FALL 2020

Art can offer joy, hope and connection when we need it most. And so we are continuing to work to bring our stories to our audience, whether online or on stage, in some not too distant future.

Search for the Mizzou Theatre channel on Youtube to watch our performances.
Over the summer Slover Linett Audience Research and Advisory Board for the Arts conducted a nationwide study of public engagement with the arts during the pandemic. More than 650 arts organizations and their audiences from across the country took part in the survey, and the results were striking. Nearly half of all Americans reported they felt worried or less connected with others, and 40% indicated the pandemic had already affected their income and security. At the time of the survey, 79% of respondents were under a stay at home order or voluntarily quarantining, and 12% had a family member or close friend sick with COVID-19. Just as we had pivoted to online offerings when our galleries were closed—offering daily Instagram posts with object discussions, weekly Friday Features on object-related topics, online exhibitions, and Zoom-based programming, among other initiatives—so too did arts organizations elsewhere. And while respondents appreciated the effort, and many used the online resources and programs, they reported that even the best online offerings didn’t provide the more immediate security. At the time of the survey, 79% of respondents were under a stay at home order or voluntarily quarantining, and 12% had a family member or close friend sick with COVID-19. And 1% had a family member or close friend die from COVID-19. And 1% had a family member or close friend die from COVID-19. Of those who had a family member or close friend in their home as what they craved. But for Columbia, 73% listed getting together with friends and family in their home as what they most anticipated (as it should be, as any other answer would be at best disturbing) and 69%—nearly seven times the national average—listed visiting an art museum as what they next most anticipated. In rank order they then listed going to a bar or restaurant (61%), going to movies (31%), and going to a concert or performance (31%) as next on their list. In part, that difference simply reflects Columbia’s unique character, and how deeply the arts are integrated into the fabric of our shared daily lives. It’s part of what makes Columbia such a vibrant and dynamic community. It reflects the special way that museums like ours offer a sense of rootedness, of connection and identity—a celebration of who we are, and who we want to be—that’s money vital than ever in these turbulent times. We make our art, and our art makes us. And so we reopen our doors and invite you back. We’re taking necessary precautions to ensure the safety of all. We’ve installed directional signage and the gift shop will remain closed; and we look forward to relaxing those restrictions as circumstances allow. Finally, in this commemorative year of the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, granting women the right to vote, the Museum acknowledges that historic moment. The Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSCC), with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, is launching a nationwide campaign called Forward into Light, a nod to the historic suffrage slogan, “Forward through the Darkness, Forward into Light.” Be sure to visit the Museum’s online and gallery exhibitions, American Women Artists Since the Vote, a powerful testament to women and their ongoing artistic achievements. We also recognize that the pandemic is not the only source of hurt confronting our community, and other wounds need to be healed. We’ve seen this summer that the promise of equality, justice, and inclusion has yet to be fulfilled. We take our role as educators and teachers seriously, but we’re also part of a movement for change. We’re working to address the wounds that need to be healed. 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If you’ve been following the Museum’s Instagram feed, you’ve probably been wondering who’s been regularly posting works of art from the collections, which we (academics) called on a whim “Where Art Thou” posts. Well, wonder no more—guilty as charged. But rather than treat this as a sort of Wizard of Oz “behind the curtain” situation, I’d like to offer some comments about my experiences running the Museum’s Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two things have stood out to me: the abundant potential for using an arts institution to bring our collections to our audiences who could not visit the Museum due to Covid-19, and that shared artworks that are part of special exhibitions that have been shuttered (Fig. 1), or reflected adjustments to the new circumstances of working from home and parenting from home.

Before you think that I’m responsible for all the content on our Instagram feed, I give due credit to my colleague Benton Kidd, who has been such an important part of our collection, positions, other Museum staff past and present, and the many graduate students and research assistants whose work over the years has bolstered the information available in our database. These collective efforts greatly inform what we choose to highlight and present to our audiences who could not visit the Museum due to Covid-19. Initially, posts from home and parenting from home I have been granted a considerable amount of freedom with the ongoing pandemic. Two things have stood out to me: the abundant potential for using an arts institution to bring our collections to our audiences who could not visit the Museum due to Covid-19, and the reasons for sharing them on certain dates or during certain seasons. I have been granted a considerable amount of freedom with the ongoing pandemic. I have routinely sought to highlight and present to our audiences who could not visit the Museum due to Covid-19. Initially, posts from home and parenting from home have been shuttered (Fig. 1), or reflected adjustments to the new circumstances of working from home and parenting from home.

