Anonymous, in the style of Jan Van Huysum, Dutch (1682-1749)

Still Life with Flowers, Early 19th century
Oil on canvas
64.117
Gift of Mr. Ivan B. Hart


Jan Van Huysum has been admired as the "prince of flower painters". Holland is famous for its beautiful flowers, and floral still-lifes became popular in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, the new spirit of scientific discovery prompted artists to make even more exacting and botanically correct renderings of flowers.

The fact that this painting was not actually made by Van Huysum has been proven in an interesting way. By researching botanical history, it has been shown that one of the flowers in the central part of the picture could not have been known to Van Huysum. The round blue plant was discovered by a French botanist in 1787 and was named *Napoleona imperialis* because of its resemblance to the French crown. It is a tropical flower which grows in western Africa, and is extremely difficult to grow outside its natural habitat, even in the closely controlled conditions of botanical gardens. The depiction of the flower in the painting--showing frontal, rear and three-quarters views--imitates the technical drawing style of professional botanists, and is, in fact, nearly an exact copy of such a technical drawing, first published in 1804, long after Van Van Huysum’s death. Van Huysum, who was meticulous about working directly from nature, would not have worked from a drawing, even had it been published during his lifetime.

Although this painting, then, does not have the "pedigree" of a famous artist, it is interesting as a pleasing example of the popular genre of flower painting, as well as an example of some of the fascinating issues posed by attribution. (MAA 12/95)
Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Pena (French, 1808-1876)

*Clearing in the Forest of Fontainebleau*, Mid-19th century
Oil on panel
66.313
Gift of Mr. J. Lionberger Davis

The school of painters known as the Barbizon group was named for the tiny village of Barbizon, located in the center of the forest of Fontainebleau in France. Diaz de la Pena was a member of this group. The Forest of Fontainebleau served as inspiration for a number of French painters in the nineteenth century who sought escape from the booming industry of the cities. Their work may be compared with that of the Hudson River and Luminist groups in America (see the Museum's paintings by the Americans Bricher and Jones-of American landscapes-and by the Americans Bierstadt and Gerry-of idyllic Italian landscapes). All these painters found a kind of spiritual release in the beauty of nature. The attraction of the movement can also been seen in the fact that Diaz and other artists who had trained in the classical tradition were drawn to the "back to nature" aesthetic of the Barbizon group. Diaz, the son of Spanish political refugees, had in fact begun his career in the refined art of porcelain decoration. The nineteenth century saw the beginnings of the modern notion of the artist as one who tends to rebel against established convention and to live a more bohemian lifestyle, as the Barbizon artists did.

While Diaz and other artists of the Barbizon group aimed to capture a return to natural truth in their works, many critics at the time were not impressed. The Comte de Nieuwerkerke, head of all official patronage for art during the Second Empire in France (1852-70), exclaimed, "This is the painting of democrats, of those who don't change their linen .... This art displeases and disgusts me." Unlike the classical Italianate landscapes which were in favor at the time (Gerry's Lake of Avernus and Bierstadt's Italianate Landscape, for example), many felt the Barbizon works were too uncultivated, too much like the realistic landscapes of seventeenth-century northern painters (see van Goyen's River Scenes).

Soon, however, paintings of the Barbizon group came to be valued (and widely imitated) for their depiction of natural beauty, which, even by the mid-nineteenth century, seemed to be falling victim to the encroachment of urban life. Both Americans and the French Impressionists were influenced by the Barbizon group. (MAA 12/95)
Eugene Isabey (French, 1803-1866)

Après le Duel (After the Duel), 1866
Oil on panel
67.69
Museum Purchase

Isabey was primarily known for his seascapes. Just as paintings of sea and land could serve as a kind of escape into a nostalgic world (see Gerry's Lake of Ivernus) or a more spiritual realm filled with glorious light, so could figure painting function as a release from everyday cares. During the 1860s in Paris, there arose a special vogue for "costume pieces." Such works expressed a romanticized view of earlier eras. After the Duel, with its representation of a bygone chivalric era, reflects this fashion. The work is also indicative of the wider ranging spirit of Romanticism which pervaded the nineteenth century.

