many exotic plant specimens to which Rachel had access.

While varying her compositions, she usually uses a soft diffused light from the left. [Greer, op.cit., pp. 242-3.] Here she portrays foreign plants carried by Dutch trading ships to Holland from around the world. The large white flower is datura, known as both the Devil’s Trumpet and the Angel’s Trumpet. It came from India and Peru. It’s powerful hallucinogenic properties also have anesthetic and narcotic effects. It was believed that witches used it. Later it would be carried by some Frenchmen during the Reign of Terror to induce suicide rather than suffer the guillotine. Tricyrtis, a late autumn-blooming flower shaped like an orchid, came from Japan and China. There also can be seen trumpet vine and passion flower from the New World, and cactus from a drier and warmer locale than Holland.

Much of the Dutch interest in foreign plants was fueled by the growth of science and the search for new and better medicines during this period. Plants from all over the world were collected, categorized, and their propagation studied, and new botanical gardens were established. The Dutch East India Company with its access to far eastern ports led to the introduction of many plants into Europe. [For much more of interest see Docent - and Master Gardener - Aletha Simon’s “Background Floral Information for NAMA’s ‘Art in Bloom’ Tour,”, March 2006, in the Tour Office. Thank you, Aletha, for this very timely material!]

**HUYSUM**, Jan, “Vase of Flowers,” c. 1720, oil on panel (32-168). This work is full of Baroque characteristics which carried over into the 18th century: an unknown light source from upper left creating a lively chiascuro among the flower forms, compression and crowding of
form within the frame, amazing 3-D realism, and all-over opulence. The painting “exemplifies Baroque exuberance in the Netherlands.” [“Handbook of the Collections,” NAMA, 4th edition, 1959, p. 100.] [After 1650 the still life in Northern Europe reached its zenith with the development of the ostentatious type known as “pronk” from the Dutch verb pronken, to show off.]

The acute scientific observation by this great floral painter is amazing. Huysum seemingly replicates the stiff waxy surface of tulip petals and the soft silky texture of rose petals. The drops of water seem real. This type of painting that fools the eye into thinking the objects are real and exist in the third dimension is called “trompe l’oeil.” [French: literally “deceive the eye.”] More than 20 of the flowers have been identified as late and double tulips, daffodil, apple blossom, larkspur, mock orange, columbine, peony, poppy, corn poppy, rose, chrysanthemum, African marigold, pickpurse, primula, auricula, double anemone, guelder rose, convolvulvis, gentiana, “gout de sang,” and camomile. [Churcman, docent handbook] In this period Holland was the most advanced European nation in horticulture. [Curator Ian Kennedy, op.cit. Jan. 10, 2006.]

Not all the flowers bloom at the same time. Each summer Huysum traveled from Amsterdam to Haarlem to study new plant specimens. “So conscientious was he in working from the real flower that once he delayed finishing a painting for an entire year because the yellow rose he needed to complete the painting was not yet in bloom....today his methods, in particular how he prepared his pigments, remain a mystery... Perhaps the most memorable aspect of flower painting is its happy marriage of science and art.” [Southgate, Therese M., “The Cover,” (article on a Huysum painting at the Getty) in “Journal of the American Medical Assoc.,” Vol. 263, No. 5, Feb. 2, 1990, p. 641.]

Concerning the foliage color, it may be noted that the yellow pigment he used in making his green colors, is fugitive. Therefore the leaves appear bluer than was originally intended. [1993 label]

Holland developed a passion for tulips. In 1559 they had been introduced to Europe from Turkey by the Austrian ambassador to the court of Suleiman the Magnificent. The flower’s name is probably a misuse of the Persian word for turban. It was a common custom for Turkish men to wear flowers in the folds of their turbans. By the 1630s “tulipomania” gripped Holland, and the bulbs had become units for financial speculation. They were wildly overpriced, and exchanged for vast sums of money and property. Collective investment ventures were formed to buy and sell them. [Docent Aletha Simon, op.cit.] For the sale of tulips that didn’t yet exist, the Dutch invented the future’s commodities marker. On Feb. 3, 1637 the “bubble” broke, the market crashed, and many investors who had mortgaged all their property to buy bulbs, were ruined. The Dutch government stepped in to forbid further speculation in bulbs.

At the height of the craze bulbs producing striped petals were particularly desired. A single Semper Augustus bulb (striped with purple) sold for 6,000 guilders or more, when a small town house could be purchased for 300 guilders. [McClnahan, E. Thomas, “200 Years ago, it was tulips,” KCStar opinion page 8, Jan. 11, 2000.]

A single Viceroy bulb went for 4 tons of butter, 1000 lbs of cheese, 4 fat oxen, 8 pigs, 12 sheep, 2 oxheads of wine, a bed, clothing, a silver beaker, two lasts of wheat, and 4 of rye. Calvinist preachers saw the tulip as a dangerous addition to Vanities and preached against them. [Schama, Simon, “The Embarrassment of Riches.”] It is interesting to think that some of the flower specimens shown in Dutch still lifes cost more than the paintings themselves.
In this Gallery the popular Dutch tulip motif appears on the sides of the ebony chest, and on some of the ceramics on top of it.

Today a flower painting seems purely pleasure to the eye, but in the 17th century “art had a didactic purpose...rather than an aesthetic one...the idea of art for art’s sake had not yet been born and a still life assembled exclusively for pleasure in the objects and the play of light over them was unthinkable.” [Haak, Bob, “The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the 17th Century,” Harry N. Abrams publishers, New York, 1984 trans. E. Willems-Treeman, p. 115] A rose could represent the Virgin’s love for mankind. Or it could indicate earthly as well as heavenly love.

Insects are often featured in floral “Vanitas” paintings. They feed on the plants representing the passage and destruction of time. At the same time they reflect the new scientific interest in entomology. Allegories which we have forgotten to read underlie many Dutch paintings. Going back to the ancient Greeks it had long been understood that the butterfly was a symbol for the soul, since the Greek words for soul and for butterfly sound alike. [psyche]

Certain flowers had symbolic meanings attached to them, and particularly there was a long metaphoric tradition based on Biblical scripture that man was like a flower which soon dies. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.” Job 14: 1-2. “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” Psalm 103: 15-16. “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth...” Isaiah, Chapter 40: 6-7. “For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.” I Peter 1: 24.

Huysum was very successful with an international reputation, and the most important flower painter of his day. Among his patrons was Empress Catherine the Great of Russia. Huysum’s father and three brothers also specialized in flower still life, but he worked on his own. For all of his prosperity he was reclusive and took only one student.

The painting is so amazingly illusionistic that it has been placed under glass to protect it from members of the public who try to touch the water drops.

**COQUES.** “Family Portrait in a Landscape,” 17th century (32-18). [Note that he is Flemish, not Dutch.] The artist did a variety of subjects, but was valued as an outstanding painter of single or group portraits depicting the newly-wealthy merchant class in Flanders. He had a distinguished European clientele, including Charles I of England, Don Juan of Austria, and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, Governor of the Netherlands (the part that remained Catholic and under Hapsburg rule). ["Handbook of the Collections,” NAMA, 4th Edition, 1959, p. 96.]

“The massive architecture and landscape in this painting is typical of settings created by Rubens and Van Dyck. Particularly influenced by the dignity and elegance of the latter’s work, Coques was nicknamed ‘Little Van Dyck.’ ” [Churchman, docent handbook.] The prosperous family members who also might be aristocrats according to the current label, are in an outdoor garden setting with a classically inspired fountain of Neptune, the ancient sea god who was also patron of horses and horse racing. [There’s a somewhat similar Neptune fountain in the Country Club Plaza on 47th Street.] The big stone “Atlas” figures were architectural supports often utilized in the design of Baroque palaces.

One daughter plays a lute which can imply family harmony in this context. [2205 label] The
smallest child sitting on the ground may be a boy since they were kept in skirts a long time. The family has chosen to be shown with an exotic Arab horse (dish faced, luxurious mane, large eyed), a black servant, and a peacock which they must have been proud to have. The father’s stance with arm “akimbo” is fashionable posture for men in the 17th century. [See MEN’S POSTURES under Hals, below.]

The black boy may be either a jockey or groom. Holland was in the slave trade during the 17th century, but there was a free black population, some of its members descended from refugee Moors expelled from Spanish territories. [2005 label] But keep in mind the setting may be in Flanders which had less freedom.

As with plants from many places [see Ruysch above], foreign birds were imported for both study and to be raised for the enjoyment of the wealthy. A garden with aviaries was designed for the court in The Hague in 1622. [Spicer, J. & Orr, L.F., et Al, “Masters of Light: Dutch Painting in Utrecht During the Golden Age,” Museums of San Francisco and the Walters art Gallery, 1997, p. 44.] In spite of their raucous calls, macaws and peacocks served as “ornithological ornaments of elegant domestic life” in Holland. [Liedtke, Walter, et Al, “Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1985, p. 295] Some Netherlandish artists specialized in painting groupings of exotic and domestic birds. The peacock was imported originally from India, Ceylon, and Indo-China. [The macaw was native to Central and South America.]

As with many paintings of the 17th century, intentional symbolism may be here. The peacock was the bird of Juno, the ancient goddess of marriage. Also going back to antiquity, the peacock was a Christian symbol of immortality and of Christ’s Resurrection. St. Augustine said its flesh was incorruptible, and that the shedding followed by the renewal of its plumage each spring made it a symbol of the Resurrection. [Bonafoux, Pascal, “Portraits of the Artist: The Self-Portrait in Painting,” Skira/Rizzoli, p. 985.] The “starred” tail of the peacock associated it with heaven. An educated 17th century viewer would have been able to make these associations, perhaps more so in Roman Catholic Flanders than Protestant Holland..

STEEN, “Jan Steen with the Schouten Family,” c. 1659-60 (67-8). Basically this is what is called a “genre” painting since the subject is everyday life. Genre was a subject that Steen often painted. [Curator Roger Ward, “Genre, Manners and Morals,” Docent lecture, Jan. 31, 2001 See Magnasco in Gallery P16 above, for the early development of genre in Italy.] It was the French in the 18th century who created this category, at a time when the original underlying symbolic or moral meanings of Dutch genre were no longer understood. [Haak, op.cit., p. 85] Admittedly this is “Fancy Dress” genre, rather than low life. The figures are depicted in luxurious surroundings as if they were members of the upper class. [Ward, “Genre...”, op.cit.]

As well as a report on what the Dutch “good life” may have looked like in the 17th century, the painting is obviously a “Memento Mori” due to the victoriously crowned skull and the mantle inscription under it, “Learn to Die.” As in Van Vliet’s church interior (above), the message is that death comes to all of us. The possessions and pleasures of the wealthy are ephemeral. When death comes they are worthless, empty. This painting can also be called a “Vanitas.” (See Castiglione, above in Gallery P16.) The “Vanitas” and “Memento Mori” themes were often the subjects of literature of this time.
Art history - like all history - is under constant revision. Several different titles have been given to this painting. One was “Easy Come, Easy Go,” a moralizing Dutch saying referring to the themes of “Vanitas” and “Memento Mori.” [Goheen, op.cit., p. 62.] Another was “The Van Goyen Family.” [Jaffe, Michael, “The Flemish and Dutch Schools,” in “Apollo,” all NAMA issue, XCVI, December 1972, p.43.] During Curator Ward’s tenure it was labeled “Fantasy Interior with Jan Steen and Jan van Goyen.” He believed that the artist Jan Steen stands before the fireplace, gesturing towards his seated father-in-law Van Goyen, who was also a painter and was Steen’s teacher. Van Goyen was dead when the painting was made. He had been ruined in the 1637 collapse of the tulip market, and died insolvent in 1656, approximately three years before this painting was made. [Ward, “Genre...”, docent lecture, op.cit.] Steen had married Van Goyen’s daughter Margaretha and they had six children. Earlier opinions held that Margaretha is standing at the harpsichord and her sister - or one of her daughters - plays the lute. Their mother, Van Goyen’s wife occupies a chair. Her grandson, Steen and Margaretha’s child, offers his grandmother an exotic lemon. [Curator Peter Bowran, “Baroque Art,” docent lecture, Oct. 1, 1978. Also lectures by Director Ted Coe and Curator Jay Gates.]

Most recently it has been claimed that the seated man is Gerrit Schouten, a brewer from Haarlem. The boy and the lady to whom he offers a lemon are Schouten’s son and daughter. Schouten’s country home is depicted in the tapestry to the right of the open door, and in the painting over the mantel the elephant refers to the name of Schouten’s brewery, “The Elephant.” [Tour Office hand out, May 2006] Steen, the artist, is still believed to be standing in front of the fireplace.

In “fancy dress” genre the good life is identifiable by luxury goods. Depicted here are costly: tapestries much more expensive than paintings. On top of the cupboard are classical statues of baby Bacchus, Venus and Cupid signifying pleasure, love, and physical beauty. Under the influence of Italy, rich northerners now collected ancient art or reproductions of it. Nude statues are now displayed in the living room! [Curator Roger Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Painting,” docent lecture, fall 1982.] In this context they also imply their owner’s refined taste and sophisticated knowledge of the ancient world. Serving as supports for the keyboard instrument are statues of 3 putti and a pipe-playing satyr, also derived from antiquity. We are meant to hear music. Note that the lady behind the keyboard instrument is playing a lute of the bent-neck type. [A similar lute is carved on the foot of the ivory pokal, below.] The seated woman holds an open book of music. At the left is a precious porphyry wine basin. Behind the boy offering a lemon is a Baroque style table imported from Italy. One like it has survived in a museum. [Curator Eliot Rowlands, “Dutch Art,” docent lecture Sept. 16, 1988.]

The women wear magnificent silk textiles. “…the faithful rendering of fabric without which no painter could hope to be a success” was called “stofuitdrukkking.” There were great textile workshops in the lowlands so the Dutch were interested in sumptuous fabric ever since the Burgundian period. [Schama, Simon, “The Dandy Dutch” in “The New Yorker,” march 11, 1999, pp. 94-95.] I wonder whether Steen used a magnifying glass for the minute detailed patterning of the seated lady’s dress. Even the earrings of the women are minutely observed. The science of optics and magnification were studied in Holland. [This was the century when Leeuwenhoek of Delft had some 247 microscopes, most made by him, and 419 lenses. With them he was the first to see and discover protozoon, bacteria, human sperm, and he gave the first complete description of red blood cells.]
Resting on a chair is a sword. It and its elaborately worked belt infer high status for the gentlemen present. The two small dogs are not utilitarian breeds, but expensive pets, a whippet and a King Charles spaniel which was particularly fashionable at the time. Dogs were often used to symbolize Fidelity.

Servants in this type of picture also represent prosperity. In the background a maid pours an oil dressing over a bean salad garnished with hard boiled eggs. [The most recent theory is that they aren’t eggs, but are oysters which have an aphrodisiac reputation, and they are being sprinkled with lemon juice by the maid. Tour Office information, May 2006. What do you think? They look like eggs to me.] A black servant costumed in an earlier style of dress with Renaissance slashing, is reaching for a type of metal vessel at that time used to serve wine. It resembles a coffee pot. Many portraits from the late Renaissance through the 18th century testify to the popularity of the wealthy having a young black page in fancy dress. [Compare to the fancifully dressed black servant in one of the Pater pendants in Gallery P18.]

The women wear little capes to warm their shoulders since the dresses are low cut. Their hairdos feature a chignon at the back, curls bunched to dangle over the ears (often made of false hair), and tiny forehead ringlets. Wealthy Dutch women in this period were following the fashions set by the French court. Lots of thin silk ribbons are bunched around their elbows and broader ones adorn the boy’s costume. The two older men are dressed conservatively. [See below, discussion of men’s dress under Dutch portraits, HALS.]

The exaggerated slenderness of the ladies is to indicate they’re aristocratic. [Curator Ward, “Dutch and Flemish Art,” docent lecture, fall 1982.] Women wore platform shoes to appear taller. [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture, Jan. 10, 2006]

Over the elaborately carved Baroque mantel is a painting in a type of gold frame fashionable in France. According to many earlier NAMA staff members (Director Coe and Curators Taggart, Bowran, Gates, and Ward) the two handles hanging from the mantel were safety features. When standing to warm oneself at the fireplace, one held onto a handle so as not to loose balance and topple into the flames. Remember that in this period people consumed a lot of alcohol. Standing before a fire while tipsy could be very dangerous. [Recently it has also been proposed these were hangers for drying herbs (Tour Office information, May 2006), but to me that seems more a chore appropriately performed in the kitchen, pantry, or outhouse than a fine reception room.

No fire has been set in this fireplace because it was expensive to light one unless it was planned to be in a room a long time, and the maid’s salad indicates the family soon will leave for a meal in the next room. The men haven’t removed their hats and the women wear little capes, suggesting that the room is chilly. For temporary warmth on the floor has been placed a small portable “stoof” (stove), in this case a perforated wooden box containing a ceramic vessel holding hot coals. [Wtewael’s “The Kitchen Maid” c. 1620-1625 shows a woman warming her feet on a similar stoof. See Spicer, op.cit., p. 224, cat. No. 30.] Holland’s climate is still on the cool side and damp, but in the 17th century it was going through “the Little Ice Age” that gripped Northern Europe. According to Mr. Pepys diary, the winter of 1664-5 was so cold that the Thames froze solid twice, bringing all river traffic to a halt. [Abernathy, Cecil, “Mr. Pepys of Seething Lane,” W.H.Allen, London 1958, p. 168.] For more insulation of the room, the door could be closed and the pulled-aside tapestries released so that they blanketed the entrance. The chair seats are rather high in this period with spanners across the bottom. One could place one’s feet on the spanners so
as not to touch the cold floor. It has been noted that ladies warmed their hands or feet on King Charles spaniels in the 17th century. [“Pet Keeping,” Fox Channel 4, Saturday, June 10, 2006, 9:30AM. A segment of this televised program dealt with the history and temperament of the breed.] This does give a utilitarian use to small dog breeds after all!

Note that the background cabinet has twisted column supports at either side, and the chair legs are twisted. This type of support is called a SOLOMONIC COLUMN, and it can be seen on the black ebony chest nearby. This was a widely used design element in 17th century Baroque architecture and furnishings, based on some ancient twisted stone columns in St. Peter’s, Rome and Bernini’s balcochino there. [See Ebony Chest, this gallery, below, for more on spiraled columns.]

Wooden floors were often left bare in this period with no shellac, varnish, or wax on them. When the boards became dirty, they were sanded down.

Lemons were a luxury, and a half peeled lemon was a popular image in Dutch art. In Steen’s painting it represents the passing of time and lust, attractive on the outside but sour within. [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch Reinstallation, op.cit. However, for more on the lemon’s significance and cultural usage see the Claesz still life below.] The lemon image was so popular that treatises were written on how to paint one.

There are three inscriptions in Latin, one being “Learn to Die,” which has already been discussed.. Educated people in this century were expected to know the ancient language of the Romans. “Glory to God” and “Music drives away care” are on the opened inner lids of the harpsichord. Since ancient times music was used as therapy for cares and illnesses.

Steen and his family had suffered severe financial reverses and didn’t live in this luxury. Nevertheless he was one of the most prolific Dutch artists, and also was among the most versatile, painting portraits, historical and myth, religious subjects, animals, birds, still life, and genre. [Osborne, “Oxford Comp. To Art,” op.cit., p. 1094.] But he often had trouble selling his works, so at various times was also a brewer (his father’s trade and Schouten’s) and a tavern keeper while managing to paint part-time with an astonishing output. His peers respected him, because he became the head of the Leiden guild in 1672, and its dean in 1674. [Churchman, docent handbook.]

The painting shows how artists should live in a just world. [Curator Ian Kennedy, “Dutch... Reinstallation, op.cit., before the theory about the Haarlem brewer became known.]

**CLAESZ**, Still Life, 1638 (31-114). Images in Dutch still lifes reflect the prosperity of Holland when Dutch trade was at its 17th century zenith and the port city of Amsterdam was the richest city in Europe.

As with many Baroque painters Claesz was a master at depicting light, and here it comes from the upper left as in many other Baroque paintings. Its source is identified by the window’s reflection in the side of the drinking glass. Look at all the varied reflections on the tilted silver tazza (cup of this form) and roemer (wine glass). The latter was a popular 17th century drinking glass with knobs or bumps on the pedestal so that it wouldn’t slip out of one’s hand. They survive in museums, as do tazzas. Holland scientists were very interested in optics. There were texts for artists that described different types of reflections. In other Claesz paintings the reflections are the same as here, indicating he sometimes quoted from his earlier work rather than looking at new reflections. His contemporary Heda similarly repeated his own earlier roemer reflections.
The Baroque interest in realism is demonstrated by the metal plate bearing a half-peeled lemon. The plate is partially off the table and seems almost in danger of falling into the viewer’s space.

Claesz and Heda are the most important representatives of the monochrome style of still life painting as well as the “breakfast piece” (ontbijt) still life in Holland. Their compositions are unified by an over-all grey-green or brownish tonality. [Osborne, “Oxf. Comp. To Art,” op. cit., pp. 245, 527] Haarlem artists like Claesz developed the “breakfast piece” although they really do not represent a specific meal. The former presence of humans at the scene is often suggested by crumpled table linen and/or partially consumed food. [Lee’s notes from text panel in exhibit “Still Lifes of the Golden Age: Northern European Paintings From the Heinz Family Collection, at Natl Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. June 1989. Also Jean Churchman, docent handbook.] Claesz’s paintings of snacks or a light meal are usually restricted to a corner of the table. Other artists did larger paintings of lavishly adorned banquet meals which were popular with the more wealthy. [Curator Peter Bowran, “Baroque Art,” docent lecture Oct. 1, 1978.]

Dutch painters brush strokes in this period can differ widely. Here illusionism is desired and Claesz applies paint in delicate and hard-to-see brushstrokes. [Cf. Steen’s and Dou’s meticulously applied strokes, and contrast with the loose vigor of Hals’ and Rembrandt’s works where the strokes are much more obvious. In the 19th century Hal’s way of applying paint will be admired by the Impressionists.]

Food still lifes were a favorite subject in this period. “The tabletop still life was really born in the Netherlands.” These subjects indicate pride in Dutch affluence and pride in the skill of the artist. Allegorical and symbolic meanings were given to many of them. The century was saturated not only with symbolism but with a profound impulse to moralize as well.” [Haak, op. cit., p. 77] Glassware symbolized transience, according to Cesare Ripa’s “Iconologia” of 1593. “Truly are mankind’s hopes as a fragile glass., and life is therefore also short.” [Haak, op. cit., p. 126. Ripa’s book was an important source for artists who worked with symbolism.]

Vessels of fragile glass traditionally have been read as allegories of transience, but the medical and culinary literature of the time indicates that some contain foods that are healthy and/or will prevent poisoning. For example the roemer with its wine can be read as only half full rather than full representing transience, and there was a Dutch proverb linking a tipped tazza with death. Tazzas lying on their sides are in a number of paintings of the period, and may signify demise.

The lemon was a luxury item that would have to be imported from the tropics unless one owned an expensive heated greenhouse. A half-peeled lemon was a popular motif in Dutch art, and painting one was considered an opportunity to show off the artist’s skill and foreshortening ability. [Hochstrasser, op. cit.] Claesz’s lemon peel almost seems to protrude into the viewer’s space, a Baroque characteristic. [Cf. Caravaggio’s depiction of John’s elbow and knee, Procaccini’s toes of the Virgin.] There were artists texts on how to paint the lemon, mixing the paint so as to suggest the surface texture of its yellow skin. [On close observation you can see Claesz’s addition of extra yellow paint which he has stippled on to the exterior of the lemon peel to build up its realistic texture!] Some 17th century Dutch emblem book literature has the lemon
representing bittersweet love or false friendship, since it has an attractive exterior but sour interior. [Hochstrasser, op.cit.]

Besides allegorical interpretations, the foods in Dutch still life also reflect beliefs in what constituted a healthy diet and/or antidote to poisoning. In medical and cooking literature lemons were good for the digestion and they counteracted poison. Dutch cookbooks of the period made a wide use of lemons for meat dishes, fish, flan, tarts, pies, etc. The belief they were a remedy for poisons goes all the way back in medical literature to Athenaeus, a Roman physician of the 1st century A.D. It was believed that one should preface a meal with counteractions to poisons, such as the lemon. Lemons also counteracted bad breath. Lemons were not only an antidote to poisons, but an antidote for ghosts!!

Claesz shows a walnut at the far left. That walnuts counteracted poison is also stated in ancient literature. Therefore in Holland both nuts and lemons were often served before a meal, this being considered a healthy thing to do.

Note that in this painting there also is a flask for olive oil which was mixed with many foods in the Netherlands, and it, too, was believed to counteract poison. [Note that in the left background of the Steen painting a maid is in pouring olive oil on a salad.] There are whole olives to the left of the roemer. They were usually served pickled since they didn’t grow in Holland. They were thought to aid digestion and to go well with wine.

Wine was frequently recommended for a healthy diet, and highly praised by physicians. It was much better than water, and was medicine for the weak. Strawberries and raspberries were considered dangerous, but wine would counteract their poisons according to Humoral theory, and the berries could safely be consumed with wine. These berries were sometimes used to flavor beer and wine. In Claesz’s painting the berries in the Chinese porcelain bowl are wild strawberries, a delicacy typically enjoyed with French wine. [2005 label] The edibles in still life paintings such as this one by Claesz may actually celebrate life more than censure it, although allegorical meanings may co-exist. [Hochstrasser, op.cit.]

Keep in mind aspects of Claesz’s style (illusion, illumination, luxury goods, refined and carefully blended colors) to compare with Chardin’s still life in Gallery P18.

**VAN de VELDE, THE YOUNGER**, Willem II, “A State Yacht Under Sail Firing a Salute,” 1668 (32-169). The artist is considered one of Holland’s best marine painters. The nation relied on her ships for prosperity and protection. Frictions over trading rights and fear of foreign invasion necessitated a fleet of warships. The artist shows the Nassau Squadron preparing for the sea [1989 label] The foreground yacht fires a salute. It’s stern shows the rampant lion shield of the 7 Dutch United Provinces. In the center background is the “Eendracht,” the flagship of Admiral Obdan, which sank at the Battle of Lowestoft fought against the English. [2005 label]

Employed by the government as the official marine artist, Willem II recorded the marine battles between the Dutch and English fleets. He even rowed out into the dangerous engagements to make correct observations on the navy in action. At this time of his life he is depicting Holland as victorious.

He studied with his father, Willem I Van de Velde the Elder who was the son of a naval captain, and had himself been a sailor before becoming an artist who painted ships. Father and son often collaborated. In 1672 when Holland was at war with England, they both mysteriously moved there where they spent the rest of their lives as official marine artists for the British navy
and King Charles II. From then on they usually show English ships victorious.

[There were several Dutch-English Wars in the 17th century as the two countries fought each other to dominate world trade. In 1626 the colonizing Dutch had purchased the island of Manhattan from the Indians for $24 in trinkets. They renamed it New Amsterdam. In 1664 the British took it from the Dutch and renamed it New York after the head of the British Navy, the Duke of York, Charles II’s brother who later had a short reign as James II.] By the end of the 17th century the Dutch reputation for ship building was such that the Emperor of Russia, Peter the Great, spent time in Holland studying it (1697-98), and working for some time as a common ship carpenter. He wanted to modernize backwards Russia with western European industrial technology, and especially a modern navy. Peter so admired Dutch society and its maritime capabilities that he adopted a variation of Holland’s flag for Russia’s. Peter turned it so that the colors are reversed. Note that in this painting Dutch flags seem to be everywhere.

A man in the prow of the rowboat is wearing the traditional red jacket and white canvas trousers of Dutch ship builders, a workman’s dress that Czar Peter ordered his Russian retinue to wear, and wore himself while laboring in the shipyard. While in Holland Peter collected paintings of ships and the sea. He also dined with and visited several times Rachel Ruysch’s renowned professor father Frederic, whose laboratory was considered one of the marvels of Holland.

[Massie, Robert K., “Peter the Great: His Life and World,” Ballantine Books, New York, 1980, p. 181, 187, 190. I don’t know whether any Van de Velde works were among his acquisitions, although it seems logical.]

**PORTRAITS:** Dou, Rembrandt, Hals, Backer. See also the Steen and Coques family groups above. In earlier times only the wealthiest people, usually members of the aristocracy, could afford to hire artists to make their portraits. Now lots of middle class merchants and business men commissioned portraits of themselves and their families.

Note how different the paint application is in the Museum’s examples: the meticulous refinement of Dou and Steen versus the loose vigor of Hals and Rembrandt.

**DOU** (rhymes with “how”) “Self-Portrait at Age 50,” dated 1663, oil on mahogany panel (32-77). At the age of 15 Dou was Rembrandt’s pupil when the master was then at Leyden. Rembrandt later moved to Antwerp, but Dow stayed behind becoming “the Star of Leyden.” He signed this work on the pillar. [I CAN’T SEE THIS! CAN YOU?] The painted stone arch which frames him is a motif he frequently used, and it attracted many imitators. Dou was famous for his precise and detailed observation. His refined technique is very controlled. Note his close observation of minutiae, his interest in textiles and opulent tactile effects.

He was horrified by dust, and sometimes called “Dustless Dou.” Here he gives himself a princely pose and setting. Becoming very successful and wealthy, Dou charged by the hour rather than the project. [Curator Eliot Rowlands, “Dutch Painting,” Docent Lecture, Sept. 10, 1990.] He was so prosperous that he turned down Medici patronage. This painting used to be in Munich, but Hitler sold it off. [Ibid.] A porcelain dessert plate hand painted with a replica of the portrait is on exhibition at the royal Residenz, Munich. [Seen by Lee in 1984.]

Is there anything in the painting that would tell you this man is an artist? No. “He thinks of himself as a gentleman, not a mere professional...” [2005 label] This is indicated by his expensive
fur-lined hat and coat, his cane (often carried as an accessory inferring authority, rather than as an aid for disability), the costly imported rug from the Near East, and his location in an expensive building’s loggia overlooking a Leyden canal. On the other side of the water is a Leyden church. The book infers that he is learned and has scholarly interests. [Ibid.]

**REMBRANDT & HALS** are among the greatest portrait painters of all time. Again, their paint application is very different from Steen, Huysum, Dou, and Claesz.

**REMBRANDT.** “Portrait of a Young Man,” 1666 (31-75). What Baroque style characteristics in Rembrandt’s painting are similar to Caravaggio’s important innovations? [Strong light from upper left, its source not indicated, and a homely realism.] Although he never visited Italy, Rembrandt collected and studied Italian paintings. He also saw works by the Utrecht Caravaggeschi such as Baburen and Terbruggen. In his earlier works he exhibits much more color and Baroque dynamism. Although this portrait seems quiet and somber, Rembrandt was famous in his own lifetime for earlier works in the grand Baroque style with more color, opulent details, and complex compositions. For these and for his prodigious output in prints he was known during his own lifetime from Poland to Sicily. It was during the 1640s that he gradually abandoned the more dramatic aspects of Baroque for a quieter atmosphere and sympathetic concern for the subject. [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to the Arts,” op.cit., p. 964.]

This year (2006) is the 400th anniversary of his birth, and there are special exhibitions of his work in Amsterdam and other places to commemorate it. Rembrandt is one of the greatest artists ever. Ours is a late work signed in 1666, 3 years before his death. It has been conjectured that the subject may be one of his pupils, Samuel van Hoogstraten. [Curator Rowlands, “Dutch Art” docent lecture. Hoogstraten was a painter, etcher, poet, art theorist, and director of the Dordrecht mint. His appraisals of Rembrandt’s work are important. Osborne, “Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 547.] When I first started volunteering at the Museum in 1961, it was conjectured that the subject was Rembrandt’s son Titus. [Of his four children with his wife Saskia, only Titus survived infancy. Rembrandt later had a daughter with his mistress.]

Rembrandt did many portraits, painting himself over 50 times. He loved very thick paint - so thick that it has been said you can pick up a Rembrandt portrait by the nose! [NPR program, Oct. 1987.] This is the most subtle painting technique with layers and layers of paint, the pinnacle of oil technique with its melting texture. [Curator Eliot Rowlands, Dutch Painting, Docent Lecture, Sept. 10, 1990.] He was a great technician, continually changing his working method from work to work. Sometimes he painted skin flowingly, the brushstrokes hardly visible and worked with superimposed transparent layers. This kind of glazing can allow the underpainting to show through. At other times his stroke was strong and perceptible with more opaque paint. [Haak, op.cit., p. 277.] In this work, “Of special interest is the use of the butt end of the brush to make incisions in the wet paint, to accent details of form and modeling in the subject’s face and hair.” [old label by Curator Ward] These incisions provide a richer sense of texture. [2005 label]

This is the best picture in the room. [Curator Ian Kennedy, Dutch ...Reinstallation, op.cit.]

In his last and most austere period, Rembrandt’s palette was dark and somber. This has been attributed to his psychological state; his wife was dead; in 1656 he had been declared bankrupt and was forced to sell all of his property including his collections; his earlier popularity
had vanished since he asserted his own will over his patrons’ wishes. It has also been proposed that his limited dark palette was due to his reduced circumstances, and he could not afford expensive pigments. [Various docent lectures, Docent handbook by Churchman.]