What comes of all this is that the Museum posts you see from us/me are about the nation’s museums flocked to social media to condemn racism—messages that often came off more as marketing ploys than as commitments to change. (June 22, 2020, p. 8). We are a small institution, so what we present may seem small, but our responses to painful circumstances, whether it be mass incarceration or mass death, can and do create real change. Our Museum full-time (Fig. 2). Then I realized how much I enjoy sharing with our visitors in this way, because I found myself thinking about possible posts often and looking forward to writing and posting with each passing day. Indeed, some of my posts have sprung simply from wanting to share this joy and express my gratitude to our supporters (Fig. 3). With the world bearing witness to the agonizing death of George Floyd, the Museum did not issue a statement for the very reason that Andrea Scott cited: we didn’t want to be opportunistic, gaining from others’ deep pain. Instead, we shared a work from the collection that speaks to questions of visual evidence affecting public opinion, Jack Keisler’s social-realist Battle of the Overpass, ca. 1938 (Fig. 4). We subsequently presented two series of posts of art from all eras, one about representations of Blacks in the history of visual and material culture (Fig. 5), and one about artworks from the African continent (Fig. 6). We have contributed to the conversations in ways that we are best able to: educate art about art, because art speaks to every human experience. Just like museums, exhibitions, scholarship—indeed, thought—the Museum’s Instagram page is not and cannot be neutral. Avoiding conversations around health, death, racism, police brutality, is not just difficult, but unconscionable. How can we be silent in the face of so much change and pain? What have we learned or what can we learn from the history of art and material culture—just, let’s face it, is the history of pretty much everything? These are questions we consider every day in a line of work I am grateful to be in.

And if you haven’t been following the Museum on Instagram, please think about doing so. We would love to see you and hear from you there. Peace and blessings, everyone! 

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**Where Art Thou, Museum?**

Alisa McCusker Curator of European and American Art

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**Fig. 2: Instagram Screenshot**

**Fig. 3: Instagram Screenshot**

**Fig. 4: Instagram Screenshot**

**Fig. 5: Instagram Screenshot**

**Fig. 6: Instagram Screenshot**
On March 11, 2020, MFAP staff began to truly see the impact professionally, of the COVID-19 pandemic with a university-wide travel restriction. In the subsequent forty-eight hours, our staff calendar for March and April was wiped clean, as site visits, public events, meetings, fieldwork, and workshops were postponed with Missouri’s stay-at-home order. Ultimately, all eight events that staff co-planned with partners for the last quarter of FY2020 were cancelled. The ensuing days, weeks, and months have been anything but typical, and these days have been incredibly full.

Rather than conduct site visits to witness apprenticeship lessons at artists’ homes and workshops, staff shifted to lengthy phone calls, email exchanges, and video meetings to stay in touch. Rather than coordinating outside evaluations, staff developed a written self-evaluation for artists. Rather than produce in-person public events, staff worked with traditional artists and apprenticeship teams to record virtual events for the MO Folk Arts YouTube channel (linked to our website at mofolkarts.missouri.edu). Rather than conduct fieldwork in person as planned in southern Missouri, staff and consultants interviewed artists and culture bearers on Zoom, FaceTime, and Messenger.

The national field of public sector folklore took on a new tenor and fervor through the accessibility of Zoom, Google Hangout, and other video call apps. MFAP joined with the American Folklore Society to produce a webinar series to encourage ethnographers in Missouri, the U.S., and beyond to press on with fieldwork—from a distance. MFAP connected with folk arts managers in Mid-America Arts Alliance’s six-state region to develop six new outreach fellowships to launch in 2021. MFAP staff united with folk arts managers from around the U.S. to discuss, then assess, the impact of the pandemic on every aspect of their apprenticeship programs. MFAP staff bonded with a diverse cadre of folklorists, culture workers, and award-winning traditional artists for a weekly think-tank, first dubbed Traditional Arts Recovery and now called the Living Traditions Network (LTN). That network shares emergency relief opportunities for artists and organizations; promotes online performances; elevates artists and innovative projects in our increasingly robust virtual world; and encourages advocacy for, and within, the creative sector—both non-profit and for-profit.