This work may also be considered in terms of the nineteenth century controversy regarding the sketch aesthetic. The loose or sketchy application of paint (see Giordano's bozetto for Apparition to the Virgin for an earlier example) came to be one of the major characteristics of Impressionist painting and of the "avant-garde" in general in the later nineteenth century. Many critics at the time, however, were not pleased with this development, which they saw as an excuse to produce unfinished work. In 1874, one critic, Theophile Thore, stated that:

M. Eugene Isabey is another of these improvisers who have no time to work at a picture . . . . A sketch may often have more style and vigor than a finished painting, but these spontaneous studies should only be motifs, destined to undergo a stricter and more thorough elaboration.

While Isabey was generally considered an "official" painter throughout his career, then, his work also stirred up a bit of controversy in its day. (MAA 12/95)
Samuel Lancaster Gerry (American, 1813-1891)
*The Lake of Avernus*, 1851
Oil on canvas
75.85
Museum Purchase

Published: Handbook, no. 137

Gerry's painting shows the nineteenth-century love of landscape painting, here in the classical guise of the Roman Campagna, or countryside. For nineteenth-century American painters, Italy offered a refined and serene alternative to the rugged, wilds of rural America. In *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience*, Barbara Novak described the relationship between American artists and Italy as follows: "The American artist could marry the wilderness, which was in many ways, more familiar to him. But Italy was his mistress and the affair could maintain its potency as long as the elusive mystery was maintained."

The landscape is an amalgamation of the real and the ideal. The Lake of Avernus is an actual body of water located eighteen miles west of Mt. Vesuvius (seen in the background at center), near the city of Naples. The lake was considered by the ancients, Virgil and Homer, to be the entrance to the underworld and the description of the site in Virgil's *Aeneid* was well known. The ruin in the upper left is the Sanctuary of Hercules Victor. Below the lake is the cascading Falls of Tivoli. The structure in front of the sanctuary is the round Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, constructed in the first century BCE. The ruin at right which dominates the scene is an ideal rather than archaeological reconstruction of any specific temple from that site. A Franciscan monk, a shepherd, boaters and a few sheep populate the scene. As in the seventeenth-century landscapes of the northern painters (van Goyen's *River Scenes*, for example), the traditional relationship between figure and background has been reversed, so that the land itself becomes the primary subject.

Gerry received his artistic training at the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. This aligned him with the Hudson River School tradition (see the works by Bricher, Bierstadt and Jones who were also influenced by this school). The group was made up of artists working New York and New England, but also included artists working in other geographic locations who shared a belief in the spiritual qualities of the land. The school advocated sketching directly from nature in order to capture its true qualities. Portions of these sketches would then be creatively selected to create an oil painting in the studio. When Gerry traveled abroad, he combined European ties to classicism with his Hudson River School background. The artist's final combination of foliage, ruins and figures conveys an idealistic, romantic ambiance. (MAA 12/95)
Albert Bierstadt (American, 1830-1908)

North Italian Landscape, ca. 1856
Oil on canvas
77.203
Museum Purchase

Bierstadt is best known for his large, panoramic depictions of the majestic mountain scenery in the western regions of the United States. This painting dates to the beginning of his career when Bierstadt studied in Europe. The artist was born in Solingen, Germany in 1830 and immigrated with his family to New Bedford, Massachusetts when he was two. He returned to Germany in 1853 to study landscape painting at the Dusseldorf Academy, the major foreign center for American study of art in the mid-nineteenth century.

In 1856 Bierstadt left Dusseldorf and traveled through Germany and Switzerland to northern Italy on a sketching tour. This painting was most probably painted in the artist's studio from pencil studies executed on this excursion, and is one of his earliest works.

Though it is relatively small, North Italian Landscape is grand, broad and panoramic in conception. Like the Hudson River and Luminist painters (see Bricher’s View of Cohasset and Jones' Summer), Bierstadt was very interested in the depiction of light, even in this early picture. Here he has depicted a warm, glowing twilight.

In its combination of profuse, descriptive detail and mood-evoking light, this picture serves as a link between the exacting realism of Gerry's Lake of the Avernus, and the moody tonalism of many of the landscapes Impressionists went on to produce. (MAA 12/95)
Elihu Vedder (American, 1836-1923)  
*Egyptian Scene*, 1890  
Oil on panel  
77.236  
Gift in memory of Mr. and Mrs. William Randolph Benson by their sons and daughters

Elihu Vedder was born in New York City in 1836. He began training to be a painter when he was twenty, studying in Paris and Rome. He was among the many European and American artists of the late nineteenth century who were attracted to North African and Middle Eastern subject matter. In 1863, before Vedder ever visited the Middle East, he painted his famous *The Questioner of the Sphinx* (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) in which he pictured an Arab man placing his ear against the giant lips of a buried stone Sphinx.