Since his death there has always been a market for Rembrandt’s work which is particularly highly treasured today. Consequently what is and isn’t a Rembrandt has been and still is much debated. He

had considerable influence on his many pupils. He made corrections to their works, and some of their paintings were sold by Rembrandt from his workshop as by him. In addition Rembrandt was influential on his contemporaries. In 1968 the Dutch government funded the Rembrandt Research Project. Its members have visited collections and museums around the world to determine authenticity. Twice this painting has been inspected and received approval. The Project’s publication of the artist’s authentic works is only half complete. Project members are retiring and their replacements may differ in opinion on decisions made by the former members. The recent Met. Exhibit “Rembrandt - Not Rembrandt” didn’t clarify much since the Met’s curator and conservator who mounted the show disagreed with each other almost 50% of the time as to what really was Rembrandt in their own exhibition. [Stone-Ferrier, Linda, U. of Kansas professor, “Recognizing Rembrandt: Problems in Attribution,” at the NAMA Symposium titled “Fakes, Forgeries and Mistaken Identities,” Oct. 19, 1996.]

An update on the Project as of June 18, 2006: “The number [of authenticated paintings] is shrinking. “In 1900 there were thought to be some 800 Rembrandt oils; today, the best estimate is under 400, with many Rembrandt look-a-likes attributed to his pupils.” [Riding, Alan, “Walking Among the Shadows of Rembrandt’s Life,” in “The New York Times,” TR 7.]

At some time in its career an owner altered the dimensions of this portrait. He had it “formatized.” [See Terbrugghen, above in Gallery P15.] The canvas was enlarged with a strip across the top which was carefully painted to match the original background. Rather than try to remove it and perhaps damage the original lower portion, a modern frame was custom made with much deeper rabbiting behind the top rail to hide the additional strip. The modern frame is an exact replica of a Dutch 17th century scotia profile cabinet frame, veneered and capped in rosewood, polished and distressed, and purchased from frames dealer Paul Mitchell of London. [Pentecost, NAMA European Frames Data Base.]

**HALS**, “Portrait of a Man,” c. 1650 (31-90) After Rembrandt, Hals was the greatest Dutch portraitist of the 17th century. [2005 label] As he aged his technique became more daring, and the works show increasing freedom and boldness in the brush strokes. He quickly set down lights and shadows that suggest a form only from a distance, but then magnificently. His rendering of hands with the minimum of shaping is quite extraordinary given the general taste in portraiture at that time. Only Rembrandt permitted himself comparable freedom. [Haak, op.cit, pp. 377-8.] If the hands were to be well defined, it was more work for the artist who sometimes would charge the patron more for the extra labor.

This work is fairly late in his ouvre c. 1648-50. Hals skipped making preparatory sketches and worked from the model directly to the canvas, [2005 label] as had Caravaggio. His enjoyment of paint itself can be seen in his obvious brush strokes. His fresh and candid portraiture has a dazzling, slashing technique. He gives his sitters bravura. The painting has a pendant showing the subject’s wife. [St. Louis Museum of Art.]
Hals technique was admired by Manet, the Impressionists, and other 19th c. French artists. Van Gogh said Hals had 17 different blacks! [Curator Eliot Rowlands, “Dutch Painting,” docent lecture, Sept. 16, 1988.]

What is similar about the portraits by Hals and Rembrandt? Both are portraits of men in dark clothing, white collars, wearing dark hats, against a plain background, with Baroque light coming from the left. The bright white collars they wear draw the viewer’s eye to their faces.

If you didn’t know one of these 2 portraits was by Rembrandt, which would you prefer? Why? I’m guessing visitors will pick Hals’ for the more animated aspects of his painting. The unsymmetrical arm postures (admittedly you can’t see the arms of Rembrandt’s subject), slightly misarranged collar, wisps of tousled hair, and his smile enliven the work, making the man’s presence more vivid than Rembrandt’s subject. Adding swagger to Hal’s subject is the cloak he has carelessly tossed on halfway.

MEN IN BLACK (Dutch)

In both these portraits the men wear very sober, conservative colors. This conservative fashion for men’s dark suits began during the earlier time that the area was ruled by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V who went into black mourning attire on the death of his wife, and wore black for his coronation in 1530 and mostly thereafter. [Churchman, docent handbook, under Bronzino..] Accordingly his ministers, their staffs, and other government officials (a considerable number were working in the Netherlands) took up black clothing as can be seen in the black silk worn by Granvelle. [See his portrait by Titian be reinstalled in the Renaissance painting Gallery P11. A chief minister for the Hapsburg Spanish King Philip II, Granvelle was in the Netherlands for sometime during the rebellion of the Dutch provinces. He was an arch enemy of William the Silent whose tomb is shown above by VAN VLIET’s painting.] Although foreign rule was defeated and independence achieved, many Dutch men hung on to this conservative dress color which is seen so often in portraiture. It should be noted that men did on occasion wear fancier dress. [See the youth in Steen’s painting and Dou’s self-portrait.]

In England in this century dark clothing could indicate your political-religious affiliation as a Republican and Puritan, versus Monarchist and State Anglican Church. Kids, do the dark suits with white collars remind you of the costumes of any American colonists that you have seen in books or TV? This style of dress is similar to that of the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed to North America on the Mayflower in 1620. Earlier in the century they spent several years in Holland as religious refugees from British persecution. Nowadays, every year around Thanksgiving you see soberly clad representations of them in holiday decorations, advertisements, and the media.

MALE POSTURE - “The Renaissance Elbow”

Boys, how would you want to stand while an artist paints your portrait? In 17th century Europe the pose of Hal’s subject was a very popular stance for men and boys - holding one of your arms “akimbo,” hand on hip. [Anglo Saxon - like a “keen bow’”] It was considered the “cool” way for guys to look, and started in the Renaissance portrayals of military men, especially the honored position of flag bearer, often the leader of charges, and expected to die rather than surrender his banner. A scholar calls this posture “the Renaissance elbow.” It implies valor and dominion. The fashion spread into the world of non-military men, and Dutch businessmen picked it up.
A respectable woman [Cf. the nearby “Portrait of a Lady” by BACKER, 1641 (31-85)]
stands or sits with both arms close to her body unless she is very important with macho powers
[e.g. Elizabeth I of England] or is of low class and therefore hasn’t learned proper female
comportment. Until the 20th century gender differences in society were extremely different from
ours today, and women’s activities were much confined and determined by men. [Spicer,
Joaneath, “The Renaissance Elbow,” in “A cultural History of Gesture,” Bremmer & Roodenburg,
Edts., Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York 1991, pp. 84-128.] BACKER was a gifted and
successful portrait painter who had been one of Rembrandt’s pupils. [Jean Churchman, docent
handbook] However he was a less accomplished artist than Hals or Rembrandt. [1993 label]

Note that this male macho posture can be seen in the POKAL’s Cupid below. In other
galleries below are examples: Augustus the Strong has the “Renaissance Elbow” in both his
portrait by Largilliere, and in the small Meissen figure of him..

Ex-president Clinton had his portrait painted this year. Its a 3/4 length portrait like our Hals
gentleman. Clinton is more of a 3/4 side view of his torso turned away from the viewer, his face
turned to look at the viewer. Yes, his left arm is “akimbo,” with hand on his hip. [But apparently
his left finger ring “seems bare as a bachelor’s.” “Kansas City Star,” April 26, 2006, A-2]

**PORTRAITS SMILING**

Part of the attractiveness of Hal’s subject is his little smile. Nowadays not many of us have
portraits painted, but innumerable photographs are taken of us instead. What does the
photographer say? “Smile - say cheese!” We stretch our mouths open to show our teeth.

It may seem odd to us now, but from the Middle Ages until the end of the 18th century
smiling particularly with the teeth showing, was rarely seen in portraiture except in genre
depicting the lowest classes. Their smiles indicated they were uneducated and didn’t know correct
comportment, and perhaps were having an irresponsible good time. In the 17th century the middle
and upper classes were concerned with decorum. and propriety (i.e. good manners). Smiling was
considered lacking in dignity, even frivolous. [Trumble, Angus, “A Brief History of the Smile,”
Basic Books, New York 2004. Curator Roger Ward, lecturing to docents on portrait by Vigee-
Lebrun in Gallery P23.: The Duchess is pushing the limits just before the Revolution. The smile
on the face of Hoppner’s Emily St. Clair would be considered lascivious but characteristic of her
ecstatic role as a Bacchante.]

Nevertheless Hals painted some well-to-do patrons who deliberately chose to smile in their
portraits. One wonders about their personalities in going against the grain, the current fashion of
non-smiling! I speculate that the non-smiling custom may have originated because the sitter’s
teeth were often badly decayed or missing by adulthood, but I have not read this anywhere.

**DECORATIVE ARTS IN THIS GALLERY**

**CHEST,** Ebony, French (45-16) This is a good example of the opulent extravagance that
characterized aristocratic furniture during the Baroque period. “It was made for a grand room in
an aristocratic residence.” [Handout, p. 2, day of Curator Catherine Futter’s Reinstallation Lecture
for Docents, 2006.] Ebony is a very expensive imported tropical wood that takes a high polish.
The best ebony was imported from India and Ceylon. The fashionable use of ebony (or cheaper
woods blackened to resemble it) was highly desirable in Dutch interior decoration. Note ripple
molding that was popular on Dutch furniture and appears on some of the picture frames.
The interest in tulips is also seen. Small ones appear on the front and the sides feature large floral bouquets with them reminding us that the Dutch were the most advanced botanists of Europe.

**SOLOMONIC COLUMNS** are on either side of the cabinet facade. They are a fashionable design element in Baroque art, architecture, and the decorative arts, popularized by Bernini. The type is spiraled and they are based on the antique marble columns now in St. Peter’s, believed to have been brought from the Temple of Solomon when it was sacked by the ancient Romans. [Perkins, J.B. Ward, “The Shrine of St. Peter and Its Twelve Spiral Columns,” in “Journal of Roman Studies XLII, 1952, 21 f; cited by L. Lavin, “Bernini and the Crossing of St. Peter’s,” New York, 1968, p. 14f.] The ancient columns were built into the altar of the Constantian basilica, but later moved to the new St. Peter’s. [Vermeule Cornelius, “European Art and the Classical Past, Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, p. 107.] In the 17th century to great acclaim Bernini featured Solomonic Columns on his bronze baldachino over the central altar of St. Peter’s (finished 1633). Then he was ordered to make a reduced version to cover Urban VIII’s bed at Castel Gandolfo, and Louis XIV had a canopied bed flanked by two baldachins based on Bernini’s creation for St. Peter’s high altar. [Ibid., p. 127.] “Gianlorenzo Bernini - sculptor, painter, and architect, was the outstanding figure of the Italian Baroque and the greatest formative influence within it.” [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to the Arts, op.cit., p. 131.]

On the front of the cabinet the columns and other design elements are very symmetrically placed, a Baroque furniture characteristic. The classical reliefs on the front and ancient architectural details reflect French court taste, but the maker may have been Dutch. [Curator Ross Taggart, docent lectures.] Note the empty escutcheons (shields) whose mantlings have been turned into delightful funny faces, a Mannerist decorative motif. [You might notice sometime the two funny faces on the carved marble quiver of Mosca’s “Atalanta and Meleager” in the Sculpture Hall.]

Cupids can be found. There are reclining male and female nudes, and scenes from ancient mythology which are symmetrically placed.

On the lower left door Perseus riding Pegasus sees below the beautiful Princess Andromeda who is being sacrificed to a dreadful sea monster because her mother (at left) Queen Cassiopeia (“kas-see-oh-pee-ah”) insulted the sea divinities by boasting she was more beautiful than the sea nymphs. This angered the sea god Neptune (Poseidon) who sent the monster to ravage the area, killing many people. The monster and Neptune would be appeased only if the Queen’s daughter were sacrificed to it. So she was chained to a rock near the water. Perseus will slay the monster, rescue and marry Andromeda. Perseus, Andromeda, and Cassiopeia were elevated to the heavens and are constellations.

This myth was allegorized as were so many, and given a widely known Christian interpretation based on the “Moralized Ovid written around 1340 by Berchorius, a Dominican monk. Perseus was seen as Christ saving the human soul Andromeda, who was bound by sin to the earth. The sea monster can be read as the Devil. This story was popular in the arts of the 16th century. [Lee, Rensselaer, W., “Ariosto’s Roger and Angelica in Sixteenth Century Art,” in “Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in Honor of Millard Meiss,” Edts. Lavin & Plummer, New York University Press 1977, pp. 307ff.]

On the lower right door the fiercely chaste goddess Diana (Artemis) is bathing when she is
accidentally seen by the hunter Acteon. She turned him into a stag (note the tiny antlers sprouting), and he was torn apart by his own hunting dogs. It is interesting to know that in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, is a fine Baroque silver dish of 1613 by Paulus van Vianen with the exact same scene in relief. [See Bazin, Germain, “Baroque and Rococo Art,” Praeger World of Art Series, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York 1964, pp. 102-103, Fig. 82.]

The top two smaller doors tell the last part of the ancient story of young married lovers, Cephalus and Procris. Procris gave her husband a spear that never missed its mark. She began to doubt his fidelity and spied on him while he was out hunting. He mistook her for a wild animal and fatally wounded her. These three myths are among many told by the ancient Roman poet Ovid in “Metamorphoses” [Book 4: lines 661-753; Book 3: lines 138-249; Book 7: lines 671 - 865.] Ovid’s works were important sources for artists.

This is what is called a “tabernacle” or “theatre” chest with a miniature recessive stage like area behind its upper doors. In this one painted backdrop trees and architecture, and inset mirrors create the illusion of more space. This unusual chest form was “Among the rarest and most beautiful of all furniture...,” a style of the early 17th century, and many were of ebony carved in fantastic relief usually illustrating myths. [Weller, Anthony, “Secret Chambers: Looking Within Rare European Cabinets,” in “Architectural Digest,” Sept. 1984, pp. 174ff.]

The upper half of this chest originally would have been placed atop an openwork stand, a type of high storage cabinet popular in the 17th century. At that time the two large (and now lower) doors covered the tabernacle and small drawer areas. A later patron or dealer removed the chest from the stand, and replaced it on another cabinet created to support it. The large carved doors were removed from the cabinet and replaced on its newly created lower base. This not only doubled the storage space, but revealed more of the magnificent carving without having to open and shut the big doors.

**CERAMICS** on chest: The tobacco jar (33-107) is labeled “St. Omer,” after a French town, but this indicates it held a flavored scented tobacco of that name. A prosperous store or even home might have a set of tobacco jars. Tobacco was imported from the New World, and this jar is adorned with American Indians smoking pipes and a Baroque arch, but its colors are an imitation of Chinese blue and white porcelain. This, however, is pottery with a tin glaze. “In imitating blue and white Chinese porcelain, the Dutch produced tin-glazed earthen ware called Delftware, as much of the pottery production centered in the town of Delft....By the end of the 16th century tobacco consumption had become widespread in Europe and tobacconists became significant clients of the Delftware factories.” The tin glaze technique for making Delftware came from the Near East. [Curator Catherine Futter, Reinstallation lecture for docents, Jan. 5, 2006, and handout p. 6.] The words Delftware, maiolica, and faience all indicate the tin glaze technique on pottery.

Two Delftware Chargers (54-56 and 55-82) have designs reflecting the Dutch craze for tulips.

**POKAL (COVERED GOBLET) WITH THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS**, attributed to the Monogramist BG, German/Austrian (60-80). [c. 1670 according to “NAMA EXPLORE ART,” for March/April 2006.] The style of carving makes this cup widely attributed to the Monogramist BG of whom nothing is known except that he was active in Vienna from c. 1662-80. The quality of the carving is remarkable and in very high relief with some elements in the full round.
The virtuoso show-off carving was meant to be studied and admired in detail. Although of utilitarian form, it is doubtful that it was really used. The Dutch and Germans have similar words for this type of ostentatious and luxurious art work. The Dutch word is PRONK [German: PRUNK] meaning pomp, ostentatiousness, splendor, magnificence. These words also are used in describing elaborate suits of armor for use at court and social functions that never were meant to see battle, and still lifes of particularly luxurious and opulent objects.

The source for the major scene on the vessel section is from ancient Greek literature about the Trojan War, an event precipitating it called “The Judgment of Paris.” Prince Paris is seated before the Venus to whom he gives a golden apple prize. He was the handsomest man in the world, and son of the king of Troy. His bad judgment in a beauty contest led to the terrible 10 year war, many deaths, and much suffering. The tale begins with an Olympian wedding to which all the gods and goddesses were invited except Eris, the goddess of discord [presumably the aged woman to the left of Paris.] Nevertheless she came uninvited and vengefully threw into the celebrating crowd of deities a golden apple inscribed “To the fairest.” Goddesses vied for it. Zeus (Jupiter) who was married to one of the contestants, decided that Paris would be the judge. It turned out to be a crooked beauty contest since the contestants tried to bribe him. Aphrodite (Venus) shown here with her child Cupid (Eros) and her doves, offered Paris the most beautiful woman in the world. Hera (Juno) offered worldly power, and Athena (Minerva) offered wisdom.

Athena can be identified by her war helmet. She is seated on the ground with some instruments of learning including a writing tablet and a celestial globe for studying the heavens. Hera is standing and biting her finger, a sign of envy in this period. She holds a firebrand scepter which probably represents her husband’s thunderbolt, and her status as his wife and queen of the Olympian deities.

The educated of Europe looked to ancient pagan religion as well as Christian texts for moral truths. Most mythological subjects from the Middle Ages through the 17th century were given allegorical meanings. It was an understood allegory that Hera’s offer to Paris of worldly dominion represented the active life of a leader of men, that Athena’s offer of wisdom a contemplative life such as a philosopher’s, and that Aphrodite’s offer of love and beauty in the person of Helen, Queen of Sparta [and already married], represented a wastrel’s life of lust and luxury. [Brumble, H. David, “Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings,” Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1998, pp. 190, 258-9.]

In 1553 the French court poet Pierre de Ronsard wrote that the Judgment of Paris signified “The triumph of lust over civic virtue and wisdom.” [“Livet de folastries,” Paris 1553.] Therefore the cup’s imagery is meant to be didactic, as is the case with many 17th century art works.

The Judgment subject was also popular in the performing arts. Since the Renaissance there have been 19 ballets, 19 plays, and 8 operas inspired by it. [Reid, Jane Davidson, “Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300 - 1995,” Oxford U. Press 1993, pp. 821-831.]

The carved figures on the lid seem to be a gloss on the Judgment scene below. The putto holding a mirror in which his reflection is seen is the personification of Prudence, one of the four Cardinal Virtues necessary for a good ruler (the other three being Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude). In the 17th century the word Prudence did not have today’s connotations of sexual modesty and abstinence. It meant Wise Action. If Paris had been wise and not stolen Helen from her husband, the war would not have occurred. Prudence looks in a mirror to see things as they really are. At the same time Prudence wears a mask on the back of the head looking backward
(like the two-faced Roman god Janus), in order to learn from the past before deciding on action. Another attribute of Prudence is a snake, here wrapped around the putto’s arm. In this context the snake represents Wisdom. The Bible states, “Be ye wise as serpents.” [Matthew 10:16.] This Prudence, like Raphael’s in the Vatican Stanza della Segnatura, has a torch of penetrating light nearby in order to see what is really going on. [Cf. illustration of Raphael’s Prudence on p. 462, Fattorusso, Joseph, Edt., “The Wonders of Italy,” Medici Art Series, Florence, Italy, 14th edition revised, 1966, top illustration on p. 462.]

The putto to the right of Prudence holds a wreath. This might signify Victory which would follow if one were prudent. However it is a wreath of flowers which can signify marriage. [This marital motif is on the pair of 18th century Sevres commemorative betrothal or marriage urns [33-1580/1,2 in Gallery P23 and the 19th century Italian panel by Gatti portraying the Gilstrap couple in Gallery P30.] One way or the other, the figure is one of celebration.

Perhaps the cup was a wedding present? [Suggestion by Curator Catherine Futter, “Gallery Reinstallation,” docent lecture, 2006.]

On the lid these putti are separated from two more by a fragmented architrave on one side, and post with ball finial on the other. The third putto is blindfolded and stout. He lies on the ground beside a large rock to which he is chained. Against the chain is an arrow pierced heart which suggests a lock on the chain. “Love [the lustful type] is blind” and if you let it rule your life, this is what happens to you. You’re not only blind to reality, you’re grounded, limited in action, and not going anywhere since burdened with this heavy weight like a boulder. This putto also suggests the personification of Sloth which is sometimes associated with Lust. Sloth is overweight and sometimes reclines. The fourth and last putto holds a cornucopia of coins which infers never ending wealth. If the cup was a wedding gift, this might represent a wish for the couple’s prosperity, but otherwise I don’t know of its meaning in context with the other figures.

The stem of the cup is another story of love gone wrong. Pan, a nature god of shepherds, pursues the nymph Syrinx. He grabs her but she escapes him by turning into reeds. All he can do is cut them down and form them into the musical instrument called the syrinx or Pan pipes. In allegory Pan often represents Lust. [Hall, James, “A Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” Harpers and Row, Publishers, New York 1979, p. 232] The Pan pipes can be seen on the foot of the cup. This myth also has been told in the performing arts with at least 5 ballets and 3 operas. [Reid, op.cit., pp. 1010-1013.]

The base is wonderfully carved with musical instruments. Among them are three drums, a viol da braccio with its convex bow-stick (used like its descendant the violin which now is played with a straight bow; the viol was invented in the Renaissance), a bagpipe, harp, horn, two shawms (wind instrument similar to the oboe with finger holes and a double reed in the mouthpiece), and lute of the type with a bent upper neck. [In the Steen painting a lute of this type is played by the woman standing behind the clavichord.] There is also a long necked, stringed instrument with a squarish sound box that I’ve not yet positively identified. It looks like a shamisen which was developed in China during the Yuan dynasty, and introduced into Japan around 1562. If so, its presence here attests to the amount of European trade with the East at the time the pokal was carved. [Cf. Grove Dictionary of Music, also on the web: http://jtrad.columbia.jp/eng/i_shamisen.html]
The finial of the cup lid is Cupid (Eros, “desire”), lording it over all. He stands in flames representing the torments and passion of love. He has a quiver full of his dangerous arrows. He snaps his fingers as he mocks us. Note the swaggering posture with one arm “akimbo” which infers his domion. [See MALE POSTURE under Hals, above.] Love conquers all. Virgil’s famous statement “Amor vincit omnia,” [from “Eclogue” 10:69] inspired many images in art. Some other examples of this theme in the Museum’s holdings: Roccatagliata’s Cupid andirons (62-19/1.2), Poussin’s “Triumph of Bacchus” (31-94), and the French Sceaux soup tureen, cover and stand.

A work like this requires a very slow reading, and must have inspired considerable conversations when shown to guests. To my mind this is one of the most delightful and complex allegorical works in the Museum. [Allegory - from the Greek meaning “other speaking,” i.e. there is another meaning or message underneath the more obvious one on the surface.]

**OWL JUG.** 1690-1710, English (Staffordshire), lead-glazed slipware (2004.4, A,B) What a contrast is this whimsical lidded vessel to the ostentatious, message-laden ivory pokal! “Inquisitive, delightful, amusing and rare are just four adjectives that come to mind...” [Curator Futter, “Rare Owl Jug Enhances Superb Collection of British Pottery - and Charms Museum Visitors,” in “NAMA Member Magazine, Spring 2005, p. 6.] The head is a matching cup and the jug is the owl’s body. “Initially thrown on a potter’s wheel, the piece was pressed into a mold to create the raised wings, and then individual pieces and rolls of clay were added to create the tail, handle, eyebrows, and three-toed feet that allow the bird to perch precariously on its base. The owls wide eyes are emphasized with raised, tan dots, and the head was fired upside down, resulting in the streaks above the pupils that give the owl its animated expression.” [2005 label] “Some 15 to 20 jugs have survived in this form. They were made by various Staffordshire potteries and seem to have been a somewhat popular form...possibly the owners thought they would gain wisdom, often represented by an owl, from drinking from the cup...The jug would have held beer or ale and probably only served one person...The animated owl immeasurably enhances the Museum’s superb collection of British pottery...” [Curator Futter, “Rare Owl...”, op.cit.] The owl as a symbol of wisdom dates back to the Greeks. It was the bird of the Athena the goddess of wisdom.

To create the feathered appearance of the owl, the craftsman used a brown slip and a cream slip which he combed with a real feather. About 5 of these owls all having ridged single eyebrows come from the same workshop. This has been used. There is wear on the rim of the cup and edge of the jug. It was probably for ale, not wine. [Catherine Futter, Gallery Reinstallation, docent lecture Jan. 5, 2006]

**GALLERY P18**

Themes: Age of kings, the Grand Style, and propagandistic state art in which the influence of the ancient Classical world continues. At the end of the 17th century and in the early 18th increasingly it is France that sets the style for the rest of Europe, and that nation will continue to do so throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 18th century France there is the rise of a new painting and interior design style, the Rococo. It will dominate the taste of western Europe in the 18th century. Increased contacts with Turkey and the Near East influence art, as does contact with the Far East. French political and
religious persecution results in the greatest period of English silver making.

There’s no religious art in this gallery. Of course it was still made, but increasingly there’s a more open art market with more patrons who have secular tastes.

With Hals and Rembrandt we saw Baroque portraits of ordinary men. Now we look at two kings. In Catholic Europe kings were anointed by the Church and ruled by Divine Right. In European monarchies the artistic style and fashion were set by the rulers, and then trickled down to their subjects. It was King Louis 14th of France who dominated the taste of Europe towards the end of the 17th century and until his death in 1715. The arts were subject to centralized direction under his rule, and French taste became the standard for Europe. Grandeur and richness and classicism were what Louis favored.

**GIRARDON,** “Louis XIV as a Roman General,” 1685, bronze model (old label) (54-32). He is the sculptor whose work most fully embodied the classical doctrines of the French Academy of Painting and Sculpture (founded by Louis 14 in 1648). His style reflects Academy theories and reflect his interest in ancient sculpture. Among his important commissions were the decoration of areas of the Louvre and Versailles palaces.

This is a small replica of his largest work which was one of the biggest equestrian bronzes cast up to his time. [1680] The original was cast all in just one piece by Keller. This was considered a great technological feat. We are lucky to have this smaller version which was cast in several different pieces, since the big one was torn apart by a mob during the French Revolution. All that survives of it is a bronze sandaled foot almost 17" long now in the Louvre Museum. The destroyed statue was almost 26 feet high, and used to stand in the Place de Vendome which at that time was the Place of Louis the Great.

One of the many purposes of art in this period was to glorify the ruler and his state, so the big portrait statue was an example of royal propaganda. It was meant to stand out of doors in the center of Paris where it could be seen by many subjects and foreigners. State art is intentionally didactic. Louis wants you to get messages about him when you see his portrait. First you have to know that long ago there was a great and much admired emperor of ancient Rome named Marcus Aurelius who was a very good ruler, general, a wise thinker, and a philosopher. The Romans had made a very famous large equestrian statue of him which is still standing in Rome. In our statue which was made in France around 1,500 years later, the posture of Louis is almost identical to that of Marcus, and so are the postures of their horses. (Louis’ head is slightly turned left while Marcus looks ahead.) This shows how the influence of ancient Classical art continues. So one message of Louis’ propaganda is that when we see this statue we are to be reminded that he is a very good ruler and a philosopher-prince like the great Marcus Aurelius. The statue of Marcus Aurelius has its arm extended in this same gesture which people interpreted to mean pacification. Note that Louis’ horse is trampling on war weapons. So another message of this statue is that as a ruler Louis ends war and brings peace to his people.

On the shield beneath the horse’s feet is a Medusa head with snakes for hair. In Louis’ youth there was a rebellion stirred up against his rule by the Fronde party, that name inferring that they “slung” stones. After its defeat Louis had himself painted in ancient armor as Jupiter, with his own foot on a shield with a Medusa head. [Does anyone know the connection between Medusa and stone?]
In the art of this period snakes were often associated with Sin and the Devil. The image of a snakey headed person was sometimes used to represent Envy and/or Heresy. In 1685 Louis repealed the Edict of Nantes, thus “purifying” France from Protestantism which he and the Roman Church considered to be Heresy. [However this intolerant act resulted in the immigration of thousands of hard working, talented Huguenots, almost depopulating several provinces. Louis’ repeal contributed to an economic decline in France.] The message here is that Louis is conquering his foes, be they political or religious.

Another message is in the images that decorate the center of Louis’ armor. There are two griffins which are mythological animals - part eagle, part lion - standing on either side of a stringed musical instrument. The ancient deity Apollo, god of the sun, the arts, and reason, played a stringed musical instrument to hold the cosmos in harmony. Sometimes he has griffins with him. Louis performed the role of Apollo in a court ballet, and thereafter he was often referred to as the Sun King. So the third message is that (like the god Apollo), Louis brings the arts, reason, and cosmic order to the world. The French king did sponsor a lot of wonderful art and architecture, but I’m afraid he was more of a war-monger than a bringer of peace.

Louis’ costume tells us of his war focus since it is that of an ancient Roman general, except for his hair style. He is wearing a peruke or periwig or full bottomed wig - a big wig that fashionable men wore in Europe during Louis’ reign. [They were very expensive - you had to be a “big wig” to afford one, hence that expression, and when out of doors you had to watch out for wig snatchers who would steal and then resell them!] By contrast the costume of Marcus Aurelius is a modest everyday tunic and he has what we would call today a normal hair style.

Look for the repeated motif of a fleur-de-lis [French: “flower of lily”] worked into the border of the horse’s saddle blanket. This emblem was for centuries a symbol of the French monarchy. The stylized flower is really an iris, but long ago before it was really studied, people thought it belonged in the lily family.

[A note on Louis and his legs of which he was proud. He was crazy about dancing, and in his court ballet performances even danced a travesti role. To be one of his successful courtiers, you had to know how to dance, so Louis established the first professional dance school. He also established a ballet training program for poor children, a school and company that continues today in Paris as the Opera Ballet. The Museum’s Degas portrays a rehearsal of its dancers in the 19th century. Louis was also the patron and protector of the playwright Moliere. I add this information for when Girardon’s bronze is used on the Theatre and the Dance tours.]


**LARGILLIERE**, “Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony,” c 1714 (54-35). The painter also worked at Versailles, but is primarily known as a great portaitist with a prodigious output, reputedly 1,500 portraits! His sitters were the greatest celebrities of the day. In portraiture his only rival was his friend Rigaud, the outstanding court painter at the end of Louis XIV’s reign. Largilliere was a Director and later the Chancellor of the French Academy of Painting and Sculpture which had been founded by Louis XIV in 1648.

The artist was born in Paris but was educated in Flanders. His early years there “engendered in him a singularly brilliant technique and love of color that distinguished his work from other
French painters of his period.” [Goheen, op.cit., p. 71.] As a young man he worked as an assistant to Sir Peter Lely, England’s most influential portrait painter of the 17th century, but withdrew to Paris in 1678 when anti-Catholic acts occurred in London. Largilliere speedily gained recognition for his portraits. Recalled to England when Catholic King James II ascended to the throne, he again returned shortly thereafter for France. He differs from his contemporary “Rigaud who preferred cold hues, straight lines and a rigorous composition. Because of his Flemish training Largilliere used warm hues, a broad brushstroke and curving motion that give his paintings a definite dynamism.” [Churchman, docent handbook.]

Here in 1715 the artist paints a contemporary of Louis XIV, another European monarch who is Augustus II, “the Strong,” King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. This is a good example of the way rulers were painted in the late Baroque period.

You’ve seen King Louis’ portrait with many propagandistic messages. What messages does Augustus give you? Study his posture; the right arm is akimbo (see Hals above), the macho stance for men based on earlier Renaissance portrayals of military men. Augustus’ other arm makes the same gesture as in the equestrian statues of Louis XIV and Marcus Aurelius indicating pacification, that he is brings peace. What is he pointing at? A burning city he has conquered. He’s victorious in battle. Any messages about his clothing? This is “parade” armor indicating his military might. How many jewels can you find? - a personal touch since Augustus was crazy about precious gems and formed a fantastic collection you can still see today. [In the “Green Vault” of his Dresden palace, Germany.]

Attached to his blue silk sash is a small elephant ornamented with gold and a jewel. It’s an insignia of Denmark’s highest chivalric honor, the Order of the Elephant. Augustus’ mother was a Danish princess, daughter of a Danish king. [Is it realistic to think he would actually wear such riches on a battlefield?]

[The Order of the Elephant was founded in 1462. After the Reformation its membership consisted of the Danish sovereign, his sons, and 30 knights who were all Protestant. However, by the time of this portrait Augustus had converted to Roman Catholicism to gain election to the Polish throne. The elephant symbolized chastity and purity. The battle elephant was also used as a symbol of the champion of Christianity. In the 20th century Niels Bohr, Montgomery, Eisenhower, and Churchill were members of the order. Since 1958 women have been eligible for membership. Thanks to Docent Emerita Janice Stuerzl for this information that she obtained from Karen Nielsen, Royal Danish Consul of Kansas City, September 1997.]