Still, even in mid-March, MFAP staff knew that individual folk artists would persevere, as their traditions are infused in their day-to-day lives. The blacksmiths still made their way out to their workshops. The woodworkers still built tools, furniture, and instruments. Quilters still quilted. The dancers still danced, and the musicians still played. Their communities, however, were disrupted. The ones hardest hit by the pandemic are the traditional artists who earn their livings on the road, playing concerts, festival circuits, as well as celebrating cultural events. St. Patrick’s Day parades and ceili dances were some of the first cultural casualties. In the folk arts, though, tradition is married to innovation, so staff watched as Irish fiddler Eimear Arkins, harpist Eileen Gannon, and friends, spaced six feet apart, played a live Instagram concert on St. Paddy’s Day from a gazebo in Forest Park at St. Louis. In Ripley County, woodworker James Price found projects in his brush pile, while carrying on extra lessons with his apprentice by phone. Missouri old-time musicians connected with existing and new audiences via American Folklore Society Executive Director Jessica Anderson Turner (top), MFAP Director Lisa L. Higgins (middle), and Independent Folklorist Thomas Grant Richardson hosted a professional development webinar to discuss how ethnographers and traditional artists made the best of “remote situations” due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
New charitable gift annuity rates are available.

Current rates for one person range from 3.9% to 8.6%, depending on the age of the recipient.

The Office of Gift Planning and Endowments is available to aid you in any questions you may have. We look forward to seeing you again in person but we are here to help until then. Thank you again for your commitment to Mizzou’s mission.

New Rate Charts (effective July 1, 2020)

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Explore our gallery exhibitions, online exhibitions, and our collections portal which offers information and images of every object in the Museum’s collection.

View these online exhibitions and more at http://maa.missouri.edu

Calendar of Events

September
14 Monday
Ad Hoc Film Series
In Conjunction with Ragtag Cinema and DBRL One Read Program selection
A Gentleman in Moscow
Russian Ark (2002)
Directed by Alexander Sokurov
Starring Sergei Donskoy and Mariya Kuznetsova
7:00pm, Ragtag Cinema
www.ragtagcinema.org for details
15 Tuesday
Online Sketching Group
10:00–11:30am, via Zoom
Email callawaycl@missouri.edu for Zoom invite
20 Sunday
Docent-Led Zoom Tour
"Museum of Art and Archaeology Virtual Tour"
Valerie Hammons
2:00–3:00pm, via Zoom
In conjunction with Daniel Boone Regional Library’s One Read A Gentleman in Moscow.
Visit www.dbrl.org/events for information and the link to register for this Zoom event.

October
20 Tuesday
Online Sketching Group
10:00–11:30am, via Zoom
Email callawaycl@missouri.edu for Zoom invite
November
1 Sunday
Docent-Led Zoom Tour
"An Odyssey in Art"
Valerie Hammons and David Bedan
2:00–3:00pm, via Zoom
Email callawaycl@missouri.edu for Zoom invite
3 Tuesday
Gallery Exhibition Opens
American Women Artists Since the Vote
8 Sunday
Art of the Book Film Discussion
In Conjunction with the Art of the Book Selection, Circe by Madeline Miller
The Odyssey (1997)
Directed by Armand Assante and Isabella Rossellini
(Film available on YouTube)
2:00pm, via Zoom
Email chrismo@juno.com for Zoom invite

December
1 Tuesday
National Day Without Art
Day of observance recognizing the disproportionate number of arts community members who have died or are living with AIDS
15 Tuesday
Online Sketching Group
10:00–11:30am, via Zoom
Email callawaycl@missouri.edu for Zoom invite

Insipired by the stories of Greek mythology, Madeline Miller reimagines the life of Circe, the daughter of the mighty god of the sun, Helios, and Perse, an ocean nymph. Circe is a lesser god but has powers of magic and witchcraft. Feeling threatened, Zeus banishes her to a deserted island, where she hones her occult craft, tames wild beasts, and crosses paths with many of the most famous figures in all of mythology, including the Minotaur, Daedalus and his doomed son Icarus, the murderous Medea, and, of course, wily Odysseus. But trouble is brewing, and this strong female soon comes into conflict with both gods and mortals.

Art of the Book Club events will be conducted via Zoom meetings. Anyone wishing to participate will need to email to Christiane Quinn - chrismo@juno.com requesting a code for each event’s Zoom meeting.