In the spring of 1890 Vedder finally traveled to Egypt. While touring the country, he painted *Egyptian Scene* directly from nature on a small panel. He gave this oil sketch to the American artist Robert Swain Gifford, and the work remained in the Gifford family until 1976. Both Gifford and Vedder were also acquainted with the painter Samuel Coleman whose orientalist cityscape *Arabian Market* is also on permanent display in the European and American Gallery. (MAA 1/06)
Alfred Thompson Bricher (American, 1837-1908)

View of Cohasset, ca. 1868
Oil on canvas
78.71
Museum purchase

Best known as a painter of New England seascapes, Alfred Thompson Bricher was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Apart from some possible training at the Lowell Institute in Massachusetts, he was largely self-taught. By 1858 he had opened a studio at Newburyport, Massachusetts and was sketching along the coast of Massachusetts and Maine. The following year Bricher moved to Boston where he remained until 1868. After 1868 Bricher lived in New York City and was active in the prestigious National Academy of Design and the Society of Painters in Water Colors.

Bricher's panoramic coastal vistas are closely related to the Luminist seascapes by artist such as John F. Kensett. Like the Hudson River School painters (who influenced Jones' Summer and Gerry's Lake of Avernus), the Luminists were interested in the effects of light in nature, and in the spiritual qualities of the outdoors. It is obvious from the great number of landscapes produced in America in the nineteenth century that something in nature, or the idealization of it, struck a great chord with American spectators at that time. Contemporary writers, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, found moral and even religious values in the phenomena of nature.

Certainly, artists like Bricher found inspiration in the seventeenth-century landscapes, seascapes and river panoramas--both the classicizing and idealizing works of French painters such as Claude Loraine and the less grand genre scenes of the northern painters (like van Goyen's River Scenes and Heeremans' Wintersport). But the nineteenth-century American landscapes, along with those of the Barbizon painters in France (see Diaz de la Pena's Forest of Fontainbleau), were not afraid to show nature just as it appeared to them, whether it was majestic, or simple and awkward. Rather than clean-up or enliven nature with studio formulas, painters like Bricher relied on the depiction of beauty at its simplest. Furthermore, this allowed artists to work with rather than against the formal qualities of nature, to compose by merely choosing or siting a view. Here Bricher has chosen an asymmetrical composition that balances solids to voids.

The painting beautifully captures the cool serenity of the southern New England shore. Bricher's interest in marine subjects also parallels, and slightly predates, that of Winslow Homer, one of the most well-known American painters. (MAA 12/95)
Samuel Colman (American, 1832-1920)

*Arabian Market*, 1876-1877
Oil on board
79.1
Museum Purchase

Published: *Handbook*, no. 138

*Arabian Market* is linked to the late Romantic Movement in its "exotic" subject matter. The North African, Arab subject relates this work to that of Eugene Delacroix, an artist who painted many highly charged scenes of Asia and Africa. Painters and viewers in the nineteenth century were very intrigued by what they perceived as the alien customs of non-western people and places. Colman's scenes are not nearly as frenzied as Delacroix's, however, and present rather a peaceful and straightforward picture of a North African market. This scene was painted in the artist's studio after he had returned from his travels and might be thought of as something akin to a postcard of a fondly-remembered scene.

Born in Portland, Maine, Samuel Colman studied landscape painting under Asher B. Durand of the Hudson River School (see landscapes by Bricher, Gerry, Bierstadt and Jones). He traveled to Europe in the 1860s. His ties to landscape painting help explain his approach to figurative scenes. Though the foreign dress of the figures interests him, he seems to aim at a more encompassing view of mountains and architecture. Individual figures serve to "authenticate" the scene.

Along with Bricher (see *View of Cohasset*) and others, Colman also organized the American Society of Painters in Water Colors in 1867 and served as its first president. He was therefore instrumental in increasing the status of the medium of water color, which had previously been devalued as amateurish and inferior to the medium of oil paint. (MAA 12/95)
Abbott Handerson Thayer (American, 1849-1921)

_Lady with Shawl (Miss Jane Hunt), ca. 1896_

Oil on canvas mounted on cardboard
79.2
Museum Purchase

A. H. Thayer began his artistic training with H. D. Morse in Boston and continued his studies when he traveled to Paris in 1875 and studied figure painting under Jean-Léon Gérôme. Despite his early interests in animal painting, Thayer is best known as a muralist and painter of highly idealized human subjects, particularly women. However, he was also sought after for portrait commissions.