As a young man Augustus was noted for his physical strength, hence “the Strong” and it was said he could bend a horse shoe with his bare hands. He was called “Hercules saxonius,” the Saxon Hercules, and it is Herculean motifs that dominate his self-representations. The god was featured on the ceiling painting of his Dresden Palace Audience Chamber. Augustus appears almost nude with lionskin and club on commemorative medals. In rivalry with his contemporary Louis XIV, Augustus also identified himself closely with the sun god Apollo and impersonated him wearing a great golden rayed mask. A large almost nude statue of him as Apollo was commissioned. [Mississippi Commission for International Cultural Exchange, Inc., “The Glory of Baroque Dresden: The State Art Collections Dresden,” exhibition catalogue, Mississippi Arts Pavilion, Jackson, Miss., March 1-September 6, 2004, pp. 27, 28, 134, 224-225, 250, 281, 281, 283. A film shown as part of the exhibition showed one of Augustus’ horseshoes that he liked to bend with his bare hands in public. It had been weakened in one area in advance so that he could
accomplish this feat more easily! As a young man on the Grand Tour, Augustus had visited and was greatly impressed by Louis XIV’s court and protocol.[Gleeson, Janet, “The Arcanum,” Warner Books, New York 1988, p. 35.]

Augustus had “red cheeks, blue eyes, a strong nose, a full mouth and exceptionally heavy and bushy black eyebrows.” [Besides jewelry Augustus assembled a vast collection of ceramics from the Far East. He is one of the key figures in the history of 18th century art because of his establishment of the first European porcelain factory at Meißen, a village in Saxony near Dresden. See Meißen works in Gallery P19.] Poland at this time was an immense territory and somewhat of a republic which elected its kings. Its chaotic government was run by the native aristocracy. In contrast to France, there was no strong central authority, and “The monarch therefore became little more than a state ornament”

To be elected king Augustus had to change his religion from Protestant to Catholic, at which point his Protestant wife, a Hohenzollem, left him. But he didn’t lack for feminine company since his “sensuality and philandering were on a gargantuan scale.” With his collection of women he was reported to have sired 354 bastards. [Massie, Robert K., “Peter the Great: His Life and World,” Ballantine Books, New York 1980, 228-30. The number varies a bit source to source.]. “His court was the most dissolute in Europe,” known for its “boundless luxury and corruption of manners.” [”Chambers Biographical Dictionary,” J.B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia 1926, p. 52] The English writer Thomas Carlyle called him “That ever-cheerful Man of Sin.” [I add this information for those doing the Love tour.]

A study of Augustus’ right hand for this portrait is in the Musée Nationale, Algiers. It has been noted as having the redness with deformations of the phalanges that are characteristic of arthritis. [“Eighteenth Century Acquisitions” in “The Century of Mozart, Jan. 15 through March 4, 1956,” in NAMA Bulletin Vol. I, No. I, p. 82.] NAMA’s portrait was once in the collection of Baron Nathan Rothschild of Vienna. [Ibid.] NAMA’s other portrait of Augustus is the small Meißen porcelain figure in Gallery P19.


[NOTE: Propaganda: “any organization or movement working for the propagation of particular ideas, doctrines, practices...the ideas, doctrines, practices, etc. spread in this way.” Kids: think about propaganda in your life. All those TV commercials are propaganda to convince you to buy things. What colors do politicians most often wear? Our president usually wears red ties and blue suits What designs or messages can you find on the walls behind them, or in the settings (often a background wall of many shelved books indicating wisdom) they choose for interviews as they try to persuade you to their viewpoints? In factory and farm settings, more casual dress to indicate affiliation with labor and hard work, egalitarianism. What color tie did George Bush wear when he made a speech at K-State on Jan. 23? Purple, the University color. Future project for children: What props and posture would you tell an artist to put in your portrait to give messages about you? Maybe you’d be shown wearing a tee or sport shirt with the team color and number of your favorite sports player? Would you want to be shown holding a NASCAR model car, a horse figurine, your dog, a tennis racket? Would you want to be shown wearing dress clothes and shoes, or sports clothes and shoes? What do the tee shirt messages worn by your friends tell you about them? Discuss clothing and posture giving messages about you.]
RIGAUD, “Marquise d’Usson de Bonnac,” 1706-7 (F77-14). The artist was Largilliere’s friend and rival. They were the major painters of French royalty and nobility in the early 18th century. Rigaud was the outstanding court painter at the end of Louis XIV’s reign, and retained his popularity through the Regency and under Louis XV. His sitters were more likely to come from the court than Largilliere’s patrons. Rigaud’s style is cooler, his compositions more rigid and with less movement. During the early 18th century it is still Louis XIV’s taste that dominates the arts in France. The king favored “a stately reserved classicism in place of the lavish emotional Baroque art of Italy.....Order, balance, harmony and clarity were characteristics of painting according to the exacting standards of the Academy that he had founded.” [Jean Churchman, docent handbook.]

Rigaud’s sitter was an aristocrat. [In rank a marquise is higher than a countess but lower than a duchess.] The portrait is very large which makes the subject more dominating, and the painting can be “read” easily from a distance. Rigaud’s portraits are about “rank and condition of the sitter by nobility of attitude and expressiveness of gesture in an age when deportment and attitude were in fact symbols of rank to a far greater extent than they now are.” He has been called the “Van Dyck” of French painting. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 981.] The tactile sumptuousness and amplitude of Rigaud’s depiction of silk velvets adds to the status of his subjects.

Sorry, but I know nothing of this sitter’s life, or the plants she has chosen to be included, or their significance to her. Because her hair is unpowdered it has been suggested she is a widow. [Curator Roger Ward, docent lectures.] Some docents have pointed out that in the far background there is indication of a block shaped object...her husband’s tomb? What do you think?

It is interesting to compare this portrait to that of “Madame Freret Dericour” that hangs opposite.by Duplessis . The Rigaud was painted in the early 18th century (1706-7), and the Duplessis towards the century’s end (1769). The lady with the Japanese spaniel is also luxuriously dressed. With which person would you like to dine? Why? [See farther below for Duplessis.]

THE ROCOCO [We’re still in Gallery P18]

Rococo is a term in art history for an innovative French style which began to emerge c. 1700 and by the mid-century dominated Europe until it was superseded by the classical revival in the last decades of the 18th century. As it declined in favor, it received its name based on the French word “rocallle” which from the 16th century onward had denoted fancy rock and shell work for gardens. In the classical revival (Neo-Classic) period the word was derisively used against the style of Louis XV whose reign was the Rococo’s height. Mid-19th century German art historians considered Rococo to be the closing of the Baroque and therefore a decadent part of it as it was dying. However, attitudes and aesthetics change, and now it is considered to be its own distinct period rather than decayed Baroque. Rococo’s chief historian Fiske Kimball called it “an art essentially French in its grace, its gaiety and its gentleness, one of the most delightful flowerings of artistic creative genius.” [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to the Arts,” op.cit., p. 986.]

As you might have observed with the two portraits of kings, the Baroque style didn’t end abruptly with the conclusion of the 1600s, but lingered on into the 18th century. (Louis died 1715, Augustus 1733.) After Louis’ death, the rigid formal life that he required courtiers to live at
Versailles came to a close, and the focus of French social life and art moved to Paris. Artistic developments in Paris set the style for western Europe and would continue to do so through the 19th century’s many -isms.

In 1737 the Academy’s Salon was established, a government sponsored competitive exhibition held twice a year until the Revolution and annually after that. Art now is public entertainment and all classes may attend.

In Paris the nobility built luxurious mansions with more intimate spaces in which to entertain. Many smaller scaled paintings were made which were often built into a room’s elaborate but more delicate woodwork. Much of social life centered around hostesses who held gatherings in their “salons” (reception rooms) where the arts were frequent topics of discourse.

It has been said - to use stereotyped gender references - that the Baroque is a bold, macho, masculine style whereas the Rococo is refined, elegant, and feminine. A major style setter in the arts during the height of the Rococo was Madame de Pompadour, influential mistress of King Louis 15.

Didacticism, a major feature of Baroque art, lessens with the rise of the Rococo. Instead of significant subjects, many artworks feature light hearted activities with no messages other than pleasure, love, and beauty. [“Let the good times roll!” said a friend.] Under the influence of a new interest in pastels, the colors in oil paintings are more delicate, subtle, and lighter. Brush strokes are softer, wispy, and feathery. The traditional Baroque plasticity in painting, where forms spring out of the mass [e.g. the elbow and knee of Caravaggio’s “St. John”], is transformed into delicate surface play. Throughout compositions the lighting is more even.

A new type of genre subject was originated by Watteau. The Academy - not knowing in what category to exhibit his works - created a new one for them, the fete galante (party of courteous, sophisticated, fashionable, elegant people) which when set in the idyllic out-of-doors is sometimes referred to as fete champetre (literally “party in the field”).

It was Dutch genre (e.g. see STEEN; “fancy dress” genre in Gallery P17 above) that inspired 18th century French genre and especially Watteau, one of the greatest of all genre painters. In the 18th century there was a French mania for small Dutch genre works which in turn inspired French artists to take up the subject. [Curator Roger Ward, “Genre, Manners and Morals, Docent lecture, Jan. 31, 2001.]

**PATER.** “Le Gouter” and “Les Baigneuses,” 1720 (F82-35/1 and F102-35/2) These two pendant works (meant to hang together as a pair) are fine examples of Rococo painting and Watteau’s innovations. Pater had worked for a time in that master’s studio, and then inherited it. Pater followed his style and took up his new subject matter, the fete galant. Doing so made Pater an Academy member and a commercial success. Demand for his work was so high that he was said to have died of exhaustion trying to meet it. “Gouter” is French for a snack or refreshment time between luncheon and dinner, equivalent to the British tea time. Richly dressed young and beautiful people are gathered here, and romance is in the air. At the far right is a turbaned black servant in fancy dress who will serve them refreshments. [Cf. lower left of STEEN’s painting where a fancifully dressed black servant is about to serve refreshments.]
The costumes worn by some of these revelers indicate they may be actors. The same floppy big berets and neck ruffs are worn by some of the men in Watteau’s painting “The Italian Company of Actors,” c. 1729 [National Gallery of Art. This painting is illustrated p. 376, Fig. 12.14, in Brockett, Oscar G., “A History of the Theatre,” Allyn & Bacon, Inc., Boston, London, Sydney, Toronto, 1968, 5th edition.] At left the lady “sumptuously draped,” is in a 17th century Flemish style costume which recalls some worn by women in Rubens’ paintings. [Churchman, docent handbook] In the 18th century some theatrical characters continued to be costumed in 17th century dress, particularly for the production of Moliere’s plays. [Brockett, op.cit., picture caption to Fig. 12.19, p. 381.]

Theatre was an enormously popular form of entertainment in 18th century France. Amateur aristocrats put on shows in their palaces and chateaux. Large city mansions had their own private theatre wings, and in the cities were a variety of professional companies licensed by the state. Many upper class people like Voltaire wrote plays. Royalty, nobility, and the middle class performed in private amateur theatricals.

“Les Baigneuses” or the bathing party was a subject Pater developed independently of Watteau, and was one of his favorite subjects. He did nearly 30 pictures on this theme! [Churchman, docent handbook, also 1993 label] It was a titillating topic in a period when women didn’t show their legs, and they also didn’t wear underpants.

**ROUGE DIGRESSION**

In Pater’s two paintings and the pair by DeTROY (below) both men and women have brightly colored cheeks. In the 18th century the French consumed approximately two million pots of rouge each year. “Indeed the use of cosmetics was to some extent enshrined in portraiture and, perhaps more visibly, in rococo imagery of shepherdesses and Classical deities whose cheeks, particularly when represented by Francois BOUCHER, blush not with modesty but with rouge.” [Trumble, op.cit., p. 61.] The English followed the French fashion, and “The Connoisseur” commented in 1754 of numerous upper class men that “the ruddiness of their countenance or complexion owed more to the application of rouge than to fitness or good health.” [Ibid., p. 62.] Both men and women of the upper crust used the same cosmetics, perfumes, and dressed with the same sumptuousness of textiles.

**ROCOCO DECORATIVE ARTS**

In the Rococo period the French invented a new style of interior design and decorative arts also called by that name. Its characteristics are asymmetry, C and S curves (much of it in the form of foliage) and decorative shells. You can usually find stylized shells on the four corners of picture frames hanging in the Museum’s Galleries devoted to the Rococo.

Regarding the Pater PICTURE FRAMES, Curator Ward shifted his opinion on this pair. At first he dated them to 1725/26 - “early Louis XV with swept moldings, elaborate center and corner motifs. Pierced work, shells, scrolls, checkering—topnotch,” but then decided they were superb late 19th century replicas of earlier frames. However, they “are of the highest quality in terms of workmanship...” [Frames Tour, 1990, p. 19 and Ward’s post-it note affixed to title page. Regardless of when they were made, they’re excellent examples of the Rococo style. [Pentecost, NAMA “History of Frames” NAMA data base.]
**CRESSENT**, Cartel Clock, 1725 (62-1). “Cartel” means that it is a hanging wall clock. It has no base on which to stand. The design of this clock epitomizes Rococo style with its asymmetrical ornament, C form, curving foliage, and decorative shell motif. [Relate to style of Console Table in P19.] During the Rococo period the influence of the ancient world was still important in subject matter. Here Cupid, the ancient god of love, and Cronus the god of time are featured. [The Latin name for Cronus is Saturn.] Cressent made several versions of clocks with this theme. There’s a message about love here - does Cupid look happy or unhappy? Why? He is threatened by Cronus’ deadly scythe with which the older god had murdered his own father, Uranus.

The message is that Time ends all things including Love. Therefore, carpe diem (Latin, “seize the day”), gather ye rosebuds while ye may, and make hay while the sun shines.

Cressent was both a sculptor and leading furniture maker of the early Rococo who worked for royalty and the nobility. This is “ormolu, gilded metal (in this case copper alloy) which was very expensive and dangerous to make. After the metal pieces were cast, a liquid mixture of gold with mercury was applied to the surface. The pieces then were fired at a low temperature during which the poisonous mercury went off in fumes (often killing the workers), leaving a thin film of gold attached to the metal. This process was repeated several times until there was a thicker surface of gold that could be polished.

Cressent was born in Amiens, but moved to Paris where he joined the gilders’ guild. He was also a member of the Academy St. Luke (an artists’ association). He married the widow of a cabinet maker, thus obtaining both the deceased man’s shop and his patron the Duke of Orleans who was Regent during the minority of Louis XV. The powerful Duke protected Cressent against the government’s strict guild regulations, so that Cressent could do both the wood work and his own casting of metal mounts which should have been farmed out. His brass (copper and zinc) mounts are extraordinarily sculptural and “gutsy.” [Curator Christina Nelson, “Case by Case: A Closer Look at European Case Furniture,” Fellows Walk, April 20, 1997.]

[GALLERY SEARCH: Can you find Cupid and Cronus in another art work in this gallery? Is the message the same?]

**DE TROY.** “A Lady Attaching a Bow to a Gentleman’s Sword,” 1734 (82-366/1), and “A Lady Showing a Bracelet to her Suitor,” 1734 (82-366/2). [The painter’s name is pronounced “dit-twah”] Although he painted large mythological and history paintings in the grand manner, his finest and most original contribution to art was his “tableaux de modes” (scenes of the fashionable) of which scarcely more than a dozen examples exist. However, even in de Troy’s day these were his works preferred by connoisseurs. Like Pater and Watteau, de Troy shows us fashionable people but they are indoors, rather than out-of-doors as in the fete galant. In the interior where a lady ties a ribbon on her lover’s sword, the clock has the same ancient gods as on Cressent’s clock [see immediately above], but here the message is Love triumphs over Time since Cupid has disarmed Cronus and taken away his deadly scythe.

DeTroy gives great detail about 18th century fashions of clothing and interiors. The upper class spent hours dressing and undressing for a complex social life. They might change clothing three to four times a day. [“The 18th Century Woman,” ABC Video Enterprises and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982.] The lady tying a ribbon is wearing an elegant silk informal
morning dress called a sacque, a garment characterized by a voluminous back fall of extra fabric attached to the shoulders. Lace ruffles protrude from the sleeves. Her lover wears the latest male fashion for the early 1720s. “His waistcoat is a multi-colored floral brocade, while the greatcoat is richly embroidered with silver in a more abstracted floral or arabesque pattern. This design is carried over onto the voluminous, rolled up boot sleeves and the trim on the edge of the black tri-corner hat.” [Churchman, docent handbook.]

In the other painting a lady stands before her dressing table which is furnished with 18th century silver containers for makeup and accessories, and a mirror and jewelry box of red lacquer. She is either getting dressed for - or has returned from - a grand social occasion such as a court appearance. She is halfway into (or out of) a red velvet gown with short train, ornamented in the front with lavish embroidery down its center opening. This type of gown was known as a manteau and it was worn on such special occasions. Under it she is wearing a white silk chemise with exquisite lace ruffles, over which there is a tight-fitting sapphire colored petticoat. [Churchman, docent handbook.]

She is holding a bracelet “with a prominent locket which contains, we may assume, a miniature portrait of the young man himself. In a passage of consummate sensitivity the lovers’ nearly touching hands and the gentleman’s profile are reflected in the mirror. The silver pitcher behind them reflects the artist himself standing at an easel, a detail which is scarcely visible to the naked eye.” [Curator Ward, NAMA Calendar of Events,” April 1983, p. 2.] Note the Rococo carvings of the walls, and an overdoor painting built into the room’s woodwork, another way of exhibiting paintings rather than hanging them detachably on the walls. On the background shelves can be seen imported Chinese porcelains which were avidly collected. [Ward, “A bountiful Decade,” op. Cit., p. 124.] The inlaid floor pattern is very similar to that of our 18th century French period room. The artist has signed and dated the painting on the crumpled piece of paper at the lower right.

Compared to Pater, De Troy gives considerably sharper attention to the details of costume and accessories. The painter is little known, but is the other “greatest” French genre painter besides Watteau. He brings the subjects back indoors, and the great detail of his rich interiors are as interesting as his people. His “Reading of Moliere” brought $3 million 3 years ago. For exhibition the French Academy invented for him the category “Tableau de Mode” showing the contemporary upper class. [Curator Ward, “Genre...” docent lecture, Jan. 31, 2001.]

The painter also designed tapestries and he collaborated with Boucher in 1734 on the decoration of one of the Queen’s rooms at Versailles. [Osborne, “Oxford companion to the Arts,” op.cit., p. 1162.] His life took a sad turn. Although an Academy member and professor, his wife died prematurely and he lost all seven of their children. The final blow was when the French Academy dismissed him in 1751 and he died a year later. [Churchman, docent handbook.]

**CRESSENT** Commode (chest of drawers), 1745-9, oak and pine carcass, marquetry of various woods (probably bois satine - satinwood - and amaranth) gilt copper alloy (ormolu) mounts, and marble top. (65-19). On the ormolu pieces is the C crown tax mark indicating the commode was made during the period 1745-9. The style is Regence, a transition from the Baroque to the high Rococo. The characteristic of asymmetry is not emphasized here, but there are certainly beautiful flowing curves and a shell. The contrasting light and dark woods of the marquetry (wood veneer) are cut to echo and shadow the ormolu designs.
Cressent designed and supervised both the making of the veneers and the design of the sculptured ormolu metal pieces. This was against strict regulations of guilds at the time, but the French Regent protected him from these laws. By being able to design both, his furniture has an organic unity to it. “There is little doubt that the characteristic Louis XV commode of bombe form, supported on four legs of cabriole shape, in which the gilt-bronze mounts perform a significant decorative function, owes its inception to Cressent. He exerted considerable influence in his lifetime and numbered several foreign princes among his clients.” [Osborne, Harold, Edt., “The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,” Oxford U. Press, Oxford & NY 1985, p. 286]

The world of 18th century French furniture makers was complex and regulated with many different guilds. The menuisier and eboniste guild included two types of wood furniture makers. The menuisier mostly made chairs, beds, and smaller furnishings. The eboniste more often made “case” furniture, that is to say cabinets, commodes, and desks (all of which have drawers), and also armoires. A piece of furniture was made usually by a number of members of different guilds; the chair frames were carved, and then sent to the gilder, and then to the upholsterer. The elaborate veneers on case furniture were created by the eboniste, and then the object went to a craftsman in metal who made and cast the gilt metal mounts. The tightly regulated guilds squabbled with each other in this complex commercial system as to who did what. Protected by the Regent, Cressent was able to control all of the wood and metal work, resulting in an organic wholeness to his designs. [Curator Christina Nelson, “Case by Case: a Closer Look at European Case Furniture,” Fellows Walk, April 20, 1997. Notes by Pentecost.]

If the patron didn’t order directly from the furniture maker, he turned to a marchand mercier whom Denis Diderot (encyclopedist, art critic, Enlightenment philosopher) snippily called “Sellers of everything, makers of nothing.” The marchand mercier pulled everything together for the patron. He might serve as interior designer, and even as the furniture designer. He was powerful and influential. He and his fellow go-betweens also bought porcelain and had it set in gilt bronze mounts. They sold to the court and the rich. Fortunately they were wonderful record keepers. Their receipt books are very important in identifying furniture. Some furniture can be identified as being from a certain marchand mercier, so well kept are their records, and often their individual tastes can be identified. They also dealt in used furniture. [Ibid.]

The cabinet is veneered, that is to say the case or “carcass” wood underneath is entirely covered on the visible sides with pieces of finer wood. This is in contrast to the inlay technique where pieces of wood are set into incised areas of the case. The case wood here which we don’t see is of oak. Walnut was also used in this period. There had been an oak blight during the 17th century, so oak was of inferior quality...which also explains why the French Navy was inferior in this period. Veneers at this time were often exotic, expensive imported woods. Here the dark wood is kingswood, a type of rosewood that came from South and Central America. The lighter areas are probably satinwood. Some 50 different exotic woods from all over the world were used during this period. To actually determine this commode’s lighter wood veneer the Museum conservator would have to chip off a piece for study which doesn’t seem warranted. [Ibid.]

To create the contrasting wood surface, the eboniste would draw a pattern on the wood of the case, then cut the veneer pieces to fit. The veneers were glued onto the carcass. The finished veneer surfaces were either shellacked or coated with beeswax. The marble top is original to the commode. The sides are cabinet doors with vertical hinges. [Ibid.]

Cressent didn’t sign or mark his wares. This was not required by law until 1751. He was protected by the Regent and so famous by then that he probably felt he didn’t need to do so. The
commode dates from 1745-49 according to the tax marks, and is in the Regency transitional style. There was an extra tax on the copper used in each ormolu mount, so each piece has a tiny stamp on it (a crown and the letter C) to show that the tax was paid. At one time this commode was in a Rothschild collection. [Ibid.]

LIOTARD  “A Frankish Woman and her Servant,” Swiss, c. 1750 (56-3). The artist was the son of a French Huguenot who took refuge in Switzerland after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes. He traveled extensively and while in Italy met a group of wealthy young Englishmen on the Grand Tour. He was invited to join them for a visit to Istanbul, where he was so taken by exotic Turkish culture that he stayed for 5 years (1738-43), during which time he adopted the dress and manners of a Turk. Later he moved to Vienna.

Liotard was very much in demand as a portrait painter and often persuaded his sitters to wear Oriental costume. “Liotard was a forerunner of those Romantic painters specializing in orientalized subjects who gained great favor in the nineteenth century.” [Goheen, op.cit., p. 68]

The Turkish world was famous for its sumptuous textiles which were imported into Europe and influenced European textile patterns. Note the lady’s Oriental pattens with the high double heels, her long smoking pipe, henna-dyed fingertips, and the coffeepot and comb on the servant’s tray. [Ibid] The scene is in a Turkish women’s bath house as shown by the water taps and basin [which might be compared to our contemporary day-spa!]. In Islamic countries it was the custom to have body hair removed with depilatories while one visited the bath house. The women wear high shoes to keep their feet out of the mess on the floor. [Thanks to Docent Emerita Janice Stuerzl for the shoe and bath information.] This work is oil on canvas, but Liotard was an undisputed master of the newly popular pastel medium, and did three slightly smaller pastel versions of this subject. [Goheen, op.cit.]

THE TURKISH CRAZE

Although European countries were often at war with Turkey and in 1683 Vienna was almost conquered by the Ottoman army, there was increasing interest in that exotic culture as Liotard’s work shows. Europeans collected Turkish ceramics, rugs, and textiles. They went to masquerade parties and balls disguised as Turks. [See Hochst porcelain child figure in Turkish costume, with mask. This is expected to be installed in hall Gallery P21.] They built Turkish “tent” rooms in their houses. Madame de Pompadour, the leader of fashion and artistic taste during the Rococo, had a “Chambre a la turque” as the Grande Chambre (major reception hall) in her chateau at Bellevue. It contained an overdoor painting of her as a Turkish Sultlana by Carle van Loo, in which she holds a long pipe similar to that in Liotard’s painting. [Mitford, Nancy, “Madame de Pompadour,” Harper & Row, New York 1954, pp. 116-7.] European novels, plays, and operas were given Turkish locations, including Mozart’s “Abduction from the Seraglio” and Voltaire’s “Zaire.”

“The visit of a “...Turkish delegation to Paris in 1742 stimulated the French elite’s taste for exotic interior, No. 3, Winter 2006, p. 19.] Decoration known as ‘turquerie.’” There were several such fantasy rooms at Versailles. [Kisluk-Grosheide, Danielle, “French Royal Furniture in the Metropolitan Museum,” Met. Museum of Art Bulletin, Vol. LXIII
STRIPES IN & OUT OF FASHION

Turkish striped textiles increased the 18th century vogue for stripes. In the Middle Ages striped clothing was a pejorative sign of exclusion worn by heretics, clowns, jugglers, hangmen, prostitutes, disloyal knights, traitors, the infirm, the insane, those with lowly occupations, Muslims, and Jews. Representing his foreignness, stripes were worn by the black magi—“king” in some depictions of Epiphany. In the Middle Ages Joseph was often treated with disrespect and so wears stripes. [His reputation increases in the Renaissance, and in Baroque works he often has Jovian majesty.]

At the end of the Middle Ages and in the early Renaissance striped clothing began to be fashionable in northern Italy and spread. Frances I and Henry 8 wore stripes. Dark stripes were preferred during the Baroque period.

In the 18th century the negative associations of stripes were completely lost. They were seen in a great variety of lighter and brighter colors. People liked to pretend they were sultans and sultanas wearing stripes. A striped cloth was often enough to characterize a costume as “oriental.” In the 2nd half of the 18th century stripes were triumphantly everywhere on clothing and upholstery textiles, and used by all classes and all political persuasions. Increasingly taste swung to the Neo-Classical style which favored the expansion of straight-lined stripes over the curves of Rococo textile patterns. By 1775 stripes were also prominent in the American colonies, and the American flag is a result. Influenced by the new American republic, French Revolutionists adopted stripes as a political statement, as much a symbol of the new French republic as Marianne, the cockade, fasces, and Cap of Liberty. Napoleon’s campaigns in the east continued the vogue for stripes. It was fashionable to have a striped “tent” room within one’s home, and stripes remained popular throughout the eclectic styles of the 19th century. [Pastoureau, Michel, “The Devil’s Cloth: A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric,” translated by Jody Gladdin from French; Columbia University Press, NY 2001, passim.]

Note that Joachim Le Breton by Labille-Guiard [(94-34) in Gallery P23) is very much in fashion. He wears a brilliantly striped waistcoat. He was a Revolutionist and later one of Napoleon’s art administrators.

DUPLESSIS. “Madame Freret Dericour Holding a Dog,” 1769 (53-80). This wealthy woman holds a Japanese spaniel, a breed newly introduced to France in the mid to late 1760s. [Curator Coe, Ralph T., “The Baroque and Rococo in France and Italy,” in “Apollo” (all NAMA issue), XCVI, 1972, p. 71.] Her exotic pet must have been quite a conversation piece, and she gives it a prominent place in her portrait. The garniture ceramics behind her are in the Neo-Classical style which is increasingly fashionable during the last half of the 18th century.

Little is know of the sitter other than her name. Former Louvre director Pierre Rosenberg was able to identify the portrait when he examined a Salon catalogue of 1769 which belonged to the painter Saint-Aubin. The latter artist had illustrated his catalogue with small sketches of the paintings he had seen. In its section devoted to Duplessis’ paintings (there were 10 shown), Saint-Aubin sketched the Museum’s picture in the margin and labeled it as Mme. Freret-Dericour. [Churchman, docent handbook.]

Like many 18th century French artists, Duplessis studied in Rome (1745-49). A member of the Academy, he became director of the Versailles galleries under Louis XVI. He painted the
king, his queen Marie Antoinette, Benjamin Franklin and the important personages of the day. This work is one of his masterpieces. [Ibid.] He was “one of the leading portraitists of his generation.” [1993 label]

The sitter is “the very essence of 18th century aristocratic femininity...” Her status is shown by her luxurious surroundings: the newly introduced dog breed, her costume of fur, silk, pearls, and Brussels lace.

Point out to children that her unlined face and fresh complexion indicate she is young. The white hair was from fashionable powdering in this period. Men and even children also powdered or wore white wigs. [A rich person had a “powder room” to keep the stuff from getting all over the house. From that arises our euphemism “powder room” for a bathroom, since in the 20th century it was considered ill mannered to fuss with makeup in public, so we retired to the lavatory to put it on.]

**VERNET**, “Seaport with Antique Ruins: Morning, 1751,” and “Coastal Harbor with a Pyramid: Evening,” 1751, (F84-66/1,2). The pendants (a pair meant to hang together) are signed and dated in the bottom right corners, “Joseph Vernet f./Roma 1751.” The artist was the premier landscape painter of 18th century France, and enormously successful. The son of a humble Avignon coach painter, at the age of 20 he traveled to Rome, his trip sponsored by a local aristocratic amateur. He lived there 20 years, from 1733 to 1753. There he studied marine painting and admired the Italian coastline. He also admired the picturesque and dramatic qualities of Salvator Rosa’s work. From Italy Vernet sent paintings to the Salon in Paris for exhibition.

He established an international reputation for portraying the idyllic Roman countryside and the beautiful coastline between Rome and Naples. The critics unanimously admired him. He was acclaimed for his sensitivity and veracity. Denis Diderot asserted that Vernet’s art surpassed that of even Claude Lorrain, the great French landscapist of the 17th century. [See two works by Lorrain in Gallery P14.] On his return to France Vernet was elected a member of the Academy. Louis XV commissioned him to paint a series of the sea-ports of France. The 16 he completed are in the Louvre. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op. cit., p. 1185.]

Vernet’s rise to fame paralleled the change in taste occurring at mid-century. Those bored with Rococo style, finding it both frivolous and merely decorative, admired his direct observation from nature and his subtle distinctions of atmospheric conditions and color. [Curator Roger Ward, “A Bountiful Decade,” NAMA, 1987, p. 144. Compare to Boucher’s magnificent but quite artificial landscape in Gallery P19.] Vernet’s interest in painting landscape pendants, and even double pairs of canvases meant to be exhibited together with specificity of natural phenomena, can be seen as an aspect of the Enlightenment’s interest in classification. “In our very good collection of 18th century French paintings they will provide exactly the right complement to the elegant fetes galantes of Pater and the tableaux de modes by Detroy, and a perfect counterpoise to the marvelous landscape by Boucher.” [Curator Roger Ward, docent handout and label when the pair were first presented to the public.]

The locations of the pendant scenes have not been identified. They may be a compilation of coastal scenes or entirely imaginary. Both feature ruins, among them a pyramid. In Rome the artist would have seen a pyramid about 117 feet tall (and a tourist goal) that was built as the tomb of a Roman tribune, Caius Cestius who died in 43 B.C. [Fattorusso, op. cit., illustrates it on p. 403.] For the passion for ruins and depicting them in the 18th century, see essay on RUINS PAINTING, below, in Gallery P20.]
Vernet’s “distinction of atmospheric conditions and topographical variations, times of day, climatic conditions, even seasons of the year reflects the 18th century obsession with classifying all aspects of the natural world.” [1993 label by Ward.]

These pendants were commissioned by Monsieur Peihon, advisor and secretary to Louis XV. (Conseiller-Secretaire du Roi), and one of the artist’s most important patrons in the 1740s-1750s. As the inscriptions indicate they were painted in Rome in 1751. Later they were exhibited in the 1753 Paris Salon. When the patron’s collection was dispersed at auction in 1763 the pendants went successively to four other private French collections before reaching NAMA. [Curator Ward, docent handout and label op.cit.].


David Willaume I was a Huguenot who was part of that 1685 wave of immigration into England and other nations with more religious tolerance than France. He was one of the best and most influential goldsmiths to arrive in this surge, and he became one of the most successful in London where he enjoyed the richest and most influential patronage. [Curator Christina Nelson, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” April 1993, p. 2.] One of the most successful London smiths, he established a banking department and became very wealthy. [Turner, Jane, Edt., “The Dictionary of Art,” Grove, MacMillan Ltd. Publishers, London, 1996, Vol. 33, p. 195.] He made many outstanding pieces, enjoying the patronage of the wealthiest clients from the latter part of William III & Mary’s reigns to the end of George I’s. In 1728 he retired and purchased a manor in Bedfordshire. His son David II continued the firm and bank and became High Sheriff of Bedfordshire. [Curator Christina Nelson, op.cit.]