Visit the Museum’s website for details and flyers on all events: http://maa.missouri.edu
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From Bigfoot to Nessie to the Yeti, legendary monsters are still very much alive in twenty-first-century consciousness. Similarly, the myths and legends of ancient peoples teemed with fantastic creatures. Although some creatures are vague in origin, scholars suggest that others may have been influenced by the discovery of actual dinosaur bones. Such discoveries are documented in ancient sources and they bespeak of a terrifying age when monsters walked the earth. Like today, many must have wondered whether such creatures could still be among them.

Demons are rife in the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia, and one of the most dreaded was Pazuzu. He was known as the demon of the southeast wind and brought all manner of pestilence, from famine to plagues of locusts. His fearsome appearance included the body of a man, talon feet and hands, and the head of a lion with a snarling, fanged mouth. Like many terrifying creatures, his image in amulet form could be protective, and the Museum’s pendant must have served that function. In pop culture, Pazuzu was resurrected to bedevil a young girl in The Exorcist, the bestseller novel followed by the notorious film. Long reckoned the fiercest of beasts, the lion was morphed into yet another famed hybrid in Egypt, and sphinxes became synonymous with the culture. They were invariably benevolent, male protectors, resolutely guarding temples and tombs.

The ancient Greek patriarchy preferred its bogeys female, predetermining them to conquest by male heroes. The sphinx thus underwent a gender change when it was brought to Greece and was reimagined as a deadly female mateaner, whose infamous riddles led to the downfall of many. She met her match with Oedipus, who solved her riddle and caused her death. The gorgon Medusa would meet a similar fate. We discussed her possible origins as a powerful, protective figure in our online Friday Features, but she ended up the serpent-haired monster whose poisonous gaze petrified the hapless. Perseus decapitated her, but her face lived on as a protective image, represented in countless contexts, such as the interior of a wine cup illustrated here. As great mariners, ancient Greeks preferred its bogeys female, guarding temples and tombs. They were invariably benevolent, male protectors, resolutely guarding temples and tombs.

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The Museum’s Film Series: Ad Hoc, Indeed

Regular attendees of the Museum’s Ad Hoc Film Series know that the connection between the film being shown and art is sometimes tenuous. The themes of exhibitions do give me a lot of wiggle room for choosing films, which is appreciated. We have, however, suspended the film series due to safety precautions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Ragtag has managed to figure out how to stream films, and as I write this, has reopened, a great service for those who love films. For now, this column will have to suffice for the Ad Hoc series. This article will mention the films that were going to be shown, those that will be covered by discussion, and recommend a few more.

The Museum will collaborate once again with Ragtag** in September, showing the wonderful experimental film Russian Ark (2002). Thanks to Museum Associates “Art of the Book Club” we will focus on two films, connected with their book selections, providing a Zoom space for discussion. August’s book is about the connection between the film being shown and art is sometimes tenuous. We have, however, suspended the film series due to safety precautions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Ragtag has managed to figure out how to stream films, and as I write this, has reopened, a great service for those who love films. For now, this column will have to suffice for the Ad Hoc series. This article will mention the films that were going to be shown, those that will be covered by discussion, and recommend a few more.

The Museum’s Film Series: Ad Hoc

Shown in conjunction with A Gentleman in Moscow, this year’s selection for Daniel Boone Regional Library’s One Read Program.

Ragtag Cinema
7:00pm, Monday
September 14, 2020

Russian Ark (2002)
Directed by Alexander Sokurov
Starring Sergei Donskov and Mariya Kuznetsova

September 21st there will be a virtual option for home viewing. See www.ragtagcinema.org for more details.

**Those with long memories will remember Pickard Hall held a packed showing of Fantasia. I also sat in on several film courses when I was ostensibly working on my PhD in classical studies at the University of Washington.

Disclaimer: I am by no means an expert and have no training in film studies, other than the experience working at the Downer Theater (yes, it really was called that) in Milwaukee from high school through my undergraduate days. It specialized in art films, so mostly films with subtitles. It was unusual for a film to stay more than a week. Parents dropped their children off at matinees for the annual showing of Fantasia. I also sat in on several film courses when I was ostensibly working on my PhD in classical studies at the University of Washington.

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***African masks, of which the Museum has a fine collection.
Greetings, All!

I trust this publication finds you and your families safe and well. As we navigate through challenging times, I hope the Museum Magazine will provide a bright spot in your day and that you continue to interact with the Museum as you are able.