Thayer’s *Lady with Shawl* is unusual in that it shows an aged woman; therefore standing out among Thayer’s other paintings of young angelic figures. The painting is a portrait of Miss Jane Hunt at the age of seventy-five. Jane Hunt was the sister of the famed painter William Morris Hunt and of the architect Richard Morris Hunt. During her life, she worked as a porcelain painter.

*Lady with Shawl* was most likely inspired by James McNeill Whistler’s *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Artist’s Mother*, which was painted in 1872. (MAA 12/95)
Francis John Wyburd (British, 1826-1893)

*Lallah Rookh*, 1855
Oil on board
79.94
Gift of Museum Associates

This painting is based on an episode from Thomas Moore's *Lallah Rookh*, published in 1817. The story tells of the journey of an Eastern princess, Vina, to meet her future husband. The tale was a favorite of Wyburd, who executed paintings from it between 1854 and 1857. In the painting, Vina lounges on a bed while a girl kneels besides her playing the mandolin. Moore writes, "There was a little Persian slave who sung sweetly to Vina, and who, now and then, lulled the Princess to sleep with the ancient ditties of her country..."

Escape from the drudgeries of nineteenth-century industrialized England was often realized through literature and paintings about far-away places (see also Coleman's *Arabian Market* for an American example of this phenomenon). Fantasies with often erotic undertones were commonly projected by stifled Victorian artists and audiences onto other cultures. The fascination with peoples thought to be "exotic," and frequently with what was perceived as the sensual world of near-eastern harem, has been called Orientalism. Such Orientalist works also participated in the legacy of Romanticism, which, along with Neo-classicism, was one of the major currents of nineteenth-century art.

Wyburd was educated in France and began to study art upon his return to England. One nineteenth-century critic characterized Wyburd's work as "principally, a perfect realization of female beauty, an attractive manner in setting out his figures, and a refinement of finish which is sometimes carried almost to excess." The evident interest in depicting lush and diverse surfaces and textures--fur, tapestry, satin, cool metal, shining hair--also reflects Victorian tastes. (MAA 12/95)
Max Klinger (German, 1857-1920)

*Cassandra*, ca. 1895
Bronze and marble
79.95
Gift of Museum Associates

Published: *Handbook*, no. 136

Max Klinger, one of the most important German artists of the turn of the century, was a painter, sculptor and printmaker. His sculpture has been compared to that of Auguste Rodin, Klinger's most innovative and famous contemporary in the sculptural arts, and his temperament compared to that of Richard Wagner, the fiery German composer.

Cassandra is a character from Greek drama. She was the daughter of Priam, the last king of Troy, and the beloved of Apollo, who promised to bestow on her the gift of prophecy if she complied with his desires. She accepted the proposal but then refused her favors to Apollo. The god revenged himself by ordaining that her prophecies not be believed. Thus, when she warned of the advent of the Trojan horse during the Trojan War, her warning was unheeded. Cassandra was subsequently taken as a slave by Agamemnon. She prophesied the plot by his wife against his life but her words again were unheeded. Agamemnon then murdered her. The character of Cassandra is thus seen as a beautiful and virtuous woman, plunged into madness under the weight of the burden of the portents of death and destruction that she sees.

Klinger's working methods can be compared to those of Auguste Rodin. Like Rodin, Klinger often worked in multiples, and would cast several bronzes from the same model. This piece is the eighth in a series of bronzes cast of the same figure issued by various German foundries for the artist.