David I’s lidded cups with stands were made soon after his arrival in England at a time when French influence was first strongly felt in English silver. The skills of the French immigrant smiths were higher than those in England. They contributed to English smithing more delicate and elaborate designs, superior casting and engraving, and cut-card work - all of which are seen here. Their superior craftsmanship influenced many English smiths so that the art form of silver smithing reached its height in England during the 18th century. On the cup lids and bases are examples of cut-card work that the Huguenot smiths introduced to England, consisting of applied flat pieces of ornament cut from flat sheet silver. The delicate and elaborate design engraved on the cups and stands are derived from French sources. [2005 label]

Items of great luxury, these cups were probably used for drinking chocolate. They may have been commissioned to celebrate a special event such as the birth of a child. [Curator Nelson, op.cit.] Two-handled cups, with and without lids, that commemorated events “became widely popular during the eighteenth century.” They were often used as horse race prizes. [Ensko, Stephen G. C. and Wenham, Edward, “English Silver 1695 - 1825, Robert Ensko, New York 1937, p. 62.], and the form is still used today for prizes and trophies.

[NAMA has a coffeepot by the son David Willaume II or “Jr., 1744, George II. It is part of the Folgers collection. See Pentecost, Lee, “English Silver and the Folgers Coffee Silver Collection,” Fall, 2001, p. 15.]
It might be noted that the father of American Patriot and Boston silversmith Paul Revere, was also a Huguenot refugee and a smith. He chose to flee French persecution by settling in the English colony of Massachusetts.

**CHAARDIN.** “Still Life with Cat and Fish,” 1728 (F29-2) The artist has been called a “true genius and the finest painter of still-life and genre scenes in 18th century France..... His still lifes are composed of simple elements: kitchen utensils, vegetables, game, baskets of fruit, fish, and so forth.” [1993 label by Curator Ward] This painting was completed the year that Chardin was admitted to the Academy as a painter “skilled in animals and fruits.” His early still lifes sometimes featured live animals, and there are 6 still life paintings with different cats.

[Rosenberg, Pierre, “A Chardin for Kansas City,” NAMA Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 6, Jan. 1981, pp. 21-33.] To me this work hardly seems a still life since the cat is in motion. At any moment it probably will steal the fish and vanish from the scene. The painting’s pendant (Burrell Collection, Glasgow) also features a cat, but with a ray and oysters. [Rowlands in Ward, Edt., “A Bountiful Decade: Selected Acquisitions...,” NAMA 1987, p. 110.]

Born in Paris, the artist spent his entire life there. He was a maverick who succeeded, since he was not Academy trained, had few official commissions, won no prizes, and never made the artistic pilgrimage to Italy. He was a protégé of Largilliere (see this same gallery, above) who helped him gain Academy acceptance. [Churchman, docent handbook.] He was Treasurer of the Academy for 20 years. Engravings of his works made him well known during his lifetime.


17th century Dutch still lifes were very popular with many 18th century French collectors. Chardin met that taste with success, but his approach differs from the Dutch. He is not as interested in expensive luxury goods, the play of light on different surfaces, illusionism, a brushless surface or allegorical meaning that characterize the Dutch still life... Instead his paintings feature homely everyday objects and an interest in the texture of visible, palpable, buttery pigment. [NAMA Adult Programs Manager Carol Inge, July 8, 1988, lecture to docents and attendees of National. Endowment of the Humanities Summer Institute, Central Mo. State U.]

“...in contrast to the shining clarity and precision that characterizes the rendition of surfaces in the work of Claesz...Chardin’s manner is soft and atmospheric.”

Actually it seems that “Chardin’s handling was largely inspired by Rembrandt, and, like the Dutch master’s, his touch is free, creating objects with patches of color, blurring edges and merging forms; sometimes his surfaces are thick and impasted, sometimes they are covered by the merest glaze of color. And the magical result, in the Goncourts’ phrase, is a ‘sensation of the actual presence of things.”’ [Held, Julius S. and Posner, Donald, “17th and 18th Century Art,” Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, New York, no date, pp. 314-315. The Goncourt brothers were 19th century French critics who reintroduced a taste for 18th century art.] Chardin’s French contemporary, the art critic Denis Diderot (also encyclopedist, philosopher, man of the Enlightenment) praised Chardin’s work for its realism.

Chardin developed his own technique which achieved “great depth of tone by successive applications of the loaded brush and a subtle use of scumbled colour.... He was the exact contemporary of Boucher.” [Osborne, op. Cit., p 220.] There could hardly be a greater contrast. Chardin lacks Boucher’s Rococo aesthetic and artifice, and Boucher lacks Chardin’s realism and painterly surface. Yet their works were often bought by the same collectors.

During his lifetime Chardin’s paintings were bought by Louis XV of France, Catherine the

In the 20th century he has been much admired by painters of many schools for the abstract strength of his compositions and his interest in paint for itself. [Ibid.]

IMPORTANT NOTE: Curators have not yet lectured to docents on the following galleries. Therefore the following information should be emended in the future to coincide with curatorial opinion.

**GALLERY P19**


Mme. de Pompadour and her brother the Marquis de Marigny “controlled all the artists in France, and were so tactful and knowledgeable that none of this touchy breed of men seems to have objected one single moment to their rule.” [Mitford, Nancy, “Madame de Pompadour,” Harper & Row, Publishers, New York & Evanston, 1954, p. 179.] Through his sister Marigny became the director of the King’s buildings and of considerable influence on the arts.

**BOUCHER** “Landscape with a Water Mill,” 1740 (59-11). A great Rococo painter, as an apprentice Boucher made etchings after Watteau’s works, and he is the painter most associated with high Rococo style. He was the favorite painter of Madame de Pompadour, making many works for her and giving her art lessons. He was appointed court painter to her lover King Louis XV (“Premier Peintre du Roi), and was elected Director of the Academie Royale.

Multi-talented Boucher also made Pompadour’s costumes and stage sets for her court opera appearances, and for ballet. For a number of years he was stage designer for the Opera (Academie Royale de Musique), and he also provided costumes and stage designs for some of his friend Favart’s productions. [Reid, J. T., Edt., “Dictionary of Art,” Grove, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1996, Vol. 4, pp. 515-519.] [For Favart, see FALCONET’s Sevres figure “Annette and Lubin,” illustrating the play Favart staged that featured his wife in the role of Annette. To be installed in hall Gallery P21.] In Brockett’s “History of the Theatre” Boucher is listed as one of the major theatre designers. [op.cit, pp. 367,386.] This landscape is like a stage set with side flats and a painted backdrop.

Boucher even designed fans and slippers, as well as colossal decorative schemes for the royal palaces at Versailles and Fontainebleau. According to the de Goncourt brothers Boucher was “one of those men who typify the tastes of a century, who express it, personify it, and incarnate it.” [Reid, op.cit.,., p. 519. The 19th century brothers were French painting critics who wrote the first Scholarly study of Boucher in 1862, and fostered a taste for the Neo-Rococo revival in the 19th century].

Idealized country life was a theme in much of Boucher’s work. He ignored the ugly, hard realities of peasant life, as did the aristocracy. It’s in this century that the French Queen Marie Antoinette dressed as peasant and pretended to be a milkmaid, and her friend the Duchesse de
Cauderousse dressed as a peasant. [See VIGEE-LEBRUN in Gallery P23.] The unrealistic concept that peasants led happier and better lives than courtiers and city folk was fostered by Rousseau’s popular writings. This way of thinking also was a popular form of pastoralism based on the classical tradition. [See CLAUDE, above, Gallery P14.] It is a theme in the performing arts of the time. [The story of “Annette and Lubin” is an example of pastoralism in drama. This Sevres sculpture will be installed in hall Gallery 21.]

For several years Boucher studied in Italy where he saw and sketched this famous round temple ruin at Tivoli, a favored summer resort of the ancient Romans. The location is about 20 miles east of Rome. It had been built c. 27 B.C. and 14 A.D. during the reign of Augustus. Perhaps originally dedicated to Vesta, it has popularly been known as the Temple of the Sibyl. It is of the Corinthian order with 10 of its 18 columns now standing, and is romantically situated on a jutting crag above the gorge of the Anio River. It was (and still is) a popular site to visit, and the little temple appears over and over again in European paintings and drawings. It is the antique monument that most frequently is seen in Claude’s early works. [Roethlisberger, Marcel, “Claude Lorain: The Drawings,” University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1968, 2 Vols; see p.87 in the Catalogue Volume.] The admired ruin was also replicated in architecture as pavilions decorating northern European gardens.

For the 18th century passion for and cultural attitudes towards RUINS, see the essay in Gallery P20 below in connection with the two Panini ruin paintings scheduled to be exhibited there.

The water mill is thought to be one near Beauvais where some of Boucher’s tapestry designs were executed. He created many tapestry designs, and in 1755 was appointed Director of the Gobelins factory.

Compare the blasted tree on the lower right to the similar tree in Rosa’s landscape in Gallery P16. This motif which Rosa originated appears in many landscapes over the centuries. [Cf. It also appears in Cole’s “The Old Mill at Sunset” in the American Art Department.]

Boucher’s landscape was on view to the public at the government sponsored Salons of 1740 and 1741. During the latter exhibition it hung with a pendant “The Forest,” now in the Louvre. “These two paintings are among Boucher’s most rare and beautiful works...” [Goheen, op.cit., p. 79]

In the early 19th century the English landscape painter Constable would chide Boucher’s landscapes for the “pastorality of the opera house.” They are artificial rather than real. Usually his plants can’t be identified, and are indicated by wispy, feathery non-determinant brush strokes.. Boucher objected to real nature on the ground that it was “too green and badly lit.” It needed to be improved! [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 151.] For foliage he favored the blue-green colors you see here and in his “Callisto” hanging nearby. Whether you care for this hue or not, Boucher is a master of exquisite color. [Ibid.]

Although not original to the painting, its frame is an 18th century antique that is authentic in period and style, according to Curator Roger Ward. [Frames Tour, by Docents Farnen and Pierce with Ward’s approval, 1990, p. 19.]

**BOUCHER** “Jupiter in the Guise of Diana and the Nymph Callisto,” signed and dated 1759 (32-29). Following the Rococo taste for amorous subjects, one of Boucher’s favorite themes was the love affairs of the gods. This is one of the finest of his small mythological canvases. [Curator Ward, docent lecture; also KC Star, July 10, 1983, p. F 11]. Much of Boucher’s success came


The nymph Callisto was among the virgin companions of the virgin goddess Diana (Greek: Artemis) who demanded strict chastity of her followers. [Diana is also goddess of the hunt which explains the dead animals in the scene.] Jupiter (Zeus) desired Callisto but found that the only way in which he could get close enough to seduce her was to assume the guise of Diana. Here his eagle at the top right lets us know that Callisto is really resting in his lap, and not Diana’s as Callisto thinks. The goddess was enraged when she discovered Callisto’s pregnancy. Jupiter transformed Callisto into a bear to hide her from Diana’s wrath, but the goddess was not deceived and shot the bear with her arrows. [Details of this part of the story vary.] In any event Callisto died giving birth to a son Arcas, ancestor of the Arcadians. Zeus rescued Callisto by making her immortal and placing her in the heavens as the Great Bear constellation (Ursus Major). Her son became Ursus Minor, Little Bear. We know these constellations today as the Big and Little Dipper.

According to Sir Kenneth Clark in his book “The Nude,” Boucher is one of the three greatest painters of women’s flesh, the other two being Rubens and Renoir.

Callisto’s glowing white skin is set off by the pink drapery and blue-green foliage. This titillating seduction with its allusions to lesbianism and transvestism would have been suitable for boudoir or bedroom, and because of its composition which reads better if the viewer is lower, it was probably planned to be set into the woodwork as an overdoor painting. [Director Ted Coe, docent lectures.] Boucher found his models for female nudes among the members of the Paris Corps de Ballet. They were not paid for their dancing but were prostitutes looking for rich protectors. The law didn’t crack down on the Ballet dancers as it did on common prostitutes. [Carol Inge, NAMA Director of Adult Programs, “French 18th Century Art,” 2nd lecture of 3, Nov. 23, 1986.]


By the time of the French Revolution Boucher’s works were derided, and he was seen as “the depraved painter of a depraved society,” who painted for the despised monarchy. Neo-Classicism now ruled. It was not until during the Romantic period that interest turned to him again leading to the revival of the French Rococo style in the 19th century. [Turner, op.cit., p. 515.]


On occasion there may be exhibited with the painting the only preliminary study for it that has survived, a chalk drawing of “Three Putti in Clouds” (F83-27).

Also by Boucher in the collection is the image of “Leda and the Swan” which the Sevres
MYTHOLOGY IN ART OF THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURIES:

French Rococo artists often turned to ancient sources, as increasingly in the 18th century more was discovered about antiquity and published. Studies on the revelations at Pompeii and Herculaneum spurred this on. Education was wider spread, and many middle class people had classical educations.

Knowledge of myth remained a crucial requirement for every educated person, as it had been since the Renaissance. The visual arts, theater, and literature were loaded with references to it, so that myth was both a symbol of culture and a necessary element of sociability. However, there was little allegory in the 18th century and early 19th. Mythology was no longer expected to be a vehicle for hidden moral truths, and its use in glorifying the monarchy diminished. Venus replaced the Sun-King-Apollo. Images of sensual delight, beauty, and eroticism replaced those of virtue and glory. [Le Leyzour, Philippe, “On Mythology in the Eighteenth Century,” in “The Loves of the Gods: Mythological Painting from Watteau to David,” Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Rizzoli, 1992, pp. 20-29. ]

The great achievement of the 18th century is to have transformed mythology - which both State and Church had tried to recuperate for their own goals of glorification and moralizing - into what it was originally, a song of happiness...Under Louis XV and Louis XVI the iconography of the king as an Olympian or a hero of Roman history disappeared almost entirely. However, it would resurface strongly under Napoleon at the end of the century. [Marandel, J. Patrice, “The Loves of the Gods,” (review of Kimbell exhibit cited immediately above) in “The Journal of Art, Vol. 4, No. 9, Nov. 1991, pp. 52-53.] In the 18th century before the Revolution, mythological subjects are pretexts for displays of sensuous subjects and Rococo aesthetics, creating what is often a world of erotic fancy. [Ibid.] Boucher’s nudes are good examples.

CANALETTO “The Clock Tower in the Piazza San Marco,” 1728-30 (55-36). Northern European visitors to Italy wanted to see other places besides Rome, and Venice was high on their list. Among the travelers were wealthy young men chaperoned by their tutors. As part of their education they took the Grand Tour through western Europe. They and the other tourists wanted souvenirs of places they visited, and a number of Italian view painters (vedutists) found their careers in meeting the demand for these subjects. [Today we buy much more affordable postcards of the places we’ve seen.]

Among the greatest of these painters was Canaletto, famous for his very precise depictions of the Venice’s architecture. Aiding his accuracy was a technological box device called the “camera obscura” (Latin: dark chamber). It seems to have been known at the time of Aristotle but, according to Vasari, it wasn’t put to use for drawing until the Renaissance and Alberti in 1457.

You are standing in the heart of Venice with your back to the Grand Canal. The space before you between the church and bell tower was called “Il Broglio” (Intrigue) “because from 10 a.m. to noon only the nobles were allowed to meet there to traffic in appointments and to hatch their plots.” It is part of Venice’s major open public space, the Piazza St. Marco. To your left is the base of the Campanile (bell tower) and Logetta (small loggia) built at its foot by Sansovino in
On your right is the basilica of San Marco. The famous clock tower dates from the late 15th century and its dial bears the signs of the Zodiac. On it is the winged lion of St. Mark which was often used as an emblem for the city-state. On top of the clock are two statues of Moors who sounded out the time by hitting the bell.

Genre touches enliven the scene: the many different pedestrians, dogs, the shop at far left and the tented market stalls beyond the loggetta. On the flat roofs are poles to support awnings. That area was and still is used as an out-of-door living space called an “altana.” [Berendt, John, “The City of Falling Angels,” The Penguin Press, New York 2005, p. 13.]

Today the old Venetian buildings in Canaletto’s paintings are carefully studied by architectural preservationists. They can compare the high water marks he painted on some of them with those in modern photographs, to determine how much the tides have risen and the buildings have settled since the artist’s time. This helps decide which buildings need immediate protection and restoration work. [Thanks, Docent Jo Marie Hogan!]

Precise as this view may appear, Canaletto did sometimes alter proportions and architectural details of the buildings to suit his compositions. The bell tower windows were not quite like these are, and he changed the proportions of the central public space. [Carol Inge Hockett (former NAMA Adult Programs Manager, now Coordinator of School and Family Programs at Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University), “The Arm Chair Traveler: European Vistas,” NAMA lecture for the public, July 14, 2006.]

GUARDI, “View of the Dogana and Santa Maria della Salute,” 1767-69 (30-21): Another popular Venetian vedutist, gives us another major view of the city that tourists would have seen had they been in the Piazza San Marco at the edge of the Grand Canal, but with their backs turned to the clocktower. Across the Canal on the right is the Church of S. Maria della Salute, a 17th century Baroque building by Longhena. Towards the left is the Dogana da Mar, the Maritime Customs Office, built in 1682. Acting as its weather vane is a revolving statue of Fortune mounted on the small tower. [“Michelin: Italy,” op.cit, p. 229.]

Another view painting has rightly been contrasted with those of Canaletto. Whereas the older master provides solid suggestions of buildings and of place, Guardi’s cavases...resonate instead with movement, flashes of light, and calligraphic flourishes... [he is] more fanciful and Rococo...” [Rowlands, op.cit., 457, 458.]

Where have we seen a similar style? Magnasco’s influence can be detected in the dark foreground and the “calligraphic brio of figures and lines.” [Ibid., p. 460. Magnasco’s “Campfire Scene with Vagabond and Musketeer,” c. 1715, is in Gallery P16.] “His handling of paint derives from Magnasco, whose sharp angular touch he adopted.” [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 519.]

Another influence on Guardi was the Venetian vedutist Marieschi. [See his two paintings in Gallery P22.] Guardi’s “brio and play of light were indebted to Marieschi’s style. When Guardi himself took up view painting around 1755, in a few cases he even adopted some of Michele’s [Marieschiis] compositions.” [Ibid., p. 373.]
With a few large exceptions, most of Guardi’s paintings are small, some half the size of a postcard!  [Ibid., p. 520.]

Guardi’s reputation didn’t match Canaletto’s, but he came to be more appreciated in the last half of the 19th century (when the Impressionists were developing their techniques.) Francesco Guardi was the most famous of his artistic family. His father and two brothers were also painters, and his sister married Giovanni Battista Tiepolo who painted the Museum’s “Allegorical Scene: A Woman Ruler Triumphant over Discord.” [Now in Gallery P20.]

VENETIAN TOURISM

Often male tourists came to Venice for more than seeing the unique and beautiful city and its artistic treasures. Because of the city’s sexual freedom and the population’s high proportion of prostitutes, it earned the notorious reputation as the naughty playground of Europe. “After gambling, extramarital sex was the most favored pastime of the settecento [18th century] Venetians...It has been said that in 18th century Venice all women were courtesans. Absolute freedom reigned in the sexual sphere.” [Davis, John H., and the Editors of the Newsweek Book Division, “Venice,” Newsweek, New York, Arnoldo Mondatori Editore, 1973 pp. 111-112.]

When the Englishman John Coryat went on the Grand Tour in 1608 he spent several weeks in Venice and learned there were at least 20,000 in the profession. [Trease, Geoffrey, “The Grand Tour,” Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, san Francisco, 1967, p.57. I think this is an exaggeration but haven’t researched further. ] The large number of prostitutes and courtesans relied on the tourist trade. Even a number of nunneries had licentious reputations. “Every vice was catered for, and the beautiful city drew the travelers of the time like a magnet...18th century Venice was the complete permissive society.” [ Feist, Aubrey, “The Lion of St. Mark. Venice: The Story of a City from Attila to Napoleon,” The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., Indianapolis and New York, 1971, p. 250.] This sounds like Las Vegas on the Adriatic!

PAJOU. “Jean-Francois Ducis,” 1779 (F83-22). Unglazed earthernware, also called terracotta (Italian: “baked earth”) was used in the 18th century not just for preliminary models of sculpture as in the past, but now for fully finished works of art.

The subject, Jean Francois Ducis, was a poet, playwright, and wit. He was part of the 18th century cultural phenomenon we call the Enlightenment. [This was the rationalist, liberal, humanitarian, and scientific trend of thought of the 18th century, which had been foreshadowed by the scientific revolution of the 17th century. It found expression in works by Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau in France; Hume and Thomas Paine in England and America, and in reforms of such enlightened despots as Frederick II of Prussia, Catherine II of Russia, and Emperor Joseph II, and in the American and French revolutions. Definition from “Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia,” op. Cit.]

Ducis wrote court operas for Madame de Pompadour in which she performed. He adapted, produced, and popularized many of Shakespeare’s plays in France. These were enormously successful, and resulted in his appointment as secretary to the younger brother of Louis XVI. When a seat in the 40 member Academie Francaise fell vacant in 1778 with the death of Voltaire, Ducis was elected to membership in this important intellectual institution. He was now one of “the Forty Immortals,” as its members were called. His portrait commemorating the event was made a year later. The inscription on the base states, “Jean-Francois Ducis, one of the forty of the
Academie Francaise, Secretary to the brother of the King.” [Goheen, “The Collections of the NAMA,” op.cit., p. 76.]

It has been said that “No nation has so honored letters as France.” [Durant, Will and Ariel, “The Age of Reason Begins,” Simon & Schuster, New York 1961, p. 416.]

Here’s the classical tradition again; the portrait is in the form of an ancient Roman bust It was exhibited at the Salon of 1779.

The sculptor Pajou was one of the most successful French artists of the 18th century, and among many royal commissions were portrait busts of Louis XV and his Queen Marie Leczinska. He made nearly 100 portrait busts, tomb sculpture and other monumental figural groups, and architectural ensembles such as the decorations in the Versailles Palace Opera house. He traveled in the same social and intellectual circles of Parisian cultural life as his acquaintance Ducis who was among the most colorful personalities of the age. The sculptor has tilted Ducis’ head, shows his mouth slightly open, and dresses him casually, all of which enliven the work. Note Pajou’s unrivaled skill in treatment of the hair, the tight pleating of the open throated silk chemise, and fine lines around the lips and eyes. [Goheen, p. 76. Ward, “A Bountiful Decade,” p. 126. “NAMA Calendar of Events, July 1983.”]

“I think I would have to say that it is one of the very finest 18th century terra cottas in any collection in America and, without any reservation whatsoever, is the best Pajou in the United States.” [Curator Ward quoted in Hoffmann, Donald, “Two 18th Century Works to grace Nelson Gallery,” in “KC Star,” July 10, 1983, p. 11F.]:

**BUST OF A MAN.** Roman School, early 18th century (79-43). [2006 label; formerly the subject was identified as Sebastiano Conca, and carved by Pierre Le Gros the Younger.]

**DECORATIVE ARTS IN GALLERY P19**

**PORCELAIN**

**CHINESE EXPORT WARE VITRINE**

Hard-paste porcelain was invented in China around the 9th century during the Tang Dynasty. “The term porcelain is of uncertain derivation. The Portuguese ‘porcelana,’ from ‘porcela,’ a diminutive of ‘porca,’ pig, was locally current for cowrie shells which served as money in parts of southern Asia.” Marco Polo (1254-1324) applied the word to some ceramics in China whose manufacture he described. It’s suggested that he applied the word porcelana to the ceramic because of a resemblance of its glaze to the cowrie shell’s shiny surface. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,” op.cit., p. 630] We commonly refer porcelain as “china” after the nation that invented it. Chinese porcelain is made of two special clays, kaolin and petunse which are two variations of decayed feldspar.

Hard-paste porcelain is fired in a very hot kiln around 2,200-2500 degrees Fahrenheit. [Curatorial Assist. Williams, Gallery Reinstallation docent lectures, August 2006] Few mineral colors can take the high temperature (cobalt blue is an exception), so most colored enamel decorations are applied after the first firing. The piece then undergoes a second or even more consecutively lower temperature firings, depending on the number of colors used and the temperatures at which these vitreous enamels are fused. Gilding is fragile and is applied just before the very last firing as its temperatures must be very low. [This is why we handwash
grandmother’s gold rimmed china rather than putting it in the dishwasher.] These decorations are called overglaze decorations, whereas cobalt blue applied before the very high first firing is called underglaze. Characteristics of true porcelain (hard-paste) are that it rings when tapped, is so hard that steel won’t scratch it, and acid won’t eat into it. When shaped thinly, it is translucent. It forms its own glossy white surface in the high first firing. This shine is not a glaze applied later as in soft-paste production. [Docent lectures over the years by Director Sickman and Curator Taggart.]

Precious Chinese porcelain had been avidly admired in Europe since the Middle Ages, but was very rare there. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) fine imports into Europe increased. Some of these precious vessels were credited by the superstitious Europeans with preventing poisoning. In the 16th century there were European attempts to make it by the Medici in Florence and the Venetians, but the products were far from the real thing. In the 17th century French factories at Rouen and St. Cloud (near Paris) also tried using various combinations of clay, glass, chalk and lime now known as a “soft-paste porcelain.” [For differently composed soft-paste, see 18th century Sevres works in Gallery P22.]

With Renaissance exploration, the China trade grew and by the 18th century a wealthy European could order a custom decorated set of dishes from the imperial kilns. In Europe the patron made or commissioned his own design which might be personalized with initials or a coat of arms. It was sent on the long voyage to China. Newly weds who ordered customized porcelain at the time of their marriage often didn’t receive their order until after the birth of their second child.

One could count on about three years passing from sending the order to receiving it. [Asst. Curator Elizabeth Williams, Decorative Arts Reinstallation docent lecture, August 14, 2006.]


The Chinese made much porcelain for export which was strong until the mid-1700s when European production of it had increased. [Asst. Curator Williams, Reinstallation Lecture docent lectures, August 2006.] “PLATE FROM SERVICE,” 1795-85 (55-3/36) Chinese export hard paste porcelain. The center is decorated with a leg of a fowl. QUESTION:: WHY? This area is circled by different edibles. Opposite each other on the rim are two vignettes, one a fishing scene and the other a hunting scene.

At the top is inscribed “SALDANHA,” and scattered around the rim are the letters “DE AL BU QUER QUE.” The plate was part of a dinner set for the Bishop of Oporto, Portugal. That sea-faring country had extensive trade with Asia. The bishop was a member of the Saldanha family of Albequerque, a Portuguese town. [Label for an identically decorated plate from the same dinner set, in the St. Louis Museum of Art, accession number 144:1955, that I saw in August 2006. This plate is dated c. 1765.] QUESTION: On top of the same coat of arms on both plates appears a crest of what seems to be a Cardinal’s hat with tassels. Did the bishop become one? The St. Louis label didn’t say.

**JESUIT PLATE**, 1725, Chinese porcelain (72-40/3) Monochrome decoration.

QUESTIONS: What does title mean? Used by or portrays a Jesuit? Woman in lion drawn chariot - Cybele? Other figure a monk or Jesuit?
**PLATE.** 1724-1725, Chinese porcelain (F91-20/10) Enamed and gilt. Centered is a European coat-of-arms with many white birds.

**PREISSLER.** Ignaz (attribution) “Dish with Scene of Attilius Regulus Battling the African Serpent,” c. 1725. (F85-5) This was a plain white porcelain dish (an undecorated “blank”) imported from China that was decorated in Europe by a German artist. Preissler was a “Hausmaler,” literally a “home painter,” a free-lance artist who enameled blanks. It was a tradition starting in the 17th century when the artists worked mainly on glass and metal items. “Schwarzlot” was the technique of painting in blackish enamel. It was much used by Preissler. [Savage, George “Porcelain Through the Ages,” Penguin Books, Baltimore, Md., 2nd edition 1963, p. 133.]

“The great era of hausmalerei was the early 18th century when these wares were largely a courtly product. By the 1760s, with the spread of porcelain manufacturers throughout Europe, hausmalerei had become a dying art.”

“Features now strongly associated with Preissler are vigorous Baroque horses with knotty joints, buxom hindquarters, and bulging, almost human eyes; stiff drapery folds with strongly highlighted hollows and ridges; and the technique of scratching through wet enamel to create delicate linear detail.” The piece is regarded as one of Pressler’s finest works. On the back a Latin inscription explains the scene “The Roman consul Attilius Regulus, at last a victor, has overcome by means of the bow, the dart, the spear, and the javelin with much slaughter of his own men, the African serpent, menacing because of its vibrating tongue and terrifying because of its circular movement.” The serpent symbolizes the ancient Carthaginians, enemies of Rome during the Punic Wars. Regulus was twice a Roman Consul in the 3rd century BC. He won a number of battles with the Carthaginians, but eventually was taken prisoner in 255. “According to Roman legend he was sent to Rome by Carthage to negotiate peace terms, under an oath to return. He actually urged the Roman senate to reject the terms, but still kept his oath and returned to Africa where the Carthaginians tortured him to death.”

The scene on the plate takes its inspiration from a Renaissance engraving by Cornelis Galle after a work by Jan van der Straet. It was published in Antwerp in 1578. However the van der Straet composition has been subtly altered and improved. “The piece demonstrates not only the role of prints as design sources for the decorative arts, but also the superb quality which hausmalerei attained. ‘Regarded as one of Preissler’s finest works, it demonstrates an important aspect of European porcelain decoration not previously represented in the collection.’” [All of the above is from “Museum acquires First Example of ‘Hausmaler’ Painting,” in “NAMA Calendar of Events,” February 1986, p. 2.]

Perhaps there is no connection whatsoever, but Attilius Regulus was the subject of a play and opera some 7 and 25 years later, respectively. Although barely known today, during the first half of the 18th century Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) was Europe’s most influential and popular dramatist. From Italy he moved to Vienna where he was appointed resident court poet to Emperor Charles VI and later to Empress Maria Theresa. He strictly observed theunities and theatrical decorum that was established by serious French drama. His works were perfect vehicles for opera composers in search of subjects. Metastasio is best remembered for “Attilio Regolo”, 1732, considered to be his masterpiece. It was set to music as an opera by Johann Adolph Hasse in 1750. [Bondanella, Peter, “The Eternal City: Roman Images in the Modern World,” University of North Carolin Press, Chapel Hill & London 1987,” pp. 112-113.]
LEAD GLASS CUP & COVER, c 1720, English (F90-29) This free-blown glass cup and cover were probably made as a commemorative object as indicated by the finely engraved coat of arms of the Tutt family of Wiltshire. It was not intended for everyday use. Its design follows silver forms of the period such as the Lamerie work in this gallery. [Asst. Curator Elizabeth Williams, Gallery reinstallation lectures and handout Aug. 14, 2006.] Probably a presentation piece, its general form is similar to de Lamerie’s silver cup and cover in this same gallery, below.

MEISSEN VITRINE

The influence of Asian trade on European art increased during the 18th century, and everyone wanted foreign imports or European imitations of them. Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, had locked up Bottger, an alchemist who had said he would make gold for him out of baser materials. This didn’t happen, but Bottger eventually did make true hard-paste porcelain for Augustus, the first to be manufactured in Europe. Large deposits of the special clays needed were found in Saxony. Bottger produced the first European porcelain in 1709, and two years later Augustus established the first porcelain factory at the small town of Meissen. It was close to Dresden, his capital city of Saxony, which is why the wares are sometimes referred to as “Dresden.” In his experiments Bottger, inspired by Chinese I-Hsing wares, had made a red stoneware before he made true porcelain, “white gold.” [Curator Ross Taggart, op.cit.] When Bottger perfected white porcelain he announced it “as good as the Asian one, if not better!” [Irvine, Chippy, “White Gold,” in “Art and Antiques” May 2003, p.43.]

Augustus was even crazier about collecting porcelains than jewels [such as he wears in Largilliere’s portrait in Gallery P18, above]. So enamored was he of the ceramic medium that he traded 600 of his soldiers with Frederick I of Prussia for 151 large Chinese vases. [Ibid.] His palace was filled with a vast collection of Chinese and Japanese ceramics, and now he could manufacture his own wares, many of them versions of the imports he so admired. By the time of the wedding of his son (1717) Augustus had over 25,000 pieces on display!

The European mania for porcelain spawned an extraordinary and fantastical fashion for porcelain rooms among the elite. “A veritable confusion of porcelain objects was stuck to the walls, caked upon mirrors, crammed over door frames and layered over chimney pieces to create a dazzlingly elaborate multi-patterned effect.” [Gleeson, op.cit, 158-9]

BOTTGER. “Coffee pot and Cover, 1715-20 (F84-8,A,B), glazed and lacquered stoneware with enamel decoration. The alchemist first made a fine stoneware for Augustus before he made porcelain. .. Although knighted and made a baron by Augustus for his discoveries, Johann Frederick Bottger was virtually kept a prisoner at Meissen until the last 5 years of his life, while Augustus financed his extensive research to discover porcelain’s “arcanum,” the secret knowledge. Augustus wanted to keep the secret of porcelain in his possession. He locked up many of the other workers, too, but a number managed to escape. The secret spread to Vienna and then to Hochst and other towns which established factories..

After innumerable experiments Bottger made a fine red stoneware, “a completely new ceramic material. Vitrified and hard as rock, this richly colored brick-red material was far finer in texture than the stoneware produced in other German potteries and made in the Yixing region of China, but it was not translucent and it was not porcelain.” [Ibid., p. 68-9.] Many of the red
stoneware pieces were made as vessels for the three exotic drinks now highly fashionable in Europe: coffee from Africa, tea from China, and chocolate from central America. [Ibid., p. 97.] This pot inspired by Asian designs was “molded with blossoming plums on the sides and glazed, creating the impression of lacquer. It is gilded and painted in red and yellow with insects and a bird. These red porcelain wares and figures were the personal favorite of Augustus himself.” He collected them until his death. [“NAMA Calendar of Events,” March 1984, p. 2.] The early wares of the factory were imitations of the Chinese or Japanese styles, but at this time Europeans made little distinction between these two faraway nations. [Patterson, Jerry, “Valuations,” in “Connoisseur,” Vol. 221, No. 956, Sept. 1991, p. 122.]