Sketches for this work reveal that the artist originally planned Cassandra as a full figure. Though the bust had long been a common sculptural form, other types of partial or incomplete figures became a popular sculptural device in the later nineteenth century. Their popularity may in part be accounted for by the prestige and popularity of ancient art. Torsos and other incomplete figures were known and admired as sculpture which had been partially mutilated but had survived from ancient Greece and Rome. Rodin had been the first to purposely exploit the partial figure in modern works. Rodin, Klinger and others then took advantage of this form to create works that simulated an unfinished look. Though *Cassandra* is highly finished, the abrupt discontinuity of the figure at the base invokes a sense of tension. We could relate the formal tension to the conflict between the dynamic potential of Cassandra's prophesies and her being "frozen" or unable to communicate her warnings effectively. (MAA 12/95)
Johann von Halbig (German, 1814 - 1882)

*Bathing Nymphs*, 1867
Carrara marble
80.218
Purchased with monies from the Unrestricted Development Fund, MU

Published: *Handbook*, no. 135

This work is representative of the lingering neoclassical style which had first appeared in the eighteenth century. Books like Johann Winckelmann’s *Thoughts on Greek Sculpture*, published in 1755, had set the tone for the renewed reverence of classical art. Winckelmann spoke about the “noble simplicity and calm grandeur” of Greek sculpture. “Modern” sculptors wished to reproduce these qualities in their own work. Sculpture reflected the neoclassical style well into the nineteenth century, much longer than painting, because of its more direct physical resemblance to the highly valued sculpture of the Greeks and Romans. Halbig’s work specifically imitates the Neoclassicism of Antonio Canova (1757 – 1822), an Italian artist who was the most famous sculptor of his day and well after his death.

This sculpture depicts two nymphs, beautiful and chaste young female spirits who inhabited oceans, streams or mountains. They each hold a bit of drapery and seem alert to the presence of something or someone which we as viewers cannot see. Their combined stare activates the space surrounding the work so that we feel ourselves to be a part of, or perhaps voyeurs, of the drama.

Sculptors went through a rather lengthy process to arrive at a final product. As a painting was first mapped out in a sketch or bozetto (see Giordano’s *The Apparition of the Virgin to St. Bernard of Clairvaux*), so was a sculpture. This was done in the form of either a wax or a clay model, called a “Marquette.” The sculptor next produced a full-scale clay model, which corresponded in detail with the finished work. This model, however, was then destroyed in the process of making a plaster cast of it, called the “original plaster.” Though these were sometimes exhibited as they were (because they were light and easy to transport) the original plaster could also then be used to create the final product in a number of materials, including bronze and marble. The original plaster also linked modern sculptors’ works to ancient ones, from which plaster casts were often made (as in the Museum’s *Cast Gallery*). (MAA 12/95)
Hugh Bolton Jones (American, 1848-1947)

Summer, ca. 1890
Oil on canvas
81.154
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Shriever

Hugh Bolton Jones was born in Baltimore where he trained as a painter. His early work was influenced by the paintings of the Hudson River School and the Luminists (see also Bricher's View of Cohasset and Jones' Summer). These painters depicted what they felt to be the greater power in nature in relation to the relatively insignificant role of man in the greater scheme of things.

Like many artists of his day (including Gerry and Bierstadt), Jones also traveled to Europe to study for a few years. There he was influenced by the work of the French Barbizon landscape painters (see Diaz de la Pena's Clearing in the Forest of Fontainebleau) who had been active a few decades earlier. The Barbizon painters were adept at creating mood-evoking, intimate landscape imagery, and Jones continued to develop his skills at depicting the daily and seasonal variation of light and atmosphere in his works.

He often titled his works merely by season, rather than identify their particular location, in order to conjure a more universal sentiment which would go beyond attachments to a specific place. A reviewer of Jones' work wrote in Art Journal (1880):

Mr. Jones's pictures always appear to us to have meaning and significance of a deep and valuable sort; to penetrate beyond the surface of the scenes of which they are representations; and to bring out and forward some of the inner and fascinating truths.

The bright colors in this work also add to its appeal. By this time artists, particularly the Impressionists, were taking full advantage of new synthetic pigments which made more vivid oil paints than the luminous though subdued tones which could be achieved with traditional oils. (MAA 12/95)
Frederick Oakes Sylvester (American, 1869-1915)
Mississippi River Loading, 1897
Oil on canvas
81.155
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Schriever


Frederick Oakes Sylvester was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1869. He began his painting career in Boston, but later moved to New Orleans to become director of the Art Department of Newcomb College. In 1892 he came to St. Louis, Missouri, where he painted numerous images of the Mississippi River, often representing modern, industrial life on the waterway. Later Sylvester abandoned representing urban life on the Mississippi and began to use the river to express a more romantic, personal relationship with nature. Mississippi River Loading is typical of Sylvester’s earlier images of the river. (MAA 12/95)
19TH CENTURY

Antoine-Jean-Joseph Ansiaux (Franco-Flemish, 1764-1840)
Alexander, Apelles, and Campaspe, ca. 1831
Oil on canvas
86.25
Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund Purchase


This painting depicts an episode from the life of Apelles, one of the most celebrated painters of classical antiquity. According to Pliny's *Natural History*, Alexander, the ruler of Greece, ordered Apelles to paint his favorite mistress, Campaspe, in the nude. During the execution of the painting Apelles fell in love with Campaspe. Rather than becoming angry upon discovering this, Alexander presented the woman as a gift to Apelles. Pliny states that because he "presented not only his bedmate but also his affection to the artist, and was not even influenced by regard for the feelings of his favorite [Campaspe] in having been recently the mistress of a monarch and now belonging to a painter," Alexander demonstrated his great-mindedness and self-control (*Natural History*, XXXV, xxxvi).

Since the Renaissance, this scene had been seen as a symbol of the ideal relationship between a royal patron and court painter. The patron is shown to be generous and strong willed, and he acknowledges the painter's greater sense of beauty. While the scene's erotic potential was often emphasized, Ansiaux has chosen to downplay the sexual element. Instead, the focus is on the noble restraint of the patron and the humble gratitude of the painter. Historically, desirable women were often represented as the inspiration for art, philosophy and noble actions on the part of men. (Understandably, however, Campaspe's treatment as an object of exchange in this symbiotic relationship between male patron and painter may grate against contemporary feminist sensibilities.)

It is interesting that the drawing that appears on Apelles easel is not of Campaspe alone, as is usual in depictions of this scene. Rather, Ansiaux shows Apelles depicting both Alexander and Campaspe as the mythological figures Paris and Helen. (Paris can be identified by the distinctive hat he wears, called a Phrygian cap, his most common attribute). Paris was also a mythical artist who had a noted eye for beauty, and Helen was a Spartan queen whom he chose to be his lover. For this reason Alexander would have been flattered by Apelles'
depiction of him and Campaspe as Paris and Helen. However, there is also a significant contrast between the noble Alexander and Paris, whose self-indulgence in abducting Helen ultimately led to the Trojan War. Paris, that is, had chosen private pleasure over public good. Given the outcome of the scene in the painting—Alexander's renunciation of Campaspe out of selfless recognition of the higher good of art—the patron Alexander's position as a virtuous leader is enhanced. By "donating" Campaspe to Apelles, Alexander is able to restrain his passion for the support of art.

It is possible, then, to read this painting as embodying a political message, as well as an interest in classical mythology. Ansiaux's painting may be seen as an optimistic hope for an enlightened government which would support the arts. (MAA 12/95)
Claude Raguet Hirst (American, 1855-1942)

Still Life with Bowl (Lionel and Clarissa--A Comic Opera), 1922
Oil on canvas
91.280
Gift of Museum Associates and Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund

Born Claudine Raguet Hirst, the artist worked under the name Claude to conceal her gender, although she was often called the "female Harnett" after renowned still-life painter William Michael Harnett. One of few women of the period to paint still-lifes, Hirst worked in a trompe l'oeil ("fool the eye," meaning very illusionistic) style similar to her colleague Harnett's. This exacting precision is apparent in the object and textures Hirst included in the composition: the worn pages and covers of old, leather-bound books which she collected, the translucent blue glass vase, and the delicate luster of a yellow porcelain bowl decorated with red Chinese dragons.

The books that appear in this painting were probably in Hirst's personal collection. The central book is open to the title page of the comic opera "Lionel and Clarissa," written by Irish author Isaac Bickerstaff and first printed around 1770, when comic operas enjoyed peak popularity. Original theater scripts were often bound together in this way in the eighteenth century. Hirst's use of a specific book with illustrations and legible text was unusual; most artists used generic titles in their compositions.

The genre of still-life painting, long popular with artists in the United States and abroad, is well-represented by Still Life with Bowl. In both style and subject matter, the work is characteristic of Hirst's oeuvre, as well as the treatment of this genre during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (MAA 02/97)
George Caleb Bingham (American, 1811-1879)  
*Portrait of Thomas Withers Nelson, 1844-1845*  
Oil on canvas  
2003.5  
Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund

George Caleb Bingham is Missouri’s most famous nineteenth-century painter. He was born in Virginia in 1811, and moved to Franklin, Missouri, in 1819. He began his career as a self-taught portrait painter in 1833 and became successful enough to open a St. Louis studio in 1834 and travel to Europe in 1856. Bingham lived in Columbia, Missouri at several different times during his life and was appointed the first Professor of Art at the University of Missouri in 1877.