**BOTTGER.** “Pilgrim Flask and Lid,” 1710-15, red stoneware polished and gilded (E96-1/1 A,B).

This example of Bottger’s red stoneware has not been enameled as was the piece above. His red stoneware was non porous and did not need glazing. “It was the hardest substance of its kind produced, and could be engraved and polished on the wheel of the lapidary in the same way as semi-precious hardstones.” [Savage, op.cit., p. 129.] Augustus’ appetite for the new so-called “red porcelain” was enormous. [Gleeson, op.cit., p. 99.] Inspiration for the form of this piece came from China.

**HOROLDT.** “Plate Decorated with Chinoiserie,” 1730-35 (F84-7)  “Chinoiserie” is the French name given to Chinese-like objects made in Europe. This is a fine example derived from the designs of the Meissen Court Painter Johann Gregor Horoldt (1696-1775). He was influential in the development of painting porcelain at the factory, and invented many enamel colors still in use. “His chinoiserie designs quickly became the rage in porcelain decoration thanks to the broadly based European fascination with the Orient.” [Curators Kunst and Ward, “A Bountiful Decade,” NAMA 1987, p. 132.] The plate’s sumptuous decoration features a center with Asian figures as imagined by Europeans, and purple vignettes of harbor scenes. The rim border has four more harbor scenes, but they are polychromed. [Ibid.] Much gilding enriches the overall sense of opulence.

**KANDLER.** “Swan Plate,” 1737-4, enameled and gilded porcelain (59-45) Meissen’s famous ceramics sculptor Johann Joachim Kandler (1706-1775) designed one of the most celebrated dinner sets ever made, the famous “Swan Service.” He was a young wood sculptor when Augustus ordered him to work on some large ceramic animals. Augustus appointed him court sculptor. He proved himself a talented porcelain modeler, and with his staff he made “the most extensive dinner service of its time” Today pieces of the Swan Service are still made from the same molds. [Irvine, op.cit.]

The service was made on the occasion of Count von Bruhl’s marriage. On the plate’s rim is his coat-of-arms quartered with those of his bride. Bruhl was a page to Augustus the Strong, and on the Elector’s death in 1733 became the power behind the throne and prime minister during the reign of Augustus III. He was Director of the Meissen factory. The German ruler Frederick the II said of him, “Bruhl had more garments, watches, laces, boots, shoes and slippers, than any man of the age.” [“Encyclopedia Americana,” Americana Corporation, New York-Chicago 1940, Vol. 4, p.629. Curator Ross Taggart, “European Ceramics,” docent lectures.]
Bruhl’s enormous dinner set of 2,200 pieces has been called by S. Ducret, an authority on porcelain, “The most beautiful and magnificent table service ever to be executed by a porcelain factory.” [Quoted by Patterson, Jerry, in “Valuations,” in Connoisseur,” Vol. 2211, No. 956, Sept. 1991, p. 122.] In the 19th century Bruhl’s descendants broke up the service. [Ibid.]

The aquatic theme of water birds and marsh plants was chosen for the dinner service as a play on its owner’s name, since Bruhl means marsh or swampy place. Note that the background behind the birds resembles a big shell, a prominent motif of the Rococo style. The tureens in this set are almost life size, 3-dimensional swans. The service also features ornaments of highly modeled dolphins, nereids, and putti. [Ibid.]

The randomly scattered flowers are indicative of early Meissen. Processing the clays to a pure white was not then totally controlled. The painted flowers cover discolorations that appeared during the firing. It is interesting that these little flaws were tolerated in Europe, whereas in China such a piece would be smashed at the imperial kilns. [Curator Ross Taggart, docent lectures on ceramics.]

In 1748 the British ambassador to Saxony attended a lavish banquet hosted by Prime Minister Bruhl. He was amazed by the incredible arrangement of porcelain on the table, and later wrote, “I thought it was the most wonderful thing I ever beheld. I fanc’d myself either in a garden or at an opera, but I could not imagine that I was at dinner.” [Gleeson, op.cit., p. 258]

Kandler would gain himself and Meissen great fame for the porcelain figurines he sculpted. [Ibid., p. 257. It is planned that some will be exhibited eventually in hall Gallery P21 below.]

**JAPANESE STYLE DISH.** 1730-40, enameled and gilded porcelain (F66-14/2) The collection of Augustus the Strong included many ceramics made in Japan. They inspired Meissen works such as this plate. The top half resembles the style of Japanese Kakiemon ware with its persimmon colored images against a large white ground. The bottom half demonstrates the Japanese aesthetic of multiple patterning. [On cold days in Japan multiple kimonos were worn, each a different design. When sitting a wearer might splay them out so that a bit of each was visible at the same time.]

It has been claimed that the making of American crazy quilts took off after the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 when Japanese ways of living and art works were exhibited showing multiple patterns. [Sorry, I can’t locate my source for this.]

**TEAPOT.** 1740-60, porcelain with applied decoration (59-79/1 A,B) The Rococo shell motif appears on the handle and curving foliage on the spout. The floral decoration on the body was separately molded in clay, and then the pieces were applied to the teapot body.

Tea, coffee, and chocolate, all imported, were very expensive. Therefore these exotic beverages were served in small containers. The importation of these beverages inspired Europeans to make different containers for them.

**AUGUSTUS THE STRONG.** 1715-20, gilded porcelain (F84-33) The small statue of Augustus the Strong was made to serve as the “king” of a chess set that was never finished (see note, next page). The tiny portrait (c. 1715) has all the bravado and macho swagger of the king’s portrait by Largilliere (c. 1714) which was made about the same time. [See above, Gallery P18, Largilliere, for details on Augustus’ life.]
This little king is “one of the most important pieces of late Baroque sculpture in the museum’s collection. It was executed in the first decade of porcelain manufacture in Europe... The figure is one of the most original creations of the Meissen factory’s early years.” [Goheen, op.cit., p. 83] Furthermore it has been called “one of the rarest and most important original creations of Meissen’s earliest years......(it) exemplifies the vigor of the Baroque style...” [NAMA Calendar of Events, December 1985, p. 2. ]

Augustus stands with his left arm akimbo, the “Renaissance elbow” posture, a stance of macho domination. [See remarks on male postures under Hals in Gallery P17, above]. With his right hand Augustus holds a baton signifying that he is a high ranking military leader.

The figure is said to be modeled after a large scale statue of Augustus in contemporary dress armor by the Dresden sculptor Joachim Kretzschmar. The opposing king of the chess set was also after a Kretzschmar large sculpture of Augustus, except wears ancient Roman armor. (An example of the latter chess king is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.) [Curator Joseph Kuntz in Ward, “A Bountiful Decade....” NAMA 1987, p. 138.] Therefore as the chess game ended, no matter which side was defeated King Augustus won!!

Note the “Chippendale” or “pie-crust” edges [common terms for repetitive sectioned irregular Rococo edges] on some of the Museum’s 18th century plates, another element of Rococo design.

[Note: Curator Catherine Futter says the figure of Augustus the Strong was not used or intended as a chess piece.]

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**CONSOLE TABLE.** c. 1750, carved, gessoed, and gilt oak with marble top (55-107, A,B) This has the exuberant curves and entwined foliage characteristic of fine French Rococo furniture at the mid century.. [Tour Office handout, Aug. 2006, p. 5 and Asst. Curator Williams, Reinstallation Decorative Arts docent lecture. Aug 14, 2006.

[Do you remember the style characteristics we discussed with the Cressent Clock in Gallery P18? Here they are again: asymmetry, C and S curves, stylized shells, and foliage.]

Another Rococo style characteristic is the double-curved “cabriole” leg. During the late 18th century cabriole meant small stuffed armchairs and sofas, but in the late 19th century “cabriole leg” was used (and still is) to describe double curved legs with an outward curving knee above and a concave curve below. This profile was seen in some ancient Greek carved marble theatre seats. In the late 17th century French and Dutch craftsmen revived it, and in England it was introduced during the William and Mary period. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,” op.cit., p. 112.] It is also characteristic of English Queen Anne style.

QUESTION: But was the cabriole leg a revival from classical sources, or was the design source Asian? Museum Director Laurence Sickman believed it was derived from Chinese furniture legs. [Sickman, docent lectures on the Chinese furniture collection.]

On the top of the back legs are escutcheon areas which have been left blank. Earlier shields are symmetrical. In the Rococo period the shield areas of coats-of-arms are often asymmetric as can be seen on the 18th century silver salver by Paul de Lamerie [F99-21/102] in the Folger Collection.

A console table is not finished on the back since it is meant to be against or attached to a
wall. They are often made in pairs. Frequently mirrors with frames that match the tables’ design were made to hang above them. [Compare to the Museum’s other Rococo console table with dragon heads on its knees in the French period room Gallery P26, and the two fanciful English Rococo Chinoiserie console tables with grotto stalactites and matching mirrors in hall Gallery P25, and the two gilded English Rococo tables in the English period room, Gallery P24.]

**DE LAMERIE** covered silver cup, 1737 (54-17, A, B) To many connoisseurs the art of silver smithing reached its height in 18th century England, and Paul de Lamerie made some of the very finest works. He and his parents were Huguenot refugees. He came to London with them as a child. [For Huguenot smithing accomplishments see Willaume, David I, above in Gallery P18.] De Lamerie’s rise was meteoric. By age 24 he opened his own shop and registered his (Guild) hallmark (1712), and by age 28 he was appointed goldsmith to the king (1716). He made three versions of this spectacular covered cup where the handles are snakes. Double handled lidded vessels were often commissioned as special “presentation” pieces for special occasions. [See also in this gallery English glass CUP AND COVER, c 1720, that was probably a presentation piece.] Some of our sports trophy prizes are still in this form. He “was a dominant influence in determining English Rococo silver styles...” [Goheen, op. cit., p. 90]

The general appearance is Rococo. The outline undulates, the low part of the vessel section is a swirled linear pattern resembling an open flower blossom with an irregular edge, and many small shell designs are clustered under the neck of the vessel. However, from the 17th century (Baroque period) and even earlier (Renaissance) come the designs of the vertical patterned bands on the vessel section, and the overlapping scale pattern seen on the top of the lid and the foot. [The scale design can be related to those on the 16th century Italian Renaissance CASSONE.] Note that an element between the foot’s scaled sections forms an odd face with an imaginary marine look. [These can be related to those funny escutcheon faces seen on the ebony CHEST in the Dutch Gallery, or the two faces on the quiver Mosca carved behind the seated couple ATALANTA & MELEAGER.] The fluid undulating surface of the lid is reminiscent of the “auricular” style in 17th century Dutch silver, and again there are odd faces. [“auricular” comes from the word ear. Its curves have similar convolutions.] Note the lion mask on it. There is a griffin crest engraved between two of the patterned vertical bands, but the family it signifies is not known.

On tours it might be interesting to compare the 3 LIDDED CUPS which differ greatly: this luxurious one, the Staffordshire Owl Cup and jug, and the complex ivory pokal.. Which one do you prefer and why?

**GALLERY P21** (Not on the 17th - 18th centuries school tour.)

**NOT YET INSTALLED.** The following items have been proposed.

**ENGLISH SILVER**

Increasingly in the 18th century Britain ruled the seas, world trade, and became very prosperous. French religious persecution caused the immigration of Huguenot silversmiths to England, who brought with them technical advances. [See Willaume’s silver gilt lidded cups in Gallery P18, above.] The evolution of 18th century English silver styles can be seen in coffee pot design changes through the years. Coffee, tea, and chocolate changed culture, manners, and the
economy. English coffee houses were often business gathering places that specialized in its patrons’ careers: e.g. Lloyds of London for ventures and insurance sales, others as meeting places for painters, literary figures, lawyers, and even slave dealers.


This is a nine-basket epergne, among the rarest of all silver creations and incredibly expensive. “Pitts specialized in creating magnificent and intricately worked epergnes....and remains the most important maker of fine epergnes in history.” [M.S. Rau Antiques, “Thomas Pitts Masterpiece,” in “The Magazine Antiques,” Vol. CLVIII, No. 3, September 2000, p. 259.] This pagoda epergne “...is fanciful in concept, imposing in size, and virtuoso in execution. It brilliantly employs every technique a silversmith had at his command.” [Hood, Graham, NAMA guest curator, “The Folgers Coffee Silver Collection,” NAMA August 2000, a four-leaf pamphlet, unpaginated.] It exhibits the English Rococo style at its height. Note the characteristic curvaceous lines, scrolls, and plants. Also at its height was the ajoure technique which produced pierced or cut out areas, giving a light and airy feeling to the work.

At mid-century the Chinoiserie craze was also at its peak in England. [Ibid.] The motif of Chinese pagoda with little bells can be seen again in the Museum’s PAIR OF ENGLISH CONSOLE TABLES and MIRRORS made about the same time. [In hall Gallery P25. (F67-25/1-4). Belled pagodas are on the tops of the mirrors and under the tables. Gessoed and painted wood, c. 1760-70.)

The epergne’s pagoda is topped by a pineapple finial. With Columbus’ voyages the pineapple was discovered growing in tropical America and was brought to northern Europe. There it was a luxury item that could be grown only in heated greenhouses.

The epergne’s accession number indicates that it is made up of 24 different pieces. When not in use, it was customary to store such a luxurious item in a custom-made box with many compartments for its many parts. [Pentecost, Lee, “English Silver and the Folgers Coffee Silver Collection” tour, fall 2001, pp.22-24.]

MORE ENGLISH SILVER is to be installed and information will come later.

**MEISSEN FIGURES**

[It is planned some will be installed here. For the invention of Meissen porcelain see above, Gallery P19] World famous Meissen figurines came about as a result of the Saxon court’s love of banqueting. A banquet there might last from midday until nine in the evening. Four to five hour-long dinners were commonplace. Often musical entertainments, dance and/or opera took place during the banquets, and their themes were often echoed in the table ornaments. At first they were sculptured in sugar marzipan, or wax. Whole landscapes were fabricated for banquets and
populated by delicately modeled figures. Meissen’s ceramic sculptor Kandler realized that porcelain decorations would far outlive a single event. It has been estimated that he and his two assistants made more than 1,000 porcelain figures. [Gleeson, op.cit., pp. 259-60. Savage, op.cit., p. 135. For Kaendler’s design of the famous “Swan Service” plate and his earlier red stoneware, see Meissen in Gallery P19, above]

“The popular figurines were cast in sections, limb by limb, from a series of little molds all prepared from the artist’s original clay model, and the assembly of the pieces was in itself a highly skilled task... their work reflects in miniature and with singular animation and charm the fancies and conceits of 18th century courtly life.” [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,” op.cit., p. 631.] Truly sculpture in the round, such figures were meant to be seen from all sides on a banquet table. “It was Count Bruhl [Meissen Director and owner of the Swan Plate; see Meissen above, Gallery P19.] ....whose passion for the extravagantly decorated banquet table gave the greatest impetus to the porcelain figure, creating a fashion which came to embrace whole worlds of mythological and romantic imagination.” [Ibid.] In 1748 the English ambassador wrote rapturously of von Bruhl’s table “it was the most wonderful thing I have ever beheld. I fancy’d myself either in a Garden or at an Opera. But I could not imagine that I was at Dinner.” [Gleeson, op.cit., p. 258.]

**THE RAPE OF PERSEPHONE**, Meissen, 1750, hard-paste porcelain (F63-47) The Greek and Roman spring goddess is also known as Kore and Proserpina. See Thomas Hart Benton’s version of the subject in the American Department. The myth was first told in the ancient Greek “Hymn to Demeter.” Ovid’s retelling in “Metamorphoses” and “Fasti” inspired many later artists. Hades [Roman: Pluto] the god of the underworld, fell in love with Persephone as she was picking flowers. He swept her away in his chariot and made her his queen. Her mother Demeter [Roman: Ceres] goddess of agriculture, mourned the loss of her daughter to such an extent that nothing grew. Therefore Persephone was allowed to return to her mother from the underworld for part of the year so that the earth would blossom again and crops flourish.

**HARLEQUIN AND COLUMBINE**, 1745-1760, Meissen hard-paste porcelain, enamelled and gilded, Germany. (34-128) Popular 18th century subjects in European art are the characters of the Commedia dell’arte, a type of drama originating in Renaissance Italy during the 16th century. The irreverent productions were popular at the Dresden Court of Augustus the Strong and his successors, and characters of the plays were represented in Meissen porcelain and used for banquet table decorations. No character of this type of popular theatre was more beloved than that of the rambunctious, manic, tricky servant, Harlequin. Here he is shown with the maid servant Columbine who is his girl friend. He wears his traditional stylized costume of repeated diamond shapes which developed from the original rags and patches he wore in the 16th century.

Traditionally Harlequin and the other low class Comedia characters (called zanni from which our word zany comes) are masked, while the straight characters, usually young lovers, are not. Harlequin is the character who carries a slap stick with which he can produce scenery transformations (eg. cottages into castles, etc.), and with which he assaults other characters. But here he is holding a sausage! In German speaking countries Harlequin was known as Hans Wurst (wurst = sausage).

These knockabout farces, often scatological, still could be of such quality that the Commedia was allowed to perform in Vienna’s most reputable theatres until 1753 when the
offended Empress Maria Theresa issued a ban on “all indecency and nonsensical expressions.”


Even the great Goethe (1749-1832) wrote a comedy about Harlequin, “Hans Wurst’s Wedding.” Goethe was at one time in charge of the Weimar court festivities and masquerades.

On occasion there may be exhibited English made 18th century ceramic figures of the Comedia characters, one being a masked Harlequin carrying a slapstick and wearing his diamond patterned costume. In early 18th century England there came into vogue “Harlequinades,” plays or pantomimes in which Harlequin has the major role. The standard plot was the pursuit of the lovers Harlequin and Columbine by her father Pantaloon and his stupid servant Pedrolino. [This information is included for the benefit of docents giving the Theatre and Dance Tours. Encyclopedia Britannica 2001 CD)]

FIGURE OF A SEATED CHINESE, 1735-40, Meissen hard-paste porcelain, enameled and gilded, Germany (61-3). This is an example of Chinoiserie, the fanciful and imaginary European depictions of what Asians look like and do. A single Chinese looking figure like this is also called a Pagode (from the French word for pagoda).

HOCHST PORCELAIN

MELCHIOIR, Johann Peter, “Boy Masquerading as a Turk” and “Girl Masquerading as a Turk,” 1773-1775, Hochst hard-paste porcelain (F73-18/1,2) This factory was the third to be established (1746) in the German speaking states (Vienna was second). It is famous for its figures of children by Melchoir, the manufactory’s master modeler.

It is believed that Melchoir was orphaned at 10 and obliged to work as a shepherd. In his solitude the child modeled animals and figures. His talent was recognized and at 12 he began a 6 year apprenticeship with a sculptor. [Jacob-Hanson, Charlotte, “Johann Peter Melchior, Master Modeler,” in “The Magazine Antiques,” Vol. CLXIV, No. 3, Sept. 1998, p. 339.] He joined the Hochst firm in 1765 and left in 1779 for another manufactory, Frankenthal, when Hochst had financial distress and couldn’t pay his salary. He later worked at Nymphenburg in Munich until a few years before he died in 1825. [Ibid., p. 342.]

While at Hochst Melchoir also became court sculptor to the Elector of Mainz. During his appointment at the factory as “Modellmeister” he created over 300 figures as well as table services and decorative wares. “No modeler of his time was more prolific in modeling figures - especially children - with warmth and compassion. Having married soon after 1770 Melchoir became the father of seven children...they must have been his models.....For all his fame, Melchior never forgot his days as a solitary shepherd and what it had been like to watch animals in the countryside or see children at work or play.” [Ibid. P. 341. Many of his works showing pretty children (often with animals) are in the pastoral mood of Boucher and Rousseauian thought.
Hochst sales lists indicate that about one third of all production consisted of figural porcelains. [Ibid., p. 342.]

The two children with their masks and exotic costumes are ready for a masquerade disguised as Turks. This reflects the powerful influence of French culture throughout Europe in the 18th century.

THE MASQUERADE CRAZE

Masking and masquerade balls were extraordinarily popular in 18th century France. These Hochst figures are German made, but probably inspired by both the French craze for masquerades and the current vogue for things Turkish.

Many masquerade balls were held at the royal court where rigid hierarchy and precedence were discarded. If disguised by costume and masks, all ranks could rub shoulders and dance with each other. “During Carnival season - the high period for social dancing, as it was for theatrical entertainments - most balls were held as masquerades.” While masked, Louis XIV would socialize with whoever showed up also masked. Some court balls were open to anyone disguised. The lower classes could dance with the highest if costumed and masked. This practice of open and egalitarian socializing while masked crept into Louis XIV’s court from the practices of Carnival. This across-class fraternization seems surprising to us today, since this was a period in which genealogical lines were so avidly studied to determine precedence. [Batterberry, Michael and Ariane, “Mirror Mirror: A Social History of Fashion,” Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1977, p. 162. See in particular Cohen, Sarah R., “Art, Dance, and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Regime,” Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 148-149.]

In 1668 a conservative social critic lambasted the Parisian fashion of allowing anyone who wished to go up to a woman and ask her to dance, but by the 1710s “masquerading had become something of an obsession in Paris,” and masquerades proliferated throughout the city. “In 1716 the pursuit became public, as well as commercial, through the establishment of ticketed masked balls at the Opera.” Because of the masquerade balls a German commentator in 1718 thought that the Parisian Carnival season could be called the “Golden Age of Paris.” He wrote how balls were everywhere, no invitation was necessary, and Paris masquerade balls were packed with nobles and commoners alike. [Cohen, op.cit., p. 220.] Some men went masked and costumed as women, and vice versa. [Ibid.]

THE TURKISH CRAZE

Although the Ottoman army was at the gates of Vienna less than a 100 years earlier (1683) than these ceramic figures, there was increasing interest in that exotic culture. Europeans collected Turkish ceramics, rugs, and textiles. They went to masquerade parties and balls disguised as Turks. They built Turkish “tent” rooms in their houses. They attended plays and operas about Turks.


In the 18th century “Things Turkish were all the rage and Mozart was happy to be in
fashion.” [Swanston, Hamish F. G., “For the Love of Constanze,” in “Opera News,” vol. 56, No. 6, December 7, 1991, p. 14.] He had written a Rondo alla turka finale to his piano sonata K.331, a “Turkish Tatoo” that he worked into his Turkish opera “Escape from the Seraglio,” 1782, and had an unfinished opera “Zaide” (1780) with Turkish aspects. Voltaire’s “Zaire” was performed to great acclaim at Salzburg in 1777. To name but a few more examples there were Gluck’s “La Recontre Impreveue (1764), Bickerstaffe’s “The Sultan, or a Peep into the Seraglio,” (1769), Vogler’s “Der Kaufmann von Smyrna” (1771) and Schuster’s “La Schiava Liberata” (1777). In 1797 Dibdin’s “The Seraglio” was delighting audiences in New York. [Ibid.]

Marie-Justine Favart (who originated the heroine’s role in “Annette and Lubin”) was one of the major European actors between 1700 and 1800. For her role in the Paris production of “The Three Sultans” (1761) she sent all the way to Istanbul for an authentic Turkish costume. [Brockett, Oscar G., “History of the Theatre,” Allyn & Bacon, Inc., Boston, Mass. 5th Edition, 1987, pp. 423, 387.] The visit of a “...Turkish delegation to Paris in 1742 stimulated the French elite’s taste for exotic interior decoration known as ‘turquerie.’ ” There were several such fantasy rooms at Versailles. [Kisluk-Grosheide, Danielle, “French Royal Furniture in the Metropolitan Museum,” Met.Museum of Art Bulletin, Vol. LXII, No. 3, Winter 2006, p. 19.]

Madame de Pompadour, arbiter of fashion and artistic taste during the Rococo, had a “Chambre a la turque” as the Grande Chambre (the major reception room) of her Chateau Bellevue. It contained an over door portrait of her as a Turkish Sultana by Carle van Loo. [Mitford, Nancy, “Madame de Pompadour,” Harper & Row, New York 1954, pp. 116-7.] In it Pompadour holds a long Turkish pipe of the same type held by the woman in NAMA’s Liotard painting.

**MARINE VENUS PLATE.** Hochst porcelain, 1782-85 (F84-31) Decoration of this plate is attributed to Johann Heinrich Usinger who took the image from an engraving in F.A. David’s “Antiquities d’Herculaneum” published in Paris between 1780-1808. “Printed books illustrating the latest excavations of Greek and Roman art were an important design source for many porcelain firms during the 18th century.” [“NAMA Calendar of Events,” May 1985, p. 3.] By now Neo-Classicism was well on its way to replace the Rococo, and authentic images of recent discoveries from the ancient Vesuvian eruption of 79 A.D. were highly desirable.

I note, however, that the ultimate source is not Herculaneum. It is Pompeii where it can still be seen, an ancient Roman wall painting in the peristyle court of the House of the Marine Venus. [See Grant, Michael, “Eros in Pompeii,” William Morrow & co., Inc., New York 1975, illustration on p. 64.] The 18th century excavations of the two Roman cities buried by Mt. Vesuvius’ eruption in 79 AD inspired many artists.

In ancient art Venus, the goddess of love (Greek: Aphrodite), was frequently shown floating in the sea atop a scallop shell. She began to appear with it in the 4th century BC. In antiquity the goddess was sometimes referred to as “shell-born,” and she was sometimes depicted rising from between the two halves of a scallop as if from a womb. “Kteis,” the Greek word for scallop, also meant the private parts of a woman, and the Latin word “Concha” had the same two meanings as Kteis. [Grigson, Geoffrey, “The Goddess of Love” Stein & Day Publishers, New York 1976 pp. 36-39] Certain shellfish were considered aphrodisiacs in antiquity, and oysters still have that reputation.

More Hochst wares are exhibited in Gallery P22, below.
SEVRES PORCELAIN

These figural sculptures are soft-paste porcelain. For more on Sevres see that topic in Gallery P22 below. Madame de Pompadour had bought many Meissen figurines, including 19 pieces of the monkey orchestra at the height of the “singeries” fashon in Europe. [Irvine, op.cit, “Singeries” are depictions of monkeys aping human activities, a popular theme in French art during the Regence and Rococo periods.] She noted the variety of ceramics being imported into France from Meissen and the Far East, and how much French currency was being spent on it.

As the powerful mistress of Louis XV Madame de Pompadour was the most influential French patron of the arts in the mid-Rococo period. She and her lover the king maintained France as the artistic center of Europe. It has been said of her that “Few human beings since the world began can have owned so many beautiful things.” She had a passion for fine ceramics, and the most lasting of all her artistic achievements was the Sevres factory. [Mitford, op.cit, pp. 183, 179-180.]

Before Sevres was established she patronized the French factories at St. Cloud and Chantilly, but particularly the fine work of Vincennes. [See Vincennes TANKARD below, Gallery P22.] She persuaded her lover the king to grant a royal warrant giving Vincennes the exclusive rights to produce porcelain like Meissen, and among all the French factories only Vincennes was allowed to use gold. In 1754 Louis gave her the little village of Sevres below her Chateau Bellevue, and there the Vincennes factory was transferred so she could supervise porcelain making. [Ibid., p. 180. The village has been absorbed into the modern urban sprawl of Paris.] The story (perhaps apocryphal) has been told that at Bellevue (where Boucher was commissioned by her to decorate interiors), part of “the garden was a mass of china flowers, so skillfully made and actually perfumed that they deceived the king himself..” [Batterberry, op.cit., p. 165.] She had a passion for china and for flowers and filled her rooms with both, “more and more china holding more and more flowers.” [Ibid.]

Once a year in the king’s apartments at Versailles a special sale of Sevres was held with Louis himself occasionally serving as the top salesman for his mistress’ hobby and browbeating the nobility into making purchases. Pompadour herself cajoled the shoppers saying, : “Not to buy this china, as long as one has any money, is to prove oneself a bad citizen.” [Irvine, Chippy, “White Gold,” in Art and Antiques,” May 2003, p. 45.]

Like Meissen, Sevres figures could be used to decorate the banquet table. Some figures were sold as part of elaborate dessert services. Meant to be seen from different angles by the diners, they are sculpture in the round. “The story goes that Madame de Pompadour could wait no longer for some figures she had ordered and went to collect them from Sevres. The figures were not ready, but she liked them in their unpainted and unglazed form so much that she took them as they stood, and so precipitated a vogue for so-called biscuit porcelain. It is more likely that these figures were meant to be white and unglazed, probably in simulation of marble.” [Duthy, Robin, “Accent on Magnificence,” in “Connoisseur,” June 1984, p. 62.]

Some of the top sculptors of France designed Sevres bisque sculptures: Pajou, Pigalle, Clodion, Falconet, Caffieri.

The artist was Pompadour’s favorite sculptor, and she made him Director of the Sevres factory (1757-1766). “It was in his models and under his watchful eye that biscuit reached its full potential at Sevres,” and he received a percentage of the proceeds from biscuit sales. [Curator Christina Nelson, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” Summer 1991, pp. 2-3.]

Among his best known works for Pompadour was a life size marble statue “Menacing Cupid.,” and Sevres made a small replica of it [See CUPID & PSYCHE in Gallery P23 below. The marble is now in the Louvre.] Probably Falconet’s best known work is the large bronze equestrian statue of Czar Peter the Great in Petersburg, Russia.

Falconet’s inspiration for “Annette and Lubin” showing young lovers, was a mid-18th century comic opera written, directed, and produced by Charles Simon Favart. He was a former pastry cook who became a successful impresario, and founded the Opera Comique. Favart based his play on a short story by Marmontel which told of innocent young rural lovers, shepherd and shepherdess, whose relationship is thwarted by villains, but eventually all ends well. Pastoralism in theatre and other arts of the 18th century the arts during the Rococo period was inspired by ancient poetry and plays. In 18th century French culture Rousseau was popularizing pastoralism in his writings. His was the unrealistic belief that uneducated peasants in rural areas close to nature were happier and more virtuous than city folk. [The “noble savage” fallacy.]

Both Favart and his wife the actress-singer Marie Justine who originated the role of Annette on the stage, are important in theatre history. She was one of the major European actors between 1700 and 1800. She is also credited with costume reform. Up to then it had been the custom for actresses to improvise their stage dress in adapting contemporary styles as lavishly as possible. This was very inappropriate for the roles. The first significant change came in 1753 when Mme. Favart wore an authentic peasant dress as the heroine of ‘The Loves of Bastien and Bastienne.” Later she sent to Istanbul for an authentic Turkish costume when she appeared in “The Three Sultans.” [Brockett, Oscar G., “History of the Theatre,” Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 5th Edition, Boston, Mass., 1987, p. 387, 423.]

However, authentic costume is not the case in this depiction of her, supposedly as a peasant. Note the flower she wears on her low neckline. Pompadour popularized the wearing of a corsage at the top left of a fashionable low-cut bodice. [Olivier Bernier, “Madame de Pompadour and the Arts,” NAMA lecture, Nov. 14, 2002.] It seems doubtful that the simple country girl Annette would have been aware of this court fashion.

Marie Justine and her husband were friends of Boucher who designed stage productions for Favart, and the painter drew the actress as a shepherdess. The face is similar to that of the biscuit Annette which could be said to be her portrait. [Compare to another portrait of Marie-Justine in Brockett, op.cit., p. 387, Fig. 12/26.]

The back of this piece shows the bench on which the couple are perched. Emerging from under it is a dog, symbol of faithfulness, his paw resting on Annette’s detailed braided straw hat which rests on the ground. The work was meant to be seen in the round.

BOUCHER. “Leda and the Swan,” Sevres soft-paste biscuit. Around 1742 Madame de Pompadour’s favorite artist Boucher painted two versions of this subject. One was exhibited in the Salon that year. [Now in Stockholm.] It was engraved (which results in a reversed image in the print replica), and the print was used by Sevres artists to make this replica in biscuit.

The story of Leda’s and Jupiter’s affair says nothing about another woman being present. Boucher often inserted an extra beauty or more into his mythological paintings as an opportunity
to show more aspects of the female body. “Before the 18th century the number of female nudes depicted from behind...was remarkably small.” In the pleasure loving Rococo period Boucher and Fragonard frequently painted women from the rear. [Sir Kenneth Clark, “The Nude,” Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Doubleday & Co., Oinc., Garden City, New York 1956, pp. 209. 211.] Here we have both a frontal view and a “callipygian” one. [Greek: “beautiful buttocks.”]

One of the many amorous conquests of Zeus (Latin: Jupiter) was Leda, the Queen of Sparta whom he seduced in the guise of a swan while she was bathing in the river. She bore quadruplets: the Heavenly Twins Castor and Pollux, and daughters Clytemnestra and Helen. The latter was the most beautiful woman in the world for whom the Trojan War was fought.