Like Bingham, Thomas Withers Nelson (1804-1879) was born in Virginia. In 1836 he emigrated from that financially troubled state and settled in Vermont, Missouri, a small town south of Boonville. In 1837 Nelson married Mary Gay Wyan, daughter of the wealthy Boonville merchant Jacob Wyan. Nelson moved to Boonville and Wyan made him a partner in his business.

George Caleb Bingham was well acquainted with the Wyans and the Nelsons, painting portraits of several generations of both families. The Museum’s portrait was originally paired with a painting of Nelson’s wife, Mary Gay Nelson. Historians believe that these two portraits were begun when Bingham was in Boonville for a convention for the Missouri Whig party that took place in 1844. (MAA 12/95)
George Caleb Bingham (American, 1811–1879)

Portrait of James Madison Gordon, after 1860
Oil on canvas
2006.9
Gift of John Ashford in honor of Carolyn M. Ashford

George Caleb Bingham is Missouri’s most famous nineteenth-century painter. He was born in Virginia in 1811 and moved to Franklin, Missouri, in 1819. He began his career as a self-taught portrait painter in 1833 and became successful enough to open a St. Louis studio in 1834. Bingham is best known for his genre scenes representing nineteenth-century life in Missouri, and his 1845 painting Fur Traders Descending the Missouri (now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York) has become an iconic, internationally recognized depiction of frontier life in America. Throughout his career, Bingham continued painting portraits, and these commissions provided him with a stable and reliable income. He lived in Columbia, Missouri at several different times during his life and was appointed the first Professor of Art at the University of Missouri in 1877.

Bingham was probably in Columbia when he painted this portrait of James Madison Gordon (1810–1875) in the 1860s. Gordon was born in Old Milford, Kentucky and moved to Columbia with his family in 1826. Gordon studied law and opened a Columbia practice in 1836. He was elected county court judge in 1838 and a state representative in 1852. He also served as a state senator during the Civil War (1860–1862 and 1864–1866). (MAA 6/06)
Sidonie Petetin (French, active in San Francisco 1861-62)
Still Life with Revolver and Plover, 1861
Oil on canvas
78.256
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Osborne

Petetin trained as a painter in Paris, specializing in the painting of historical and figural subjects. At that time a scene with narrative content, including historical, mythical, religious, literary and allegorical themes, was considered the most elevated form of painting. Women, however, were excluded from free training at the state school and from participating in official commissions and competitions. A career in the most prestigious and lucrative genre of history painting would have been nearly impossible for a woman in France. Thus in 1861, Petetin came to the United States, probably hoping to find a receptive market for her paintings.

Recalling the French tradition of still life painting as practiced by Jean-Siméon Chardin, this painting shows three dead plovers (a wading bird), two of which hang upside down by their feet. Giving the piece a distinctly American and masculine flavor, Petetin included a Colt model 1851 revolver and unrelated leather shot flask with metal measuring device. Finding only a limited market for her art, she returned to France after spending less than a year in California. (MAA 3/10)
Marion Reid (British, 1858–1931)
The Sorceress, 1887
Oil on canvas
2008.2
Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund

This is the only known painting by the Victorian artist Marion Reid. Even though she studied art in Britain at the prestigious Royal Academy Schools and showed paintings at the Royal Academy, Royal Institute of Oil Painters, Society of Lady Artists, as well as several galleries, Reid and her art faded from view until the re-appearance of this painting in 2008.

The Sorceress was created at the height of Reid’s career as a painter. It shows a verdant flowering garden within which a woman, dressed in classicizing drapery, offers an apple to a man wearing a Renaissance costume. Not a representation of any specific story, the piece is a kind of conversational piece about the femme fatale, which was a particularly popular subject in the later nineteenth century.

Lacking the sensuality of the femme fatale archetype, the temptress and the composition, as a whole, show the influence of Aesthetic Classicism. Like the earlier Pre-Raphaelites, however, Reid devotes great attention to the details of nature. At the same time, Reid relied heavily on antique sculptures and plaster casts after the originals in the disposition of the figures. While painted almost thirty years after the appearance of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1858, women like Reid helped to sustain the Pre-Raphaelite style of art late into the century. (MAA 3/10)