See Gallery P20 below for Soldani’s bronze version of this love story. [NOT YET INSTALLED]

**TEA SET.** Sevres soft paste porcelain, decorated with overglaze enamels and gilding, 1757 (F89-27/1-11). [See also text on Sevres in Gallery P22.] Original factory records indicate the set was part of Louis XV’s gifts to Empress Maria Theresa in 1758 to smooth over past differences, and probably to ease negotiations for the marriage of his grandson to Princess Marie Antoinette, her three-year old daughter.

The service consists of a large tray, teapot and cover, four cups and saucers, and sugar bowl and cover. Sevres records call this a “Grand Dejeuner Corbille.” The blue ground color is known as bleu celeste (heavenly blue). It was enameled on the ceramics in an elaborately squared pattern named “mosaïque” (mosaic) which surrounds exotic birds. The set is of the highest quality, and no expense was spared in making it. [“Sevres Tea Set” in “NAMA Calendar of Events,” Summer 1990, p. 2.] Today we might call this a “snack set,” since in the 18th century it could have been used any time of day. [Curator Nelson, docent lecture.]

**ENGLISH PORCELAIN**

**JUNO and JUPITER,** 1760-1765, Derby China Works, England, soft-paste (64-50/1,2). [Greek: Hera and Zeus] The king of the Olympian gods has his usual attributes of eagle and thunderbolt, while his wife-sister Juno has her peacock (in this case a white one). In existence from 1750 to 1848, Derby made soft-paste figures and table wares, often directly inspired by Meissen and Chelsea works. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,” op.cit., p. 292.] The exquisite contemporary (not ancient!) floral textiles worn by this pair reflect the increasingly advanced textile industry of the 18th century.

**CABINET ON GILTWOOD STAND.** English, c. 1710, pine and oak with “japanned” decoration. (33-23,A,B): Chinese and Japanese imports couldn’t keep up with the European demand for lacquered furnishings. Therefore the English developed a type of varnish mixed with pigments known as japanning to imitate the real Asian lacquer made of a special tree sap. This blue-green color is rare. Most japanned works had black or red grounds (see Italian room Gallery P25) [Tour Office handout, p. 6, during Asst. Curator William’s Reinstallation docent lecture, August 14, 2006.] True lacquer is made from the sap of the lacq tree which grows in the Orient, not Europe, according to Director Sickman, docent lectures many years ago.]

115
In the 17th century imports of Asian lacquer entered Europe mainly through the Dutch East India Company, and created the desire for more. In 1688 Stalker and Parker’s book “A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing” made possible an English substitute. The hard film was built up by many coats of a varnish composed of shellac dissolved in spirit. Eventually this was polished. The coats could be applied over a layer of carved gesso on the piece to give a very shallow relief effect. The designs on japanned furniture are usually Chinoiserie, the fanciful European conceptions of Asian peoples and their activities. [Osborne, “The Oxford companion to the Decorative Arts,” op.cit., pp. 507-508.]

The cabinet’s mirrored doors open to reveal 10 small drawers above a fall-front secretary drawer with pigeon holds and a writing surface. [Tour Office handout, op.cit.] At one time the secretary top was exhibited with the mirrored doors open. The japanned interior was a much more brilliant turquoise blue. The exterior has faded and darkened. [Curator Ross Taggart’s demonstration to docents.]

The motif of the broken pediment on top of the cabinet originated in architecture of the Hellenistic world, and was popularized by Michelangelo during the Renaissance. In the 18th century its straight lines were abandoned for curves in accordance with Rococo aesthetics. [This curved Rococo “bonnet” can also be seen on examples of 18th century colonial furniture in the American collection, and on the enormous bookcase- secretary in the English period room.]

GALLERY  P22  [Not on the children’s school tour.]

“No one who has not lived then can know how sweet life was.” [that is to say for the elite] “The 18th Century Woman,” ABC Video Enterprises and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982.

PANINI, “View of the Piazza del Popolo, Rome,” 1741 (F79-3) An important “vedutist.” From northern Europe tourists could travel to Rome either by land or sea. If by land [think about bumping over the Alps for days in a coach - ouch; for those hardships see essay on differing attitudes about mountains in the 16th and 17th centuries, under ROSA in Gallery P16 above.], this would have been your first view of Rome having just entered through the North Gate of the city. It still looks very much like this except for today’s cars and motorcycles, and the clothing worn by the people. [However, the Pincio Hill at the left has changed considerably. It was rebuilt in the Neo-classical style between 1816-20 by Valadier. [ “Michelin: Italy,” op. Cit., p. 191.] High on the left horizon are the Villa Medici and the double bell towers of Santa Trinita dei Monti (which rises above the unseen Spanish Steps). Directly before the viewer is the red granite obelisk brought by Emperor Augustus from Egypt to Rome, and rediscovered in the Circus Maximus in 1587. Two years later it was moved and set up on its present site by Fontana. The Baroque twin churches were completed in 1675-79, Santa Maria de Montesanto and Santa Maria dei Miracoli. Between them runs one of Rome’s major streets, the Via del Corso.

The proportional shrinking of the line of coaches on the Corso increases the feeling of distance. It’s interesting to compare their definition to Monet’s smudgy abstractions of a line of receding carriages in “The Boulevard. De Cappucines,” Gallery P31.

In the piazza are some opulent coaches and people of different ages from all walks of life. Among them are British tourists. [Carol Inge Hockett, “‘The Arm Chair Traveler...,” NAMA lecture op.cit, July 14, 2006.] Those men in red coats may be traveling Englishmen who fancied this color while on the Grand Tour. [British men often wore red while traveling. See Traversi in
There are different types of clerics, two unidentified foreign women with squared off white textile head dresses, a beggar woman and alms giver, what appears to be a bunch of school boys in blue, donkeys, etc. Several men remove their tricorn hats and bow to each other in greeting. [These are my guesses. Rowlands doesn’t deal with these details in his book on NAMA’s Italian paintings.]

[QUESTION: Besides the two Dominicans in black and white, can other orders be identified?]

The painting is “an outstanding example of Panini’s famous and highly accurate views of ‘modern’ Rome.’…” Entering the piazza, visitors were overwhelmed by the noble example of city planning that they saw. [Rowlands, “Italian Painting...,” op.cit., p. 408; among the awed were Goethe and British novelist Tobias Smollett.] The pendant to our picture is the “View of the Piazza di San Pietro” painted the same year (Toledo Museum of Art). These are the two most famous piazzas in Rome, one the entry way to the city, the other the ultimate destination of the pilgrim. The pendants “were undoubtedly painted with the Grand Tour traveler in mind.” Panini dominated the market for souvenir pictures in Rome. There are several other versions and his workshop replicas of the scene.

Panini was also enormously successful painting large frescos for many palaces in Rome, his patrons being the cardinals and the Roman nobility. He also painted religious scenes for King Philip V of Spain. Although he never went to France, he was made a member of the Academie Royale in Paris, and some French artists studying in Rome came under his influence such as Fragonard, Vernet, and especially Hubert Robert whose early works have been confused with Panini’s. At his death Panini owned 6 Robert paintings of ruins. [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 405-412. A Robert painting is in Gallery P23, below.] For Panini’s fame as a ruin painter, see Gallery P20 below.

**Marieschi.** “Capriccio with Portico” (31-51A) and “River with Venetian Buildings” (31-51B), both 1730-35. Like Canaletto (1697-1768) and Guardi (1712-1793), the artist was a Venetian view painter. His short life makes him less known. (1710-43) During his early career he made theater designs and similar ephemera for public celebrations, as had his older contemporary Canaletto. “An offshoot of such activity must have been his ‘capricci’ paintings which are clearly influenced by set designs...” [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 372.] “Capricci” was defined by an 18th Italian as “a new kind of painting in which a site is ornamented with buildings taken from here and there, or just imagined.” [quote from Algarotti’s letter, 1759, Rowlands, op.cit., p. 374] About a third of Marieschi’s work is of this type, a genre favored by Venetian artists from the 18th century on.

To publicize his view paintings of Venice he engraved and published them in a book (1741-1742) which has been helpful in identifying them. The success of his view paintings probably made him give up theater work, as had Canaletto, and like the latter’s paintings, many of Marieschi’s works went to England in the 18th century.

He collaborated in some of his works with other artists who painted the human figures (“staffage”) for him, among them Francesco Guardi and his brother Antonio. But the somewhat awkward figures in these earlier pendants are clearly by Marieschi. [Ibid., p. 376.]

Anchoring the bridge in the center of “River with Venetian Buildings” is a Renaissance building resembling the city gates the Venetian government had erected in Padua and Verona during the 16th century. They were designed after ancient triumphal arches. In “Capriccio with Portico” the same building is along the distant sea wall. [Ibid., p.374.] The angled buildings at
the side of each painting, resemble theatre scenery, and “equally theatrical is the high-focus light source in ‘River,’ which streams from an imaginary stage entrance at right.” [Ibid.]

Francesco Guardi’s style with its brio and play of light was indebted to Marieschi. When Guardi took up view painting, he even adopted a few of the latter’s compositions. [Ibid., p. 373.]

For Guardi and Canaletto see Gallery P19 above.

**TIEPOLO**, G. Domenico, “Apparition of the Angel to Hagar and Ishmael,” c. 1751 (30-23) Venetian. He and his father Giovanni Battista were in great demand as a team executing important fresco commissions in Italy, Germany, and in Spain where they worked for the king. After his father’s death, Domenico returned to Italy. Although he also undertook independent commissions, almost half of his career was spent in the service of his father, and he was an expert in replicating that master’s style. Domenico is known for “his luscious color choice and paint handling.” [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 427] Here he has applied paint in an essentially alla prima manner. Many passages were done wet-into-wet. The painting has been dated to the years that he and his father were working on their most important frescoes in the Residenz of the Prince-Bishop of Wurzburg, (1750-53) one of the most northern outposts of Catholicism in Germany. NAMA’s painting was one of a series of four, all showing the large figures in up-close three-quarter length format with minimal indications of settings. All four feature dramatic Biblical encounters. It has been proposed that the four were to hang in one room as paintings over the doors, but the patron who commissioned them is unknown.

The figure of Ishmael is a portrait of Domenico’s younger brother Lorenzo who also became a painter, and Hagar is possibly a portrait of their sister Anna Maria Tiepolo. A drawing of the angel’s arm with pointing finger is in Venice (Museo Correr). [Ibid.]

The subject is from Genesis 21: 17 - 22: 19. Hagar, the Egyptian servant of Sarah and Abram, was with Sarah’s permission taken by Abraham to father the patriarch’s child (Ishmael), since Sarah was old and barren. However Sarah herself finally bore Abraham a son when Abraham was 100. Fearful for the rights of her younger child Isaac, Sarah pressured Abraham to banish his first born and Hagar to the wilderness. There they were about to perish when an angel appeared to her saying “Arise, take up the boy, and hold him by the hand: for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes: and she saw a well of water, and went and filled the bottle, and gave the boy to drink.” The subject of Hagar and Ishmael was depicted by Domenico on 6 other occasions. [Ibid.]

Domenico and his father worked together so closely that it difficult to determine who did what. Until 1962 , the Museum attributed the painting to his father. [Ibid., and also pp. 429, 432, 434.] A work by his father is hanging in Gallery P20.

**GREUZE** (rhymes with “fuzz”) “Head of a Girl,” French (31-35). Among the artist’s important patrons were Robespierre and Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

Over a an exquisite lady’s desk is exhibited a pretty lady. Greuze’s beauties with the come-hither glances are quite a contrast to his moral genre works.

After the French Revolution he made a number of provocative images of women “that appealed to the courtly, sensuous taste of certain segments of the public.” [2006 label] (? To me they seem more in the earlier sensuous Rococo style that had been swept away by the Revolution.)

The artist’s earlier genre works were acclaimed for their didacticism by art critic-philosopher Denis Diderot. Preceding the Revolution there was a growing social moralism.
Diderot and the other philosophers said art shouldn’t just show fetes. The purpose of art was “to render virtue lovable and vice hateful..., that is the task of every honest man who takes up the pen, the brush, or the chisel.” [Curator Peter Bowran, “18th century Art,” docent lecture March 5, 1979. Diderot’s statement is also quoted in Held & Postner, “17th and 18th Century Art,” op.cit., p. 320.]

Greuze’s was “a pioneer of anecdotal genre subjects. He infused his genre scenes with a moral and social appeal of the rustic virtues and Rousseau-esque sentiment.” This type of his work was praised by Diderot “as ‘morality in paint,’ and as representing the highest ideal of painting in his day.”

[Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op. cit., pp. 513-514. Currently not on exhibition is his “NURSEMAIDS” which is moral and didactic genre that criticizes contemporary practices of mothering. In this painting drab and slovenly looking caretakers are shown with their young charges in a dismal interior. The painting criticizes the practice of “baby farming” when well-off women didn’t nurse or raise their young children. In this period baby farming and the practice of wet nursing were attacked by cultural figures such as Rousseau and Beaumarchais..

NOT ON EXHIBITION but related to baby farming is AUBRY’s “The First Lesson in Fraternal Friendship”, 1776 (32-167) which depicts a wealthy young couple’s visit to the wet nurse in order to introduce their older child to his younger sibling who has been farmed out. This is more pleasant genre than the social criticism of Greuze’s grim “Nursemaids.” In Aubry’s painting everyone looks clean, healthy, and happy.

Note here the influence of earlier Dutch genre - the interior’s details of kitchen implements, onions, and textiles. [Churchman, docent handbook]

DECORATIVE ARTS

The 18th century saw an increasing focus on the decorative arts. [Curator Futter, Tour Re-write Committee Walk, spring 2006]

SEVRES CERAMICS

Some of this material repeats that regarding the Sevres in hall Gallery P21.

The most profitable to France and lasting of Pompadour’s achievements, in money and in prestige, is the factory at Sevres. She filled her rooms with it. Before Sevres was established she patronized the French factories of St. Cloud and Chantilly, but particularly Vincennes. [See Vincennes TANKARD below] She persuaded Louis to grant a royal warrant giving Vincennes exclusive rights to produce porcelain in the style of Saxony, i.e. Meissen. In France only Vincennes was allowed to use gold. She noted the variety of imported ceramics from the Far East, as well as Meissen porcelain, and how much French currency was being spent on it. In 1754 The King gave her the village of Sevres below her Bellevue chateau outside of Paris, and there the Vincennes factory was transferred so that she could supervise it. [Mitford, op.cit., p. 180.] Pompadour meant the Sevres factory to compete with Meissen. [Batterberry, Michael and Ariane, “Mirror Mirror: A Social History of Fashion,” Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York 1977, p. 165.]

Kaolin, the important ingredient of hard-paste porcelain, was not discovered in France until 1765, so the French did as best they could with soft-paste (pate tendre). It was made from
variously mixed ingredients of sand, gypsum, and soda mixed together in blocks, and then ground to a powder. To this was added a mix of chalk and clay, and sometimes even soft soap. Soft-paste was hard to model by hand or throw on a wheel, so molds were used frequently. Forming concise sculptural details was difficult, so Sevres concentrated on exquisitely colored surface decoration during the soft-paste Rococo period.

Soft-paste is fired at around 1200 degrees Centigrade or 2,200 Fahrenheit which is lower than hard-paste firing at 1,450 C or 2,650 F. ["Encyclopedia Britannica 2001 CD."] By the time the French use hard-paste (pate dure), the more austere Neo-classic style is increasingly popular in France. [Savage, op.cit., pp. 181-182.] Soft-paste porcelain, like hard-paste, can be translucent but it is not as strong. Its surface is more vulnerable to wear. It is lighter in weight. Soft-paste has a separately applied glaze on it to make the surface appear shiny, where as hard-paste creates its own shiny surface in the first high firing. Soft-paste is not as durable against sudden temperature changes, so put a teaspoon in the cup before you pour in hot liquids. [Curator Ross Taggart, “European Ceramics,” docent lectures.]

Because the body’s softness does not take relief detail well, finely detailed gilt cast metal mounts might be added to a soft-paste object. See in Gallery P23 the pair of ormolu mounted blue URNS, where the reserve areas are painted with floral crowns and monograms that probably commemorate a marriage. ("BF" and “JLF”, 1793)

Wonderful colors were invented at Sevres: rose Pompadour, bleu-de-roi, gros bleu and apple green among them. To French taste Sevres products were superior to those of the Meissen factory. Annually at Versailles in the King’s apartments a Sevres sale was held, and Louis XV himself sometimes acted as salesman for his mistress’ wares. [Mitford, op.cit., p. 180.] She herself cajoled the shoppers to make purchases as being patriotic: “Not to buy this china, as long as one has any money, is to prove oneself a bad citizen.” [Irvine, Chippy, “White Gold,” in “Art and Antiques,” May 2003, p. 45.]

**ROHAN VITRINE**

**DINNER SET** pieces, Sevres, soft paste porcelain, bleu-celeste ground color, enameled and gilded, 1771-1772. One of Sevres’ best dinner sets was made for Prince and Cardinal Louis-Rene-Edward Rohan (1734-1803) when he was appointed French ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire (where he served in Vienna, 1771-4). The service of 368 pieces was made to impress the Viennese court with the beauty of French work.

The background is Sevres’ famous “bleu celeste” (heavenly blue) that was difficult to achieve and a source of pride for Sevres. The color was first used for the king, Louis XV, in 1753.

Among the Museum’s nine pieces from Rohan’s set are a WINE GLASS COOLER (44-14/8) its scalloped or crenellated edge to support upside down stemware while the glasses are rinsed, or chilled in ice, snow, or cold water. A “seau crenele,” this form is also called a monteith. Monteith was a 17th century “fantastical Scot” whose cloak’s scalloped or notched hem attracted attention. ["Metropolitan Museum of Art, Xmas Catalogue, 1987, p. 53.] TWO PIERCED TWO-HANDED DISHES (44-14/6,7), “fromagers” for soft drippy cheeses. A plate would have been placed under them to catch the runoff. TWO ICE CUPS, (tasses a glace) with single handles (44-14/4,5). ICE BUCKET (434-14/3, A-C) (seau a glace) with lid and inner pail. [2006 labels] Note the initials PLR (for Prince Louis Rohan) under the handles.

Curator Taggart [op.cit.] said the small cups could serve flavored ices or ice cream, and the ice bucket could also keep hot food hot because of the insulating pail within. The cups are
very small and so were the portions served. Iced foods were very difficult to keep before modern refrigeration, and very costly. TWO DESSERT DISHES (44/14/9) and DINNER PLATE (44-14/1) The center gold monogram on the latter of LPR signifies Louis Prince Rohan. It is encircled by a wreath of oak tree leaves, bough, and roots.

The plate edges are also gilded with oak wreaths of leaves, bough, and roots. Acorns can be seen worked into the gold. “For this service Sévres introduced a new innovation - two tones of gold - for the cardinal prince’s cipher.” [“Hillwood Museum and Gardens,” Washington, D.C., 2003 guidebook, p. 13.]

Because of technical difficulties “ground” colors (i.e. the extensive background colors) had been seldom used by Meissen, but became popular at Sevres which began to develop many colors at mid-century. Exposed white porcelain “reserve” areas of different shapes were left bare against the colored ground for decoration by the Sévres painters. In this case there were 3 different people who painted the exotic birds in the reserves.

In the 18th century French cuisine for the elite required many specialized ceramic forms to contain an increasing variety of food. Certain dishes and sauces were invented that are still in our cuisine. (e.g. mayonnaise, originally mahonnaise named for the capture of Port-Mahon in 1759). The greatest chefs began to be known by name. [Guy, Christian, “An Illustrated History of French Cuisine,” trans. Elisabeth Abbott, Bramhall Hjouse, New York 1962, p. 76.]

This dinner set was meant to impress the guests at Rohan’s table in Vienna. Handsome, free living Rohan was descended from one of France’s richest and oldest noble families. He lived extravagantly. His kitchen utensils were of massive silver. For a Catholic cleric he was free-minded, and associated with liberal philosophers and aristocrats, including atheists and deists. [Durant, Will and Ariel, “The Age of Voltaire,” Vol. IX in “The Story of Civilization,” Simon and Schuster, New York 1965, pp. 254, 782]. In spite of his secular outlook he became Grand Almoner to Louis XVI, a very high religious court office.

His judgment must be questioned. He was taken in by and sponsored in Paris the notorious Cagliostro (variously a charlatan, quack, pimp, forger, counterfeiter, fortune teller, magician, robber). Rohan was also a major participant in the scandalous “Affair of the diamond necklace” in 1785.

His embassy to Vienna was not successful. He offended the decorous and straight-laced Empress Maria Theresa with his lechery at her court, his free thinking, overly lavish entertainments, and his gossip about her daughter Marie Antoinette, then the new Dauphine of France. After two months Maria Theresa “detested him as a man worthy neither of his ecclesiastical rank nor his position as ambassador.” [Mayer, D. M., “Marie Antoinette: The Tragic Queen,”Coward-McCann, Inc., New York 1968, p. 143.] Furthermore Rohan had become associated with the French anti-Austrian faction. The Empress insisted on his recall. On his return Marie Antoinette refused to speak to him. Extremely ambitious, Rohan hoped one day to be prime minister, now an impossibility unless he gained the queen’s favor.

Meanwhile court jewelers had made an incredible diamond necklace allegedly weighing 2,800 carats, confident that Louis XV would buy it for his mistress Mme. Du Barry. But that king died. The jewelers offered the necklace to Marie Antoinette, now the new queen, but she rejected it as too expensive. Among Rohan’s many women was Jeanne de La Motte-Valois, a scheming and traitorous mistress, but a countess and received at court. She offered to win the Queen over to him, and pretended to be a go-between. She forged letters of friendship from the Queen to the Cardinal. The mistress then arranged a fake interview for Rohan with Marie Antoinette, by hiring a prostitute to impersonate her majesty in the Versailles garden on a dark night. At this brief
meeting the Cardinal was given a rose as token of reconciliation and he kissed the fake queen’s foot (or the hem of her skirt; accounts vary.) Next Jeanne forged a letter from Marie Antoinette authorizing Rohan to buy the necklace for her. When the high-born churchman presented this letter to the jewelers, they gave him the necklace. At a second faked night time assignation the duped Cardinal turned over the necklace to the impersonator. When the real queen received the jewelers’ bill for the necklace, she replied she had never ordered it and had never written the letter authorizing its purchase. Rohan turned in the other fake letters, and Louis XVI recognized them at once as forgeries. The Cardinal was sent to the Bastille on suspicion he and others of the anti-Austrian faction had plotted to discredit the Queen. It’s been presumed that the necklace had been taken by Jeanne’s husband to England where it was broken up and the gems sold. Jeanne who had remained in France was arrested and sent to the Bastille. King Louis believed that an open trial was necessary to prove Marie Antoinette’s innocence, and it became the “cause celebre” of the century. Rohan was found to be an innocent dupe, but the king stripped him of state offices and exiled him to an abbey. Jeanne was publicly stripped, whipped, and branded with a V for “voleuse” (thief), before being condemned to prison for life. She managed to escape, joining her husband in London, where she wrote her memoir of the affair which kept the public focused on the scandal.

Marie Antoinette’s reputation was damaged by the open trial which revealed the scandal to all. The nobility and Parisians celebrated Rohan’s acquittal and accused the queen of causing the affair with her extravagant appetite for jewelry and other luxuries. Money did run through her fingers and she had been labeled “Madame Deficit.” Gossip even accused her of being Rohan’s mistress, although she had avoided seeing him for ten years before his arrest, due to his earlier gossip about her. Napoleon later commented, “The Queen’s death must be dated from the Diamond Necklace Trial.” [Durant, Will and Ariel, “Roussean and Revolution,” Vol. X of “The Story of Civilization,” Simon and Schuster, New York 1967, pp.320, 942-3. Zweig, Stefan, “Marie Antoinette,” The Viking Press, New York. 1933, pp. 160-199.] This was one of the scandals leading to the discredit of the monarchy and its overthrow. For another, see the two BAGATELLE URNS in the South Vestibule, below. [An interesting film “The Affair of the Necklace” (2001) is now on videocassette and DVD, starring Hilary Swank in the role of Jeanne. It can be checked out of Johnson County Library.]

CERAMICS VITRINE (on east wall)

PLATE. Hochst manufactory (German) hard-paste porcelain enameled and gilded, ca. 1760-70 (85-31). Hochst was the third European hard paste porcelain manufactory to be established. (Meissen first, Vienna second.) Note the rippled edge, a Rococo characteristic often seen in ceramics of this period. The center is a genre scene of rustics in the manner of Teniers the Younger (1610-90). 18th century connoisseurs loved genre, and paintings of or like those of the Dutch 17th century were popular.

Two peasants drink at a wooden table while companions stand behind them, one reading from a piece of paper. A distant river or lake is visible. “Near the signpost on the left is a squatting dog, a humorous detail that would have amused the 18th century diner. The plate’s rim bears two cucumbers or pickles, peapods, and a slice of melon, edible motifs appropriate for tableware.”

[- if the defecating dog is not!! As a dinner party guest, wouldn’t you be surprised to see this revealed when you had eaten your food serving that had hidden it?]

The plate is from a set
featuring different painted decorations on each object. The decoration has been tentatively attributed to Joseph Angele who worked at Hochst from 1764-74. ["NAMA Calendar of Events," May 1986.] For other Hochsts see hall Gallery P21.

VASE A COMPARTIMENTE. Sevres (French) soft-paste porcelain enameled and gilded, 1759 (90-36) When made by the Royal Sevres Manufactory this was both a new shape and the height of fashion. Mirrors over mantels were now in vogue. This shape of vase often was placed on a mantel against a mirror, so the back is also decorated with a floral bouquet. Such vases were often part of a garniture set for mantles or table tops, and “an integral part of the 18th century domestic interior.” [Curator Christina Nelson, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” April 1991.]

The “reserve” area’s countryside genre scene of two boys and a dog was painted by Charles-Nicolas Dodin (1743-1803). He was one of the best Sevres artists, and his scenes were often inspired by Tenniers the Younger, as was the Hochst plate immediately above. But Dodin’s other subjects covered the gamut of Rococo topics in general: Chinoiserie, cherubs, pastorals based on Boucher and Fragonard, genre after Greuze, portraits, landscapes, interiors, hunting and martial scenes. During the Revolution he painted the symbols and allegorical subjects of the new political order. In 1773/4 the Sevres records described Dodin as “the most able painter in the studio of soft paste porcelain.” The unknown gilder was accomplished. The exterior is covered with elaborate “cailloute” gilding (gold with a pebbled appearance. [Ibid.]

The partitioned interior was to make flower arranging easier and assist in holding them upright.

TANKARD. Vincennes (French) soft-paste porcelain with bleu lapis ground, gilded, c. 1753 (F84-53,A,B) This Vincennes tankard and the little Meissen porcelain figure of Augustus the Strong (Gallery P19) have been called “two of the finest pieces of porcelain ever produced by Europe’s preeminent factories, Vincennes-Sevres and Meissen.” ["Decorative Arts Department Announces Porcelain Acquisitions," in “NAMA Calendar of Events,” Dec. 1985, p. 2] The Vincennes manufactory began in 1740, and five years later obtained royal patent to produce china. Of all French firms, it was the only one given the exclusive right to use gold. The company was moved to the village of Sevres in 1756 to be close to Bellevue, Madame de Pompadour’s chateau outside Paris. Taken over by her lover Louis XV, Sevres became a royal enterprise like Meissen.

The quality of the richly-tooled gold is outstanding and exceptional. Tooled in it are birds flying and walking among bullrushes, weeping willows, palm trees, and other plants. Some of this gilding is polished, and some of it left unburnished and therefore matt. This type of gilding is “exquisitely rendered” and “unsurpassed by any other European porcelain firm.” [Ibid.] The bright polished areas of the gold were burnished either with a dog’s tooth or a smooth agate, to contrast with the matt. [Ibid.] Made to hold beer or other alcoholic beverages, it was very much a status symbol. Vincennes wares were “extremely fashionable among members of Louis XV’s court.” [Ibid.]

The standard of craftsmanship and design [of this tankard] may be unsurpassed. [Duthy, Robin, “Accent on Magnificence,” in “Connoisseur,” June 1984, p. 59 which illustrates the tankard.]

PLATE. Hannong, Strasbourg, earthenware with tin glaze and enamel, c. 1760-1765 (F93) This utilitarian dish is of less expensive materials and has lower status than the porcelains, but it is
charmingly painted with flowers including a large pink rose.

**SUGAR BOWL & LID.** Hochst (German) hard-paste porcelain, enamelled, 1765-70 (F70-19,A,B,) Hochst was known for fine flower paintings on its ceramics. [Asst. Curator Williams, Reinstallation docent lecture, Aug. 14, 2006.]

**POTPOURRI VASE & COVER.** St. Cloud (French), soft-paste porcelain, 1730-40 (F97-20,A,B)
The sculptured flowers and their stems were hand modeled, and then applied to the vase. Its surface was inspired by the distinctive relief style of Chinese “blanc de chine” (white of China) porcelain. [Tour Office handout on Aug. 14, 2006, p. 9.]

18th century luxury living did not include our concepts and the technology of good hygiene. There were lots of bad smells around.

**WATERING “CAN”** (Arrosoir), Sevres (French), soft-paste porcelain with enamels and gilding, 1755 (F94-20) Illustrated in “Connoisseur” magazine, this surprising object was called “Sevres at its best.” [Duthy, Robin, “Accent on Magnificence,” Connoisseur, June 1984, p. 62.] The porcelain form is that of a common tin watering can that would have been made of a number of different sized metal strips soldered together.

This object “evokes the refinement, charm and frivolity of the age of Louis XV.” [Curator Christina Nelson] It was decorated by Francois Binet.

Gardening was important in the 18th century. Many new species of plants were being introduced as had been in the 17th, and horticulture was now a pleasurable indoor as well as outdoor activity for the gentry. Even city dwellers dressed narrow window ledges with potted plants. Some homes began to have window boxes. Earthenware containers were made that were suitable for the garden and orangery, and porcelain ones for the drawing room. Often there were matching saucers to catch the water. In his book “The City Gardener,” Thomas Fairchild admonished the London gentry to furnish their rooms with plants evoking country gardens. (1722) Plant containers followed fashion, and


Queen Marie Antoinette had a passion for horticulture which she indulged in at her pretend farm “the hamlet” at Versailles, a world she created for herself. [Sciolino, Elaine, “Where Marie Antoinette Played, Before the Deluge,” in “The New York Times,” July 23, 2006, p. 8 TR.] There she dressed as a peasant, and perhaps used gardening utensils like this one created earlier in the century.

The BURNAP COLLECTION includes 18th century ceramic containers for plants, some with removable lids that have round holes for bulbs. Josiah Wedgwood I (1730-1795) and Thomas Bentley (1730-1780) early in their partnership made containers for garden, greenhouse, and drawing room. In 1769 Wedgwood filled Queen Charlotte’s order for garden pots. He also advertised containers with optional pierced covers for cut flowers, and he made ceramic windowboxes designed for windowsills. By 1811 Londoners could rent plants in Wedgwood containers from a florist for special occasions. Ibid.]

The most common decorations on 18th century European porcelains were flowers. The inspiration came from images of them on Chinese ceramics, decorative objects, and paintings.
[See NAMA’s Chinese porcelains, many of which feature plant life.] However, in Europe the choice of flowers for depiction was usually one of visual aesthetics, whereas in China there was a symbolic reason for the choice of plants quite often based on the Chinese language’s homophones (puns, rebuses). These meanings were then not understood by Europeans.

**PLATE.** Chelsea (London) 1749-52, soft-paste (F91-20/2). This firm is thought to have been established around 1743 in the village of Chelsea, now part of London. It was the first English manufactory of porcelain. The persimmon colored enamel against a large expanse of white ground shows the influence of the Kakiemon wares of Japan, but also that of Meissen’s version of Kakiemon. Meissen styles were freely copied in England. “The Kakiemon patterns...may have come at second hand from Meissen rather than directly from imported Arita porcelain.” It’s known that the English Ambassador to the Saxon Court at Dresden offered in 1751 to lend Chelsea some of his Meissen collection for copying. [Savage, op.cit., pp 214, 218.] This is not yet the English invention of bone china which Chelsea will produce. [Asst. Curator Elizabeth Williams, Decorative Arts reinstallation docent lecture, August 14, 2006.]

The English factories had no access to kaolin unless it was imported, so they variously concocted mixes of white clay and stone or bone ash. The top European factories had royal state backing which would pick up deficits, but English kings did not involve themselves in manufacturing. Each English factory had to make a profit to survive. Therefore 18th century English porcelains lack the high quality and refinement of Meissen and Sevres. It is cruder and less translucent. [Moonam, Wendy, “Antiques: Diverse Styles at the Birth of Porcelain,” in “The New York Times, Nov. 9, 2001, E36.]

[BONE china, an English invention, was patented in 1749. Ash from burned cattle bones was added to the other ingredients giving a stronger and more stable body. [Savage, op.cit., p. 212] This Chelsea dish is not bone.]

One of the Chelsea founders was a silversmith. The shape of this dish is after a silver one. Chelsea forms “…up to 1750 were, for the most part, copied from contemporary silver...Silver forms vary considerably, an acanthus leaf type being especially fine and desirable...” [Ibid. P. 223.]

**VASE.** Chantilly (French) soft-paste porcelain with tin glaze and enamel, c. 1740 (F99-11) Inspirations for both the shape and the painted figures are Asian. European Chinoiserie images like this appear on the English cabinet on giltwood stand just outside this gallery (33-23,A,B), the Meissen plate in Gallery P26 above (F84-7), and in the 18th century Italian red lacquer room [Gallery P28]

The clay forming the vase is a yellow green, so it has been coated with a tin oxide glaze to make it white. [Asst. Curator Williams, Reinstallation docent lecture, Aug. 14, 2006.]

NOTE: More French Sevres is or will be exhibited in hall Gallery P21, above, and P23, below.

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**FURNITURE**

**BERNARD II VAN RISENBURGH,** “Secretaire” (desk that locks) c. 1750: Marquetry of
various woods (probably tulipwood, kingwood, and amaranth, over an oak carcass, and with gilt (ormolu) copper alloy mounts. This piece is stamped underneath the back rail BVRB. As his full name was too long to mark furniture, the maker used his initials. (F72-26)

BVRB “has long been recognized as the leading ebeniste of the Louis XV period” and one of the most important suppliers of furniture to the Crown. [Rieder, William, “‘B.V.R.B.’ at the Met,” in “Apollo, Vol. 139, No. 383, January 1994, p. 33.] It is in 18th century France that the marquetry “technique was carried to its highest perfection. [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,” op.cit., p. 560.]

Small desks “of this elegant design were in great favor with the court.” [Goheen, op.cit., p. 95.] Although Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour, and other notables owned his exquisite things, he worked almost exclusively for Parisian “marchands-merciers” whom we might think of as the first career interior designers. They made nothing themselves, but organized and sold interior furnishings they had purchased from independent craftsmen, and they served as go-betweens by coordinating furniture, textiles, and accessories for their patrons. Philosopher, encyclopedist and art critic Denis Diderot (a major figure of the Age of Enlightenment) called them “Sellers of everything, makers of nothing.”

“Secrétaire” is French for a writing desk in which papers could be locked up and kept “secret.” A secretary was the employee one worked with so closely that he was entrusted with your secrets. There are three secret compartments in this desk that are opened by pressing certain parts of the joinery.

Following Rococo aesthetic, the verticals are delicately curved. Only the horizontal surfaces are flat and functional, serving as a writing surface and support for candle stands, writing accessories, etc.

The fact that in the 18th century there suddenly appears the specialized form of a desk for a lady’s use indicates the more active, educated, and intellectual role for them in this period. [Text panel and docent tour, Winterthur, Wilmington, Delaware. Lee’s notes from visit May 1993.] [There were some astonishingly intellectual ladies during the Enlightenment such as Emilie, Marquise du Chatelet, mathematician and physicist who translated Newton’s “Principia Mathematica” into French. She also was Voltaire’s mistress. See Durant, Will & Ariel, “The Age of Voltaire”, Vol. IX of “The Story of Civilization,” Simon & Schuster, New York 1965, pp. 373-5, 379.] Earlier specialized female furniture consisted of nursing chairs, cradles, and spinning wheels. [Text panel...Winterthur, op.cit.] The use of small specialized sewing tables came in at the same time as ladies’ desks. [Text panels and docent tour, Winterthur, Wilmington, Delaware, Lee’s visit in May 1993.]

The desk dates from the mid-18th century and is in the full Rococo style. Compared to Cressent’s earlier commode [Gallery P18] it is smaller in scale and more curvy. Furniture with the mark BVRB was not identified as being by Bernard II until the late 1950s. There were 3 generations of furniture makers in his family. His father Bernard I emigrated from Holland and worked as a clockmaker. Bernard II is the famous cabinet maker who made this desk.

The desk’s back is finished, a cultural clue as to its use indicating it was not to be kept up against a wall, but sat out in a room. Small, it could be moved by servants from place to place to catch the best light for writing. [Curator Christina Nelson, “Case by Case...,” Fellows Walk, April 20, 1997.]

The case or carcass wood is probably walnut and can be seen in the sides and bottoms of the drawers, and the interior sides and bottoms of the three secret compartments. In contrast to the exterior’s geometric veneer patterns, the interior visible surfaces have floral marquetry. To make
Marquetry a metal or paper pattern was laid against the carcass and the design pounced onto it. Veneer pieces were cut to fit the pattern. They were attached to the carcass with hide or fish glues. Sometimes the veneer wood pieces were colored to enhance contrast, but the dyes were fugitive and bright colors may have disappeared. [Ibid.]

When the desk is open, the revealed central flat horizontal panel (behind the writing area) slides to one side to reveal a secret compartment below it. Inside the compartment is a lever which when touched releases the right flat horizontal side of the first secret compartment, revealing a second compartment under it. To the left of the first compartment is a similar lever, revealing a third secret compartment. [Ibid.]

The leather workers guild was responsible for the leather covering the writing area. The ormolu pieces are attached with small screws. [Ibid.]

The complex mechanisms of this desk and the Empire Desk c. 1815 (not currently on exhibition) attest to the fine cabinetry of France in the 18th and 19th centuries, and reflect the intellectual interests of the Age of Enlightenment. Much French cabinetry continued to be finely made later in the 19th century. [Ibid.]

**SECRETARY BOOKCASE.** German, 1740-50, walnut and pine with ebony, walnut and fruitwood veneers. (F69-39) Different pieces of the wooden marquetry were sometimes dyed. Originally some of the desk’s veneering may have been brighter colored, but if so the colors have faded. [Asst. Curator Elizabeth Williams, Decorative Arts reinstallation lecture for docents, August 14, 2006.]

This a remarkable example of illusionist skill on the part of the impressive maker who plays with changing perspectives, but it’s a mystery piece since it has no maker’s mark. The lack of a mark is unusual in such a fine piece. [Acting Curator Catherine Lippert, Decorative Arts lecture for docents.]

Marquetry which is patterned veneering originated in 14th century Italian intarsia, or inlaid designs...it “reemerged in Germany and the Netherlands in the early 17th century and achieved a high degree of refinement in the 18th century.” [Tour Department handout, August 2006.]

**GALLERY P20 (on the school tour)**

18th century art in Italy. Themes: The passion for ruins. Genre takes a satiric turn. Religion is still an important subject in Roman Catholic areas. Key Pieces: 2 Panini, 2 Traversi, 2 St. Michaels, 2 church ceilings GAME? We’re alive in the 18th century and are students. Let’s pretend our families are wealthy, so they are sending us on the Grand Tour to Italy with our private tutors as chaperones. Of course we want to see all the ancient Roman ruins, but we also want to see what artists of our own day are painting there in this time period.

**RUIN PAINTINGS**

[As of Sept. 2006 the RUIN pictures scheduled for exhibition here have not been installed. When?]

**PANINI,** 1744, “Antique Ruins with the ‘Parable of the Fish,’” (32-8). Title origin is unknown. It is not in the Bible, but see speculations below.] & “Antique Ruins with Apostle Preachin” (32-9) In Gallery P22 we saw Panini’s view of Rome from the North Gate, an accurate depiction of the city as he knew it in the 18th century. He also depicted many ancient ruins of the
area, being the first painter to specialize in the subject. [Old Docent handbook; “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 1024.] Today ruins are the subjects for which he is best known. [Rowlands, p. 405] For his many patrons he painted both real and imaginary ruins, or even composites. You could tell him what your favorite ruins and ancient statues were, and he’d put them all in the one picture as if they really were located side by side.

With many of his ruin works the title is quite incidental to the importance of the romantic ruins themselves. The human figures give scale to the fragmented architecture and colorfully animate the scene, but if there is a religious message, it is subordinate. “There is no evidence that Panini intended his pictures to express religious truths.”

In the “Parable of the Fish” the figure in a blue robe with yellowish or ochre mantel has been identified as St. Peter because of these colors traditionally associated with him. [See other St. Peters, in this Gallery Giaquinto, and in P15, d’Arpino.] He gestures towards several fish. To the right a woman has baskets that might be full of bread. This may refer to the miraculous feeding in all four Gospel accounts, although none of those texts give Peter any specific role in the event. The red clad figure behind Peter may be his brother Andrew, usually depicted with a full white beard. Perhaps the fish refers to their former occupation as fishermen. There is a large body of water behind them. But now they are “fishers of men.”

The pendant picture may depict St. Paul preaching. Peter and Paul are often paired in art as the two founders of the Church. [As in d’Arpino’s painting in Gallery P13 above.], and both saints actually preached in Rome. The artist made other variations of these paintings. In the pendant with preaching St. Paul, the building with Ionic columns at the right has similarities to the Temple of Saturn in the Roman Forum, and the carved relief at extreme right recalls the famed Ara Pacis reliefs [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 411-420.] However, these two monuments were not situated closely together in Rome, but were a considerable distance apart.

WHY RUIN PAINTINGS

Grand Tour travelers took ruin paintings home as souvenirs. In the 18th century educated people had Classical educations that focused on the ancient world and its writers, so they were fascinated by ancient ruins and eager to see them. These shattered remains of architecture influenced 18th century garden design. After people returned home they sometimes built big fake ruins in their gardens well into the 19th century.

[Alluding to the vogue for ruins, Koko who is forced to court the elderly Katasha in “The Mikado,” sings to her, “There’s a fascination frantic in a ruin that’s romantic. Do you think you are sufficiently decayed?” William Gilbert, libretto, “The Mikado,” 1885.]

In 1462 Pope Pius II had placed Rome’s ruins under his protection to serve as an example of the frailty of the human condition. [Werner, Louise, “Reflections Amid the Ruins,” in “Archaeology,” Vol. 56, No. 1, Jan.-Feb. 2003, p. 56. See also Woodward, Christopher, “In Ruins,” Pantheon, NY, 2002.], and during his last years Raphael (died 1520) was appointed by the papacy to survey the ancient monuments of Rome.

To 18th century people the mood of ruins, of paintings about them, and of fake garden ruins was nostalgic and elegiac. The implied message was, “See how even the mighty ancient world has passed away, and so will our own world.” There is a Latin phrase for this mood, “Sic transit gloria mundi,” Thus passes away the glory of the world.

SUMMARY OF 18TH CENTURY RUIN PAINTINGS IN THE COLLECTION

Gallery P18: two Vernets, one with the pyramid of Caius Cestus. Gallery P19: Boucher’s
Temple of Vesta (or the Sybil) at Tivoli. Gallery P22: two imaginary (“capriccio”) ruin scenes by Marieschi. Gallery P20: two ruin paintings by Panini, one perhaps with references to the Temple of Saturn in the Forum, and the Ara Pacis.

Not on exhibition are two “capricci” of the Roman Campagna by the MASTER OF PRATO showing a Roman arch, aqueduct, column, and Roman arch and a building after Cecilia Metella’s tomb on the Appian Way outside Rome. [See Rowlands, op.cit., pp 377-382].

* * * * *

Continuation of GALLERY P20

SIDE TABLE. c. 1750, Italian top of “pietre dure” (Italian: “hard stones”), support of English oak (81-36). As a Grand Tour traveler, we might bring luxurious furnishings home from our visit to 18th century Italy, such as this table top. It was probably made in Florence where, since the late Renaissance (1588) the Medici rulers sponsored a type of mosaic work in which beautifully colored stones and other hard materials (shells are included here) were cut and fit together in complex designs. The craftsmen who worked with this material had their factory in the Uffizi (“offices” of the Medici, now the Florence museum).

The table top features plant designs made from different stones and also shells in an elaborate Rococo scrolling foliage design. When the top reached England, its owner had an English craftsman make the oak base in the Rococo style, and the owner’s falcon crest was painted on it. The table belonged to the Whitmore family of Apley, England.

Compared to the French Console Table in Gallery P19, this fine table base is rather restrained in its design and lacks the emphasized curvaceousness and playful asymmetry of the French one.

The variety of hard stones reflects the 18th century interest in studying nature and collecting specimens. [Asst. Curator Williams, Reinstallation docent lecture, Aug. 14, 2006.]

TRAVERSI. “The Arts: Music” and “The Arts: Drawing” 1755-1760 (F61-70, F61-71). The artist had a successful career in Naples and Rome. Although he did many religious pictures, over half his output was of secular subjects. Of the latter there are two sorts of genre: low life and the middle class occupied with genteel pursuits [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 436-8] These pendants (2 paintings intentionally meant to go with each other) are two of Traversi’s most important works. They’re social satire with aspects of romance and unrequited love. They contrast youth and age They’re almost life size, of such a large scale that the patron must have been an aristocrat with a room large enough for them. [Prof. Robert Endgass, Traversi presentation lecture to the public, NAMA March 23, 1989.]

Art can be funny! Is this a satirical “fête galant”? The paintings seem to be a take on that popular 18th century Rococo theme of partying. This pair of paintings are very different genre works compared to the French pendants by Pater and de Troy in Gallery 115. Those artists painted scenes of idealized, elegant, and fashionable high society with mostly even lighting, whereas Traversi’s show the “nouveau riche” (newly wealthy) members of the middle class who are putting on airs by aping their betters. Although Traversi made them when the Rococo painting style was at its height, the artist used 17th century Baroque and Caravagesque style characteristics. Nothing is idealized; most of the faces are realistically homely, there is dramatic
lighting from an unknown source in the scene of art lovers, and in both works the figures are very large, compressed, crowded together, up close to the viewer, and some at the sides are cropped. How realistic is the dog, about to leap into our space!

[Childrens Tour Note: If Grand Tour Tourist game is continued here, let’s pretend that while in Italy we’ve made new friends with some of the natives. They invite us to a party where drawings will be made and music will be played. What are these people like? What might they be thinking or talking about? Which one invited you? ]

**THE MUSIC LOVERS:** Eight men surround one young woman who plays a harpsichord. Her skirt features crewel work embroidery, a type of needlework inspired by imported textiles from India that became popular in Europe of the 17th and 18th centuries. However, her hat is very ordinary, one to be worn doing housework or shopping for a chicken, and not for a social gathering. This type of hat is called a “mob” hat, a name acquired during the French Revolution. In a gathering like this she should be wearing something better on her head or nothing at all. Note her pale pink shoe. Madame de Pompadour wears similarly pink shoes of thin leather or silk in several portraits. [e.g. Quentin de la Tour pastel of 1755, illustrated on p. 158 in Batterbury, Michael and Ariane “Mirror, Mirror: A Social History of Fashion,” Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1977. Boucher portrait of 1759, frontispiece in Mitford, Nancy, “Madame de Pompadour,” Harper & Row, New York and Evanston, 1954.] Such fragile shoes were not practical and when Madame Du Barry complained that hers did not last, her shoemaker said “but, Madam, you must have walked in them!” [Batterberry, Michael and Ariane, “Mirror Mirror: A Social History of Fashion,” Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1977 p. 160.]

Her sheet music is titled “Cantata a Voce Sola”, song for a single voice. Obviously she is the vocal soloist in the musical group, as well as playing the keyboard instrument. Turning the page of her music is an older man with music held in his hand and tucked in his coat. Perhaps he is a music master or the composer of the piece. He and the musicians at the left who play flute and what is probably a viola da gamba, seem serious about the performance. In contrast the three men at the right are paying more attention to the woman than the music. They ogle her with admiration. The one peering at her through a monocle is probably a magistrate because of his sober dress of black robes and plain collar. At the far right is the best dressed man of the painting who wears a scarlet coat popular with aristocrats and Englishmen on the Grand Tour. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 443.] His costume is enhanced by a small fortune of gold braid and embroidery, the equivalent cost of a small Cadillac, said Curator Ross Taggart. [Docent lecture sometime in 1960s.] The red heels on his shoes was a fashion set earlier at Louis XIV’s Versailles where they originally indicated courtier status. In England there was a resurgence of interest in red heels in the 1750s and 60s, often adopted after visiting Europe. [Rowlands, op.cit.]

His stance with one leg crossed, its calf muscle flexed, was a fashionable one for men in this period. [Try this posture - it’s hard to balance!] Over and over again 18th century men are portrayed in this posture [even George Washington!] Men wore tight stockings, and a handsome bulging calf muscle was considered most attractive. If men didn’t have good calf muscles, they tied falsies on their legs under their stockings to improve them. [A number are preserved in costume collections.] His tight stockings are worn folded up over his garters, but this fashion was no longer in vogue for men at the time the painting was made. Perhaps he’s not as “cool” as he seems to think he is.

In the background are two men who are concentrating on each other instead of the maiden and the music. Note that one of them has a hand tucked into his coat, an increasingly popular 18th
century male gesture that reaches its height in the Napoleonic period.

A curtain is swagged up to the right. It has been suggested that scenes like this may refer to theatrical productions of opere buffe (singular is opera buffa) that were being produced as popular entertainment at Naples at the time. These were comic musical productions and plays about manners and love. Popular plots satirized the social climbing middle class trying to act like the aristocracy, a type of entertainment whose model was Molliere’s “Le bourgeois gentilhomme.” [1670]. “His plays had been emulated in Italy since the late 17th century.” [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 446.]

THE ART LOVERS: In this gathering a woman is again the central focus of the work. She has a chalk holder in her right hand for drawing, and sketch paper with her crude drawing. She is dressed in expensive silk but her costume lacks the laces at neck and elbows that an aristocrat would have worn. Her foot is turned so we can see the fashionably curved Louis XV heel on her shoe. She looks admiringly at a young man holding a more sophisticated drawing. His modestly styled suit and his wig are no longer in fashion. With his left arm he clutches his black tricorn hat against his chest, as if he hopes that his visit here will be a short one. Perhaps he is an art teacher who has been hired to provide the party’s entertainment. [Prof. Endgass, Traversi presentation lecture, op.cit.] It is interesting that his face is that of the viol player in the other picture.

Between this couple is an old man in red who expresses delight over the woman’s unaccomplished drawing. Is he flattering the hostess so he’ll be invited back? [Ibid.] Leaning on a cane at the left is another old man in foreign dress. Perhaps he is a foreign tourist like the man in red at the musical gathering. His caftan dress, sleeveless jacket, and fur or plush trimmed hat were worn by Russians and many Central Europeans living under Turkish rule. He may be a Jew. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 444.] He is wealthy; observe the wide gold trim on the lower edge of his caftan.

Behind the young woman is a gray-clad young man who intently eyes her. His wig is unusually tight fitting and short, suggesting a city official or merchant. An old woman clasps his shoulder familiarly, as she points at the young woman. This older woman reflects the procuress role seen in many paintings of low life. Note the symbolic sexual gestures of the fingers of the older woman and the intent young man.

The three art lovers at the top right only admire the paintings on playing cards.

The best dressed man in this painting occupies the far right area, as is true of the pendant painting’s man in red. But his stockings, too, are rolled which is no longer fashionable. He looks out at the viewer while chin-chucking a child or pet dwarf who is holding a sketchbook and chalk holder. For a number of centuries the elite had kept dwarfs as pets and pages, and dressed them well. Note the gold braid on this blue costume. This little person looks adoringly at the fashionable man who holds a drawing of a face in profile.

Artists sometimes place their self-portraits in group paintings, and sometimes on the far right, as in the Museum’s Veronese painting of “Christ and the Centurion.” Perhaps this is Traversi? [Not known.]

Originally there was a third woman at this gathering, but the painter changed his mind about the composition and removed her. Can you find her? She is a “pentimento” [Italian: repentance] meaning that the artist repented putting her there, so covered her up, in this case by painting a
window over her. However, the paint he used for the window that covers her is “fugitive,” becoming transparent and not holding up well. Increasingly she is back in the scene. If the artist had not painted her out, would the mood of this painting be changed?

Who is the ferocious looking spaniel growling at? It has been proposed that the two paintings reflect just one party, music lovers at one side of the room and art lovers at the other. Then the dog would be growling at the cat. [Curator Roger Ward, “Genre, Manners and Morals,” docent lecture, Jan. 31, 2001.] If that is the case then the man with the profile drawing would be intently looking at the harpsichord player who returns his gaze. [Suggestion of MFA in Theatre students and Prof. Jennifer Martin, UMKC Theatre Department. They further proposed that he will say to her, “What a dull party...let’s leave it together!.” What do YOU think is going on? ]

The two greatest NAMA genre works are Traversi’s pair. They are “his masterpieces of his whole career” and the “greatest paintings he ever did.” [Curator Roger Ward, “Genre, Manners and Morals,” op.cit.]

“It is possible that the artist is commenting on the folly of flattery.” [2006 label]

18th CENTURY ITALIAN RELIGIOUS ART

In Italy the Roman Catholic Church remained a major patron of art, and there were many devout lay persons who commissioned art as gifts to the church or to use for their own private devotions.

ST. MICHAEL CASTING DOWN THE REBEL ANGELS, Italian, Neapolitan, early 18th c., wood paint, gilding, glass inlays (61-53) “The subject was especially popular during the Counter-Reformation when St. Michael’s victory symbolized the triumph of the Church and orthodoxy over pagan and Protestant heresies. In 1691 Michael was proclaimed one of the patron saints of the city of Naples, bringing on an upsurge in the demand for images of him.” [Old label by Curator Ward.]

The sculpture illustrates Revelation 12: 7-9, “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” One of these fallen angels is dragon-like with a long tail. [Pentecost, Lee, “The Angel Tour at the Nelson Atkins Museum...,” July 1985, p. 10.]

Because of the hot climate in Naples, churches generally didn’t have huge windows to let in light. How impressive this would have been in a dim interior, seen by the flickering light of candles which would have made the devils’ glass eyes glitter fiendishly. [Curator Ward, docent lecture]

Note on the Devil and his minions: Devil comes from Greek, diabolus, “slanderer;” and the name Satan is Hebrew for “enemy.”) He first appears in scripture as the serpent in Genesis 3. During the first four centuries of Christian art the prince of darkness appears in the form of a serpent. By the Middle Ages his serpentine form is sometimes more elaborately evolved, perhaps human-headed and monstrous, often a dragon. The devil type with horns, pointed ears, cloven hooves and a goatish lower body was derived from Christian revulsion towards the satyrs and fauns of antiquity. He can take other monstrous forms. [see Pentecost, “Angel Tour...” op.cit., p. 8] [For more on Michael, see immediately below.]
[CHILDREN’S GALLERY SEARCH: Let’s try to find St. Michael in another work in this Gallery.] “FALL OF THE REBEL ANGELS,” early 18th century, ivory (69-2). At the top is the Trinity: God the father is bearded and seated beside the orb representing cosmic dominion. Beside him is the heroic resurrected Christ holding the cross on top which sits the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. The Trinity is supported by a cluster of bodiless type of angels, and then a circle of full-bodied angels praising and adoring God. (Psalms 148.2, Revelation 7:11, 15)

The work’s middle area illustrates Revelation 12: 7-9, the ferocious battle of the good angels and the bad angels who are the devils. At the bottom right of the battle gapes a Hellmouth swallowing the defeated. In the Middle Ages the entrance to Hell was often depicted as the gaping jaws of a dragon-like monster, based on the monster Leviathan, and the Devil himself was perceived as leviathan and a dragon. (Job 41; Isaiah 27; 1, Revelation 12: 9; Davidson, Gustav, “A Dictionary of Angels,” The Free Press, New York, 1967, p. 173.) Some of the devils here resemble ancient pagan satyrs.

At the very bottom on a separate piece of ivory is the Expulsion. Having disobeyed God, Adam and Eve are kept from re-entering the Garden where stands the Tree of Life, by the Cherubim with the fiery sword who was placed by God to guard east of Eden. (Genesis 3: 24)

In the center of the Battle is one of the foremost archangels, Michael (his name means “Who is as God”). Many authorities including a number of saints such as Thomas Aquinas, and later religious thinkers (i.e. Dante and Billy Graham) believe him to be the greatest of all the angelic beings. [Graham, Billy, “God’s Secret Agents,” Doubleday and Co., Garden City, NY, 1975, pp. 50-51.] Tradition makes Michael the military Captain General of the Heavenly Hosts, the protector of the Jewish nation who then becomes the protector of Christendom’s Church Militant. He is the great adversary of Satan. (Revelation 12: 7-9) To the Jews he was the “viceroy of heaven.” Tradition says he was the angel who stopped Abraham from killing Isaac and that he was the angel of the Burning Bush. In the Legends of the Jews he saved Daniel’s companions from the fire, was the intermediary between Mordecai and Esther, and destroyed Babylon. He is called “Prince of Light” in the “Dead Sea Scrolls. In legends of the life of the Virgin, he announced to Mary her death. In Christian lore he is the benevolent angel of death in the sense of deliverance and immortality, who leads the souls of the faithful into eternal light. [Davidson, op. cit., p. 194.] He is often depicted with the scales of judgment, for on Judgment Day he will weigh the souls of the dead. However he is more frequently seen, as here, clad in ancient armor and battling the devils.” [Pentecost, Angel Tour, op. cit., p. 8.]

Traditionally the carving was long identified as by Jakob Auer, an Austrian sculptor (died 1706). “More recent scholarship suggests, however, that it is from the hand of a Neapolitan artist active in the early eighteenth century.” [Curator Ward, old label] I have seen a book illustration (can’t remember title) of what seems to be an identical carving of the battle set into a lavish Rococo stand that encircled it. Below the battle and set into the stand’s base is a similar Expulsion from the Garden.

TWO CEILING DESIGNS FOR BIG CHURCHES

GIAQUINTO, “Adoration of the Holy Cross on the Day of the Last Judgment,” 1740-42 (47-6) One of the leading painters in 18th century Rome, he came to be considered the finest fresco painter there, with many commissions from important patrons and the Church. His reputation became international and he was named first painter to the king of Spain (1753, Ferdinand VI) where he was appointed director general of the Academia Reale. “He oversaw all royal
commissions, including the all-important decoration of the new palace, the present-day Palacio Real. His role was thus the equivalent of Charles Le Brun’s at Versailles.” [Rowlands, op. cit., pp. 396-7] In 1760 he returned to Italy, settling in Naples where he had studied at an early age.

In Rome his most prestigious work there was for the interior of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, two large canvases for the ceiling and two frescoes on lower walls. This is the church that housed relics of the Holy Cross that St. Helena had brought back from Jerusalem. The commission “is rightly considered the highpoint of his Roman career,” and was for one of the most venerated churches in Christendom. It is probable that Pope Benedict XIV was the patron since he had been titular cardinal of Santa Croce. [Rowlands, op.cit., p. 400]: This painting is a highly finished “modello” of one of the ceiling canvases, to be shown to the patron for final approval before work began on the actual commission. The oddly shaped outer edge of this work reflects the form of the baroque ceiling molding into which it was eventually inserted. [The finished painting set into the church’s ceiling over the nave crossing can be seen in Fig.48a, Rowlands, op.cit., p. 400.]

The finished painting has the canonical 7 angels of the Bible’s book of “Revelation,” while only five are here in the modello. [Ibid., pp. 401-2.] Another bible text for the painting is Matthew 24:29-31 where Jesus says of the world’s last days, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven...And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four wind, from one end of heaven to the other.” [King James version]

Not all of the saints have been identified, but James is thought to be the left figure clad in green and holding a sword in his left hand. To his right is Peter holding a key in his right hand, and next to Peter is John the Evangelist (the Divine, the Gospeler, the Beloved). [Rowlands, op.cit.] These are the only three of Christ’s disciples who had witnessed the Transfiguration, the first manifestation of his divinity. [Ibid., p. 403.] Angels sound the news of the Last Judgment to the earth (seen at the lower left) that lies far below this heavenly assembly. [Ibid., p. 398.]

An unidentified bright light falls across the apostles from the top left, an often seen element of the Baroque style.

In the 18th century painting was characterized by more subtle and varied color than the Baroque and Renaissance periods before it. John’s green robe is topped by a mauve mantel. Giaquinto is a brilliant colorist who mastered the technique of “drappo cangiante” [changing cloth or changing drapery]. This phrase can be traced to the Renaissance art theorist Lomazzo who in his treatise of 1584 describes it as a virtuoso technique practiced by painters to demonstrate their skill in handling color. When depicting a textile, the artist paints with one color in the lights and a different color in the shadows. [Lomazzo, Giovanni Paolo, “Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura,” 1584, bk. 3, ch. io, 198-201.]

**STUDENT SEARCH:** Where in the painting are examples of this great skill? Peter’s blue robe has purple shadows, rather than a darker blue. The central angel’s fuchsia robe is highlighted with dabs of yellow.

The apostle who is prostrate before the cross wears a “celadon” colored garment according to Rowlands [op.cit., p. 398.] that is touched with ivory. Note the delicate subtlety of his brushwork to indicate that the shirt is faintly striped. The disciple standing beyond him is in coral rose highlighted with a dull blue. The angels’ feathers are varied in color.

“This is one of the most exquisite 18th century works in the Museum... It was bought for $900 after World War II.... It is interesting to note that Giaquinto was born the same year as Boucher, 1703. [Curator Roger Ward, “Italian and French Baroque Painting,” docent lecture, Sept.
GANDOLFI. “Assumption of the Virgin with Old Testament Figures,” 1776-79. (F92-1) This is the canvas modello for half of a hemisphere ceiling fresco in Santa Maria della Vita in Bologna. The finished fresco is in the cupola dome directly above the high altar. Of all the artist’s big projects, this one is the most important in the number of figures, iconographical complexity, and the time required for such a large project. This is the half of the ceiling visible to the congregation facing the high altar. The other half would have been seen only by those officiating at the Mass. [The modello for the other half is in the Snite Museum, University of Notre Dame, Indiana.] At top right a child angel dramatically pulls back a dark red curtain from the scene. At top left are Jesus and God the Father in heaven. With her arms outstretched the Virgin approaches them, supported by several angels. One to her right holds lilies, symbols of her purity. A large angel to the left holds a palm representing triumph in this context, not martyrdom. [Note: on winning their contest at the original Olympic games, the successful contestants were handed a palm branch.] “His original function as annunciate angel echoed...as he announces here the Virgin’s arrival into heaven.” To his right on the clouds are Adam and Eve, and probably Abel. In the clouds at the far right Jacob wrestles with the angel. Separated from the cloud born by a gap of blue sky is the lower register with other various Old Testament figures. At the left is Noah seated next to the ark on which rests a dove bearing an olive branch. Next is Joshua the warrior in armor and salmon colored cape, a shield in his left hand, a sword in his right. Then Aaron the high priest in a white robe, his head covered, who holds censers and a rod. Looking down at the viewer is Moses holding the Tablets of the Law, and below his feet the Burning Bush is flaming. Some what further back in the picture and in the lower center are Judith with the head of Holofernes, and Queen Esther with crown and scepter. Right of them is King David, wearing ermine and crown, and with his harp (referring to his authorship of the Psalms). Then Rebecca with her water jar. At the right are Abraham, Isaac holding wood and a torch for his immolation, and his mother Sarah. [Rowlands, op. cit., pp. 465-469; Rowlands does not identify the background couple at farthest right who are cropped.]

TIEPOLO. Giovanni Battista, “Allegorical Scene: A Woman Ruler Triumphant over Discord, c. 1760 (62-51) Here is a “grisaille” study (monochrome painting in shades of gray or brown; often used to indicate sculpture) by Domenico’s famous father and collaborator, who “was the foremost wall and ceiling decorator in Northern Italy and Wurzburg.” [1994 label. Wurzburg is in Bavaria, the southern section of Germany.] “He was the last great exponent of fresco painting which he developed to new heights of technical virtuosity, illumination, and dramatic effect....the last great representative of the Venetian School which in the 18th century was the most influential and creative force in Italian art.” His earlier work was influenced by Veronese and Ricci. After he married Guardi’s sister in 1719 his style became more fluid and lighter. [See Guardi in Gallery P19.] His patrons were the highest in society, including the King of Spain, Louis XV of France, and Empress Elizabeth of Russia. In 1762 Giovanni wrote “painters must try and succeed in large-scale works capable of pleasing the rich and the nobility because it is they who make the fortunes of artists, and not the other sort of people who cannot buy valuable pictures. And so the painter’s spirit must always be reaching out for the sublime, the heroic, the perfect.” The small oil on canvas is a “modello” for an unknown project. The crowned ruler may be Empress Elizabeth of Russia. Although details are obscure Tiepolo was commissioned for designs
for the Throne Room of her Winter Palace nearing completion in 1760, and he did send several paintings to Russia. The subject would have been suitable for this location. To the ruler’s right a kneeling man offers her either a scepter or baton. The figure under the ruler’s foot is probably Discord who is burdened by a yoke across her back. Discord carries a torch which symbolized “the dissensions that she inflamed within kingdoms,” according to Ripa’s “Iconologia,” the leading artists’ manual on symbolic imagery in the 17th and 18th centuries. [Rowlands, pp. 448-456].

**PITTONI,** “Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew,” 1735, Venetian (47-29) The artist has a “Frenchified” and “definitive sweet, pastel-hued style.” His lighter palette, grace and elegant figure style also recall his contemporary Ricci with whom he collaborated on a work. But more than any other Venetian artist his style shows affinities with 18th century French Rococo painting although he seems not to have traveled farther from Venice than nearby Padua. Nevertheless he had the royal patronage of the king of Spain and the Hapsburgs in Vienna. For the latter he executed two altarpieces for the Schonbrunn Palace. His success is attested by the fact that he served two terms as the president of the Venetian Academy of Painting and Sculpture.

St. Bartholomew was one of the 12 disciples who spread Christianity into Arabia, Mesopotamia, and India. The pagan King Astrages of Armenia captured him and tried to force Bartholomew to sacrifice to pagan gods (note the statue of the goddess Diana at upper left). The saint caused the pagan statue to crumble to dust, and the king ordered that he be beaten and then flayed alive. He became the patron saint of tanners, glovemakers, and butchers.

This painting was a “modello” for a large altarpiece in a choir chapel of Padua’s basilica of Sant’ Antonio, which was the most important Franciscan site after Assisi. The altarpiece has since been moved to the office of the president of the Congregazione.

In 1758 the French artist Cochin derided the altarpiece, claiming that the saint was “too white overall,” and he criticized Pittoni’s “too beautiful color.” [Rowlands, op.cit., pp. 383-391.]

Rowlands believes that the saint’s figure resembles the famous ancient statue of Laocoön in the Vatican. Since the Counter Reformation in the 16th century it had been thought an “exemplum doloris,” [Latin: model or ideal representation of pain, sorrow] and considered an appropriate type for representing martyrs. [Ibid.] The Laocoön was variously quoted in works by many artists.

It is currently claimed that the painter is “...the most rococo of the 18th century Venetian painters.” [2006 label]

**BAZZANI,** “The Departure of the Prodigal Son,” c. 1750 (F61-57). The subject is the parable told by Jesus of the Prodigal Son [Luke 15:11-13], which the artist painted several times. “The younger of two sons asked his father for his inheritance and, when given it, spent it all living riotously. Reduced to the level of a swineherd, penniless and starving, he repented and returned to his father who welcomed him home with great joy. Christ’s parable was meant as a metaphor for the penitent sinner received back into the fold of the all-forgiving Church.” Bazzani painted other scenes of the story, and it is possible that NAMA’s picture was at one time part of a series meant to be seen together, which would have included the Prodigal Son with a Courtesan, the Prodigal Son Among the Swine, and the Return of the Prodigal Son. It is possible that they were meant to be overdoor paintings for a room. [Rowlands, op.cit., p 424-426.]

Bazzani’s other versions of the Departure lack the realistic portrait of a black-veiled woman in profile on the far right. It’s speculated that she is the unknown patron who commissioned this work (and perhaps some of the others) on the loss of her own son since she is wearing a mourning veil. [Ibid.]
The artist’s style shows a loose technique, sketchlike and calligraphic, of bravura brushstrokes with scumbling (translucent paint laid over a darker underlayer). There is in Bazzani’s work an air of intense piety and emotion as the distressed parents bid tender farewell to the son while a servant brings up his horse for departure. The Rubensque mother who clasps his hand is weeping. [Ibid.]

The background classical column and drapery have been stock portrait accessories since the Renaissance. [See background use of them in West’s “Mr. & Mrs. Custance” and Bingham’s portrait of Mrs. Troost in the American Department.]

Although the painting is of the mid-Rococo period, to my eye it exhibits a number of 17th century characteristics: Baroque movement, figures up close and compressed within the frame, unknown light source from upper left, and cropping.

The successful painter was born and lived most of his life in the northern Italian city of Mantua where he worked for the important Gonzaga family. The influence of Rubens who had earlier worked there for the Gonzaga, can be seen in some of his works. (Here the Rubensque mother.) Bazzani made many religious paintings., and was an inspiration to a number of German and Austrian artists. [Rowlands, op.cit.]

SOLDANI “Leda and the Swan with Cupid,” not dated; artist lived 1656-1740 (F83-36) NOT INSTALLED YET. During the 18th century the interest in ancient mythological subject matter remained strong, although usually it no longer carried didactic allegorical messages. Love affairs of the gods were popular subjects in the pleasure-looking Rococo period.

Leda was the Queen of Sparta who was seduced by Zeus in the guise of a swan while she was bathing in a river. From this union came two or four eggs from which hatched the Heavenly Twins (the Gemini) Castor and Polux, and Clytemnestra and Helen of Troy.

This is one of a pendant pair, the other bronze sculpture being of “Ganymede and the Eagle.” In making this pair of bronzes showing two of Zeus’ love affairs in the guise of different birds, one passion heterosexual and the other homosexual, Soldani was following a tradition established in the Renaissance. At that time an ancient sarcophagus was discovered illustrating these two love affairs of the god. Its reliefs inspired works by a number of artists including Michelangelo, Pamigianino and Giulio Romano. In 1543 Cellini made for Francois I a pair of bronze reliefs of the two love affairs to ornament the base of a giant silver candlestick representing Jupiter. [Saslow, James M., “Ganymede in the Renaissance,” Yale U. Press, New Haven and London, 1986, pp. 179, 101, and n. 6, Figs. 3.2, 3.3]

I saw a complete pair of Soldani’s bronzes in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. Soldani’s contemporary Giussepe Piamontini (1664-1742) also made a pair of small bronzes illustrating the two love affairs which I have seen in the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts (access. No. 78.63.1,2)

Soldani made a number of small-scale bronzes which might be described as the “loves of the gods” and they were nearly always in complementary pairs, one composition specifically contrasting with the other. He was “perhaps the greatest and certainly the most famous of Florentine sculptors who served the Medici in the twilight decades of their long rule over Tuscany.” When in Rome he enjoyed the highest patronage including numerous cardinals, Pope Innocent XI, and the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden. Among his distinguished northern patrons were Queen Anne of England, the Duke of Marlborough, and the Prince of Liechtenstein. An antiquarian himself, Soldani was distinguished as a medalist, portraitist, relief sculptor, and creator of monumental schemes for public projects and tombs. He had the prestigious Medici
appointment as Master of the Mint in Florence. [Curator Ward, “Nama Calendar of Events,” January 1984, p. 2.]

**EAST HALL OVER ATKINS STAIRCASE**

**SOLDANI**, “The Medici Venus,” c. 1710, Florence (F73-3). For some information on the artist, see the paragraph immediately above. Working in Florence, Soldani often made superb bronze replicas of antiquities for patrons. By 1638 an ancient white marble Venus had been rediscovered and was in the Villa Medici at Rome. In 1677 the Medici family moved it to Florence where it is now in the Ufizzi.

One of the most famous statues in the world, it has remained on tourists’ “must see” lists for centuries. It was long considered an ideal model of female beauty. As one of the most admired statues of all time, it was much replicated. Louis XIV had no less than five copies!

Nama’s cast was perhaps made by order of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany. The artist who was internationally known for his work in bronze, also made another one for the Prince of Lichenstein and one for the Duke of Marlborough. [1989 label] Countless images in varying sizes in all sculptural media have been made, including modern polymer figures. Such replicas and also prints were important in spreading knowledge of the most celebrated antiquities throughout Europe.

Writers gave the statue litanies of praise, e.g. Hawthorne, Hans Christian Andersen, and Lord Byron who devoted five stanzas to the Medici Venus in “Childe Harold.” In 1771 Thomas Jefferson composed a list of art works he desired copied for Monticello. He intended his home to encompass the functions of a museum of art and of natural history as well as library, with himself as both curator and librarian. Toping his list of desired art objects was the Medici Venus.

Few criticized the statue, but in the 18th century Johann Winckelmann (considered a founder of modern archaeology) thought her navel was too deep!

This is an opportunity to discuss with tour patrons the influence of ideal classical beauty upon later centuries. Has a tour patron a classical profile with almost no indentation between forehead and a very straight nose? This idealized female face will be seen in European art well into the Victorian era. The head and shoulders will appear above ball gown illustrations in 19th century fashion books. If patrons are wearing sandals, see who has a beautiful foot according to the classical canon expressed here. The toe next to the big toe should be the longest on the foot. [Abstracted from Pentecost, “The Classical Tradition Tour,” p. 15, with sources, on file in the Tour Office.]

The arms of this Venus make what is now called the “pudica” gesture (Latin: modest, chaste). However, in antiquity the pose had an opposite meaning. It was intended to call attention to the erogenous zones, emphasizing Venus’ role as goddess of sexuality and fertility. Beside her are two little Cupids riding a dolphin. Venus is often depicted with this marine animal in attendance. It recalls her origin in the sea, but also may refer to her as a goddess of fertility since the Greek word for dolphin also means womb.

**THE FOLLOWING GALLERIES** are not on the Baroque & Rococo school tour. However, if your patrons are adults and 18th century French works are to be seen, you may want to include some of the following.
GALLERY P23
Rococo and Neo-Classical French and English art works of the 18th and early 19th century.

NEO-CLASSICISM vs. ROCOCO

Neo-classicism spread through Europe in the last half of the 18th century. It was an aesthetic movement and artistic style in reaction to the excesses of the Rococo and the late Baroque. It focused on the antique and was fueled by publications of the exciting excavations carried out at Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Paestum in the years 1738-56. “It was a deliberate and conscious imitation of antique models....Neo-Classicism in France represents a reaction from the frivolities of the Rococo and a nostalgia for the Grand style of Louis XIV and the Classicism of Poussin.” [Osborne, “The Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 768.] “Significant of this change was the engraver Cochin’s ‘Supplication aux orfevres’ (published in the ‘Mercure de France’ 1754) which derided the love of curves, scrolls, and ornaments which threatened to undermine the dignity of design and pleading for a return to simplicity and classical grandeur.” [Ibid] “In Cochin’s work are seen the beginnings of the Classicism that was to overwhelm French art at the Revolution.” [Ibid., p. 250]

In 1751 Madame de Pompadour had dispatched Cochin and her brother the Marquis de Marigny on a study-tour of Italy. They returned full of praise for the antique. Quickly the Rococo became old-fashioned, and the Neo-Classical with its hard outlines, subdued brushstroke, clear colors and uplifting subject matter, became the favored style of the Academy in the latter half of the 18th century.” [Churchman, docent handbook.]


So closely was the Rococo style associated with the monarchy that it died with the French Revolution, 1789. Revolutionaries idealized the ancient past. Politics, names of babies, towns, women’s dress, and the arts were classicized. In art the Rococo themes of amorous gods and the fete champetre were abandoned for sobering visual lessons of fortitude and civic virtue, stoic exemplars, abstinence, continence, noble self-sacrifice, and heroic patriotism. Didacticism returned. Rococo’s delicate surface sheen in painting, its flickering highlights, impulsive nervous modeling, and complexities were discarded for a severe and chastened style to express edifying moral themes. Emphasis was on elementary clarity and the linear, an influence of the line painting on ancient vases that were increasingly appreciated at this time. David was the leader of this new way of painting. [Honour, Hugh, “Neo-Classicism,” Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, England, 1963, pp. 20-25.] [Do keep in mind that although the Rococo was swept away during the French Revolution and Empire, it would be revived as one of many historical styles popular in the 19th century, and its flowing curling foliate lines have been considered an influence on Art Nouveau at the end of the 19th century.]

VIGEE-LEBRUN, “Countess of Cauderousse,” (later a Duchess) 1784. This painting is in the Rococo tradition although its colors are rich and saturated, rather than influenced by the
palette of popular Rococo pastels.

The artist was a phenomenon, one of the great French portraitists in the Golden Age of French portraiture. In the 18th century forty percent of the exhibited Salon works were portraits due to the rise of middle class wealth and the Enlightenment’s cult of the individual. It is probable Vigee-Lebrun was the most successful woman painter of all time. Beautiful, talented, witty, and ambitious she became a celebrity. At the height of her career she was the toast of European society. Queen Marie Antoinette by royal order made her a member of the Academy.

Vigee-Lebrun became court painter to the Queen whom she reportedly portrayed 25 times. [Goheen, op.cit., p. 74.] They were also friends and improvised song duets together.

The Countess glows with vitality. She has recently delivered her first child. This idealized Rococo beauty is “breathless, flushed, and all curves - the hat, skirt, arm, bodice. [Carol Inge-Hockett, Coordinator of Adult Programs, NAMA subscription lecture, March 14, 1997.] She looks directly at the viewer and temptingly offers her fruit. Vigee-Lebrun was much influenced by Greuze with whom she had studied, and her subject has the look of Greuze’s come-hither beauties. [See Greuze’s unknown beauty in Gallery P22.]

Pretending to be a peasant, the Countess is wearing the colors black, red, and white as that class often did at the time. [Curator Ward, “Genre...” docent lecture, op.cit.] This is a good example of 18th century Rousseauian pastoralism and Rococo pretense.

The Countess’ friend the Queen also liked to dress as and pretend to be a simple peasant at her pretend farm “the hamlet” at Versailles. In the nearby mini-theatre she played the roles of shepherdesses, villagers and chambermaids. ["Sciolino, Elaine, “Where Marie Antoinette Played, Before the Deluge,” in “The New York Times, July 23, 2006, p. 8 TR."]

The open mouthed smile of the sitter is rather daring at this time for a lady. [See my essay on the SMILE under Hals, in Gallery P17 above.] Her fetching smile barely revealing her teeth was considered mildly erotic. [Curator Ward, NAMA Calendar of Events, December 1986.]

Since the Countess was pretending to be a peasant, the artist who didn’t like powdered hair anyway, persuaded the sitter not to use it. The Countess rushed from a sitting to the theatre with her hair still unpowdered. This was commented upon and is supposed to have started the fashion trend of no longer powdering, according to Vigee-Lebrun’s memoirs.

The portrait was exhibited to much acclaim at the 1785 Salon. The Queen was so taken by it that she invited the Countess to wear the costume while walking with her in the Versailles gardens. [Ibid.]

Both the artist and the Duchess survived the Revolution. During that dangerous time Vigee-Lebrun went into exile with her daughter, and for 12 years was an international success. After her return to Paris she went to England where she painted Lord Byron and the Prince of Wales among others. She finally settled in Paris, and at the age of 80 she published her memoirs.

The portrait remained in the family of the Duchess until 1984. [Goheen, op.cit., p. 74.]

It’s interesting to compare this portrait to Adelaide LABILLE-GUIARD’s portrait of her friend, the revolutionary Breton, 1795 (94-34). That painting is thought to have been her gift to him, and when she died he gave her funeral eulogy. It was later published and gave many details of the painter’s career. The artist and her friend were anti-monarchist Republicans. In contrast to the Rococo “let’s pretend” of the Countess above, Labille-Guiard paints Breton with a Neo-Classical interest in sobriety and realism. She made portraits of other Revolutionaries, and was given a pension and apartment in the Louvre during the Republic.

Labille lacks Vigee’s sentimentality. Labille’s works are more quiet with restrained colors, and she is more direct and candid with her subjects versus Vigee’s idealistic treatment of them.
Breton’s hair is tousled and the lapel edges of his coat are worn. He had been an ordained Catholic priest teaching rhetoric at Tulle. With the Revolution he came to Paris to serve the new Republic and was named “Head of the Office of Public Instruction.” That was when he and Labille-Guiard established their friendship. In 1803 Napoleon appointed him Secretary of Fine Arts to organize all the art booty from other countries and to supervise its installation in the Louvre. He catalogued the French state collections. After the Emperor’s fall, Breton was hired by the Portuguese king to found the Brazilian Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences. He died in Rio de Janeiro. [Curatorial Assistant Patricia J. Fidler, “NAMA Calendar of Events,” June 1995, p. 2.]

When Vigee-Lebrun was forced on the Academy by the Queen in 1783, its members made a great show of electing Labille-Guiard to it by ballot. Female members could exhibit with Academy members at the annual Salon, but otherwise were token members and had no part in Academy decisions. Labille-Guiard’s “reception” piece for the Academy was a portrait of the sculptor Pajou modeling a bust. Pajou was a friend of her family “and one of her earliest and most loyal supporters.” [Greer, Germaine, “The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work,” Farrar Straus Giroux, New York 1979, p. 267, 274. Pajou’s bust of Ducis can be seen in Gallery P19.]

Breton is wearing a striped vest. Striped fabrics were very popular during the Revolution. [See essay on STRIPES under Liotard, in Gallery P18 above.]

ROBERT, “View from Marley,” 1780 (31-97) Painted during the reign of Louis XVI, the feathery brushwork and genre interest in activities of the well-to-do make this a Rococo painting. The artist is known for his interest in gardens and is a famous painter of ruins. Often he is referred to as “Robert of the Ruins.” With Vernet [see Gallery P18 above] “he satisfied the vogue for idealized landscape which was one aspect of Rococo artificiality.” [Osborne, “Oxford Companion to Art,” op.cit., p. 983.]

Robert’s father was valet to a French marquis. The young artist accompanied the aristocrat’s son on a trip to Italy and was given special permission to study at the French Academy in Rome. He spent 12 years in that city where he worked with the vedutists Panini and and Piranesi. [NAMA has examples of their work.]

Louis XVI appointed him Keeper of the King’s Pictures and one of the Louvre’s first curators. Robert was given living quarters in the Louvre. He was considered a leading authority on historical landscapes and designed gardens for the king, including the informal English style garden at Versailles. During the Revolution he was imprisoned, but escaped the guillotine when another person of the same name was executed in his place. [Ibid., pp. 983-984]

The Chateau de Marly was a royal residence built near Versailles by Louis XIV. For Louis XVI Robert designed some of its gardens in the English tradition. No longer standing, the chateau was badly damaged in the French Revolution, and razed in the 19th century. Robert has inserted into the painting his contemporary Pigalle’s statue of “Mercury Fastening His Sandal,” commissioned by Louis XIV. [Jean Churchman, docent handbook.] Pigalle had also worked for Pompadour. The Mercury statue was enormously popular and widely duplicated in its own day. [1993 label]

WEISWEILER, “Commode,” oak carcass veneered with ebony and mahogany, and Japanese lacquered panels (86-20) Made cerca 1780-85, this is the most elaborate French furniture in the collection. Rococo curves are gone, so it reflects the growing interest in the Neo-
Classical straight lined style. The cabinet maker trained in Germany, and went to Paris where he worked with great success. He survived the Revolution, and worked for Napoleon Bonaparte. Weisweiler specialized in work for the marchand-mercier. [Curator Christina Nelson, “Case by Case: A Closer Look at European Case Furniture, Fellows Walk, April 20, 1997.]

The lacquer panels were from a Japanese box made around 1640. Valuable panels from old furniture often were recycled into later furniture. Weisweiler reworked some areas of the panels to suit his design purposes. Note the change in the leaf on the left front panel. To set off the dark lacquer panels from the dark ebony wood, he framed each panel with bands of brown French lacquer with flecks of gold. The commode is Neoclassical in style with its straight legs, ronceau, and figures from mythology. [Apollo and Dionysos heads, goats sacred to the latter, and young satyrs or fauns.]. The placement of the ornaments is symmetrical. The ormolu quality is wonderful, but its manufacture was deadly. Each piece of brass (copper and zinc alloy) sculpture was coated with a liquid of gold and mercury, then fired. The noxious mercury vapors killed workers and caused the toxic condition known in the 18th century as “Fosse’s Jaw.” A prize was offered for a healthier ormolu technique and won by an inventor who came up with a safer flu for the firing box. [Ibid]

This is a chest of drawers. On the front the central panel and the one to the right are hinged together and open, folding away together to the right side. The left front panel is hinged and folds to the left. Revealed are three horizontal drawers. Located over the left and right front panels in the ormolu frieze, are the keyholes of small drawers. The black wood is thick ebony veneer. This elaborate commode, probably one of a pair, was made for a showy public room. The back is not finished since it was meant to be placed against a wall. [Ibid.]

The French-made aventurine lacquer that frames the panels was created by lacquering over minute clippings of gold wire or copper crystals. An almost identical cabinet is in the Metropolitan, and there are other related pieces that suggest the commode was part of a luxurious suite of furniture. The exquisite ormolu mounts may have been made by Pierre Gouthiere. This “fondeur-doreur” is known to have collaborated with Weisweiler. The strict French guild system insisted that the labor be divided between the caster-gilder of the ormolu mounts and the cabinet maker, the ebeniste. [Goheen, op.cit., p. 98.]

**EMPIRE DESK**, c. 1815. [Currently not on exhibition] Because this is so unusual and very beautifully made, it was probably a special commission. In this part of the Neo-Classical period a greater expanse of wood showing was the style. This is mahogany which the French did not much use until the Napoleonic Empire. The best mahogany came from Central and South America and the West Indies, but is now played out. The English and Americans used much of it during the 18th century, but the fashion for it on the Continent came later. The desk shows off a wonderful expanse of this beautiful wood. Its back is finished, so it could be placed away from a wall. The top cover (hiding the writing surface when closed) slides to the back so that it sits under the revealed top drawers. As it moves it pushes interior levers so that the top drawers are released and can be pulled out, and so can the three bottom drawers under the writing surface. Once the top cover slides back, the front vertical edge piece that met it, can now be folded downwards on its long horizontal hinge. Now hanging down, this horizontally hinged piece which is attached to the writing surface is raised to become the frontmost flat area of the writing surface. Next, this whole writing surface may be pulled out, expanding the writing space. [Ibid.]

The complex mechanisms of this desk and the earlier BVRB desk attest to the fine cabinetry of France in the 18th and 19th centuries (and reflect the intellectual interests of the Age of
Enlightenment). Much French Cabinetry continued to be finely made later in the 19th century. [Ibid.]

The lion headed monopod leg is taken from ancient Roman marble furniture, and shows the influence of and interest in archaeology at the time. As more became known about ancient furniture thanks to the continuing Vesuvius excavations, 18th and 19th century Neo-Classical furniture became more archaeologically correct. [Ibid.]

**FALCONET.** “Cupid” & “Psyche,” Sevres soft-paste (For Sevres ceramic history see hall Gallery P21 and Gallery P 22, above.) Falconet was the favorite sculptor of Poupadour, and she made him Director of the Sevres factory (1757-66). In 1757 he had created for her a life-size marble statue 35 ½ inches high of the love god called “L’Amour menacant” (Menacing Cupid; now in the Louvre). The factory made smaller scaled replicas of the admired statue.

“The graceful gently spiraling pose of the figure is as typical of Rococo art as is the subject. Cupid smiles mischievously at the spectator and puts a warning finger to his lips, demanding silent complicity as he reaches into his quiver for a fatal arrow.” Ten years later Fragonard quoted the statue at the left of his amorous painting “The Swing,” now in the Wallace collection, London. [Held & Posner, op.cit. , p. 324.]

The Sevres factory made a Psyche pendant to the Cupid. Note that she has disarmed him, having stolen his bow. Cupid is now not so menacing.

These two examples of soft paste are unglazed and are not enameled. “The story goes that Madame de Pompadour could wait no longer for some figures she had ordered and went to collect them from Sevres. The figures were not ready, but she liked them in their unpainted and unglazed form so much that she took them as they stood, and so precipitated a a vogue for so-called biscuit porcelain. It is more likely that these figures were meant to be white and unglazed, probably in simulation of marble.” Duthy, Robin, “Accent on Magnificence,” in Connoisseur,” June 1984, p. 62.]

However, it should be noted that Meissen had already made all white hard-paste figures. The whiteness of figures like these recall those made of sugar, flour, and other foodstuffs that had been used as banquet table decorations in Europe before the secret of making porcelain was known there.

Psyche is Greek for soul, and in antiquity was often associated with Eros (Cupid is his Latin name; both names meaning Desire.) Plato wrote that Eros (desire) had the power to draw Psyche (soul) upward to the divine. [”Symposium” 210] Therefore Eros and his female companion Psyche were depicted together on gems, ceramics, ancient sarcophagi, and other art works. (Schlam, Carl C., “Cupid and Psyche: Apuleius and the Monuments,” The American Philological Association, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1976, pp. 7-8.) During the Roman empire a romantic story of Psyche’s marriage to Cupid appeared in Apuleius’ “The Golden Ass,” (c. AD 123.) This is the only Latin novel to survive in its entirety from the ancient world. It related how poor Psyche suffered, undergoing many difficult tasks assigned by her jealous mother-in-law Venus, before the pair could live happily together.

There being no copyright protections, the English ceramic manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood copied the Psyche in his dark “basalt” type ware. [An example is in the Burnap Collection]

Note the Neo-Classical bases under these Rococo figures. What we now call the style of Louis XVI was really in use during a long part of the reign of Louis XV. In 1749 Pompadour sent her brother the Marquis de Marigny with some artists to Italy, instructing him to study all the classical remains he could. It was said this Italian journey marked the turning point from the style
associated with Louis XV, all curves and arabesques, to that of straight lines and angles. [Mitford, op.cit., pp. 139-140.]

**SEVRES URNS.** 1793, soft-paste with gilt copper alloy mounts 1793 (33-1580/1,2). They were made after the Revolution which began in 1789. This Sevres color is called “bleu nouveau.” Lidded urn shapes were popular decorative accessories in the period when Neo-Classical style predominated. Some were functional. They were often made in pairs. [For more on urn forms and their popularity see the French BAGATELLE URNS in South Vestibule, below. Some examples of Wedgwood’s urns are in the Burnap Collection.]

In the white “reserve” areas are the initials BF on one and JLF on the other, both surmounted by floral crowns. These urns probably commemorate a wedding or betrothal. [Curator Ross Taggart, “European Ceramics,” docent lectures]

**SEVRES CUP AND SAUCER.** 1790, red ground (F84-54,A,B), and Sevres PLATE, black ground with gold and platinum. (33-1370) These ceramics were made to resemble Asian lacquer wares. Red is the rarest of Sevres colors.

The first Sevres works of solid ground color with gold and platinum decorations were made for Queen Marie Antoinette. [2006 label].

**GALLERY P25 (Hall)**

**CONSOLE TABLES and MATCHING MIRRORS.** 18th century English, wood, gesso, paint, gilding, marble, and mirrored glass (F67-25, 1-4). With its rather amazing decoration of foliage, belled pagodas, and stalactites this is an example of over-the-top English Chinoiserie-Rococo on a par with Pitts’ over-the-top silver EPERGNE (see above, hall Gallery 21). The hanging “rock” stalactites reflect the popularity of pseudo cave grottoes that were being built in European gardens. Perhaps apocryphal is the report that wealthy English men sometimes hired hermit impersonators to live in their fake grottos.

**GALLERY P26: French Regence Room**

Chinoiserie andirons on asymmetrical Rococo bases. Chinoiserie dragon motifs worked into wall paneling, on candle sconces, and console table legs which have the cabriole curves of Rococo style. We don’t see the wall paneling as it once was. Originally in the 18th century the plain areas would have been painted a soft color with the carved details most likely in gold or silver. It was a later 19th century fashion to strip the paint and show the wood grain. The chandelier is made from natural quartz. [Curator Taggart, docent lectures.]

In the 18th century there is for the first time thickly upholstered, comfortable, and soft furniture. [Relate to salon activities.] The straight legged Neo-Classical style chair with tattered original (very rare!) upholstery c. 1765, came from Versailles. Under the seat rim there is branded into the wood the VV mark identifying furniture of that palace, and the maker’s mark of Boucault. Its straight lines show that Classical influence in decorative arts is returning thanks largely to the influence of Vesuvian excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, and Pompadour’s brother’s trip to Italy (Marigny). Rococo and Neo-Classicism existed side by side for several decades, but the Rococo style will be swept away during the French Revolution and Empire. It will be revived during the 19th century, and is said to have had some influence on the development of Art Nouveau’s sensuous curves.
GALLERY P28: Italian Rococo Room with Chinoiserie designs, 1750-60, Italy.

GALLERY P24: English King’s Lynn Room.

Neo-classical architectural details but some furnishings are Rococo such as the pair of gilt console tables. The gilt edged chair was part of a set made for a Lord Mayor of London whose arms appear in the center of the top. Dutch clock. A very large Chippendale (and Rococo) style secretary-bookcase.

SOUTH VESTIBULE

BAGATELLE URNS, French, 18th century, porphyry. Cerca 1775? [In my 44 years at the Museum, no information has been given on these objects, except for Curator Ross Taggart mention in passing that they were from the Bagatelle.] Lidded urns or vases were “One of the most ubiquitous motifs found on objects made during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.” Urns were popular as decorations both indoors and out. They “were the most highly sought after of all the antiquities then available.” [? I find this statement hard to believe.]

They appear in all media, and some are functional such as inkwells, perfume burners, potpourri jars, flatware containers on sideboards, etc. [Ledes, Allison Eckardt, “The Vase in the Decorative Arts” (review of Met. Museum exhibit “Vasemania: Neoclassical Form and Ornament”) in “The Magazine Antiques,” Vol. CLXVI, No.2, August 2004, p. 14, 16.]

This pair is non-functional. Urns were often made in pairs for symmetrical decorative effects. [See pair of French SEVRES URNS in Gallery P23. Some English ceramic urns by Wedgwood are in the Burnap collection.]

Although the antique was the inspiration, designers were not always strictly imitative. Here what might have been called fluting has been curvaceously swirled in the Rococo style. It is curious to think that delightful decorative urns ultimately took their inspiration from ancient ones that mostly held the ashes and bone fragments of cremated Romans.

Porphyry (Greek, “purple”) is a fine grained hard rock of red to purple coloration. My guess is that the urns have been kept inside rather than being garden decorations, since the surface doesn’t seem to have been abraded by weather.

The urns are from the Chateau Bagatelle in Paris. Marie Antoinette’s brother-in-law the Comte d’Artois (future King Charles X) bought a dilapidated little house in 1775 and decided to rebuild it. The Queen teased him about the purchase. Both of them were accustomed to high stakes gambling, and he made a wager of 100 thousand franks that he could erect a new building in less than three months. His architect had the plans ready in 24 hours. 900 workmen labored day and night on the project. The Count ordered the royal Swiss Guards to all the roads entering Paris to commandeer whatever wood and other building materials they discovered on wagons coming into the city. They paid for what they took, but the materials had already been sold to others. The angered populace blamed the King for allowing the excesses of his wife and brother. It was another cause for grievance leading up to the French Revolution. [See another grievance, Rohan’s diamond necklace scandal under Sevres, above in Gallery P22.] The chateau was completed in 64 days, and Artois won the bet. The house was named Bagatelle. (French: “a little nothing,” “a trifle,” “nonsense”) During the Revolution it was in danger of mob destruction, but the authorities made the estate a pleasurable park for the people, and it was saved. [Mayer, D. M.,
The Comte d’Artois was one of many men that anti-monarchists claimed were the Queen’s lovers, and insulting music and literature were composed about them. [See Shama, Simon, “Citizens, A Chronicle of the French Revolution,” Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1989, p. 221.]

KIRKWOOD HALL

PHAEON TAPESTRIES, series of 8, 1665-85, wool and silk, workshop of Jan Leyniers, Brussels, Belgium (33-17/1-8). Woven into the bottom edges are the name Jan Leyniers and B.B. (for the city of Brussels in the county of Brabant.) In the 17th century Brussels was the most important European center for the production of tapestries. The Leyniers family led one of the foremost Flemish tapestry workshops for centuries. [Tour Office handout for reinstallation, 2006.]

As with many art works of the Baroque period, the source for these images is the Roman poet Ovid’s “Metamorphoses,” Bk 2, lines 1-400. Abbreviated quotations from his Latin text appear in the center of each tapestry’s top border.

Proud Phaeton wished to prove to doubting acquaintances that the sun god was his father. Visiting the latter in his magnificent palace, he made his appeal to the enthroned god who was surrounded by his retinue. Ovid describes them: the Four Seasons, Day, Month, Year, etc.

Reluctantly the god granted his son’s wish. The Hours (Horae) brought up the team of horses. [Not yet on exhibition.]

Phaeton was up and away. Note that his father has relinquished not only the sun chariot but also his radiant halo to his departing son.

Unskilled Phaeton lost control of the horses. Bolting, they caused the earth to catch fire and its waters to diminish. Neptune can be seen protesting. To save the world from destruction Jupiter threw a thunderbolt that wrecked the chariot, sending Phaeton falling to his death.

In the last tapestry the sun god mourns at Phaeton’s grave marked by an obelisk. In the foreground grieves Clymene, Phaeton’s mother, and she is shown again in the background embracing one of the transformed trees. These are the Heliades, Phaeton’s sisters who mourned so much that they were turned into trees, and who still weep for him, their tears becoming drops of amber. [The ancients considered amber sacred to the sun. It was a traditional ornament for Roman brides.] At the right is the river into which Phaeton’s body fell. In the far distance is a swan, and standing in the river is Cygnus, part man and swan. He was Phaeton’s friend (or cousin; there are different story versions). Cygnus grieved so deeply he was turned into a new bird, the swan.

Phaeton’s reckless attempt to drive his father’s chariot made him the symbol of all who aspire to that which
lies beyond their capabilities.” [Hall, “Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,” op.cit., pp. 243-4.] Horace, another ancient Roman poet and Ovid’s contemporary, further allegorized Phaeton’s story into an intimidating warning to those of lower status that they should stay in their place: “Scorched Phaeton serves as a warning to ambitious hopes.” [“Odes” IV, xi.] Baroque society was rigidly stratified. A 17th century viewer should stay in his place, or as we might say in modern slang, “Don’t make waves.”

NOTE TO DOCENTS: For our purposes all of NAMA’s images of Apollo and Helios represent the same god. Originally the Greeks considered them two separate deities, Helios being the driver of the sun chariot, but in the fifth century B.C. they were equated and their cults merged. [Burkert, Walter, “Greek Religion,” trans. from German by John Raffan, Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1985. pp. 149, 336.]

SCHOOL TOUR CONCLUSION??: We have looked at almost 200 years of art and have seen how during that time the artists responded to the world around them - to religion, foreign trade, new materials (porcelain), and changes in fashion. Now that our “Grand Tour” is over which type of art appeals most to you, Baroque or Rococo? Any particular reasons why? What souvenirs would you like to take home?

FINAL NOTE to DOCENTS: The Education Department has just published the 17th and 18th Centuries Tour for school children while I have been working on this extra material. Anything in that text takes precedence over any information above.

If you’ve managed to read this far, I thank you and hope you found something of use.