Museum Associates is a resilient organization. This not-for-profit corporation was established in 1976 for the purpose of helping to provide financial support to the Museum of Art and Archaeology's educational programs, publications, exhibitions, and acquisitions. We manage to have some fun too! While the Museum’s doors have been closed, Museum staff has worked on ways to keep the Museum at your fingertips and accessible to everyone. Online collections, a special weekly Friday Feature, and online exhibitions can keep you connected to the Museum. Staff continue to work hard for a safe reopening in mid-August. Visiting the Museum and gallery exhibitions will look a little different during this community crisis. I ask that you be patient with the Museum staff and that your safety and that of the Museum families safe and well. As we navigate this period of the Covid-19 pandemic, please watch for more details.

Museum Associates, you felt a sense of privilege as you were emailed the online exhibitions for preview the day before they were posted to the public for viewing. It has been a wonderful opportunity to see not only exhibitions from the past, but newly designed exhibitions to fit the Museum’s online presence.

The Museum Store, although closed to walk-in visitors at this present time, is still available to provide you with gift items. If you wish to purchase a specific item all you have to do is email Bruce Cox at museumanualassociates@missouri.edu or call (573) 862-6724 and leave a message as to what merchandise you would like to purchase. Bruce will contact you and arrange for payment and curb side pickup of your order under the canopy at Mizzou North or I will arrange to deliver your purchase to your home with contact-free delivery. Bruce will also be highlighting a weekly special on a particular item in the Museum Store for your consideration. Watch your email and see what he picks! Your continued support of the Museum Store is crucial in the overall financial support of Museum Associates and the Museum in general. Please don’t forget us for your gift giving needs!

Museum Associates was sorry to have to cancel Art in Bloom this past spring due to the onset of the health crisis. The Board first postponed then decided to cancel this year’s Canvass Carnaval to protect our participants and not risk COVID-19 infection. However, Museum Associates wants to continue our longterm commitment of adding to the Museum’s stellar collection of artwork. To remember this time in our world circumstances, Museum Associates wishes to add the mezzotint portrait of Maria Gunning, Countess of Coventry, by Thomas Frye, to the Museum’s print collection. Review the description of this important acquisition on the accompanying page and please contribute to its purchase.

As always, the Museum Associates Board of Directors is constantly looking for new and inventive ways to reach out to you and the general public. Our Museum is an important and integral part of life in Columbia. It is a center for cultural and artistic education and a place to revive and stimulate our love for the arts.

I very much appreciate your continued support of Museum Associates, and encourage you to stay an active member. I look forward to new exhibits and events that celebrate our wonderful collections. Most of all, I look forward to opportunities to visit with all of you however and whenever we can come together.

Please take care!

Tootie Burns
President
Museum Associates

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Museum Associates

Tootie Burns
President

Maria Gunning
Countess of Coventry

Thomas Frye (Irel. 1710–1762)
Maria Gunning, Countess of Coventry
From the series Six Ladies, in Picturesque Attitudes, and in Different Dresses of the Present Mode, 1761
Mezzotint on laid paper
Image size: 505 x 354 mm (approx. 19 7/8 x 14 in.)
Sheet size: 532 x 381 mm (approx. 21 x 15 in.)

This mezzotint by Frye would be an excellent addition to the Museum’s collection, not only for its exquisite craftsmanship and large size, but also because they are original portraits created specifically for the mezzotint medium. They were not based on paintings, like so many other prints of this period. His influence on later generations of artists surpassed the graphic arts; for example, Joseph Wright of Derby imitated the richly atmospheric effects of Frye’s mezzotints in his painted portraits.

Frye’s portraits are distinctive in the history of printmaking, not only because of their life-size scale, which is unusual, and their dramatic use of light and shade, but also because they are original portraits created specifically for the mezzotint medium. They were not based on paintings, like so many other prints of this period. His influence on later generations of artists surpassed the graphic arts; for example, Joseph Wright of Derby imitated the richly atmospheric effects of Frye’s mezzotints in his painted portraits.

Frye issued his first set of twelve life-size mezzotint portraits in 1760, from designs in the manner of the Italian Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (1682–1754). A year later he produced a second set of mezzotints representing six fashionable ladies, including this portrayal of the famed beauty Maria Gunning, Countess of Coventry (1733–1760). Due to limited patronage in Ireland, he moved to London in 1735, where he remained until his death in 1762. A successful painter, printmaker, and porcelain manufacturer, Frye’s greatest contributions to the history of art are his insightful painted and printed portraits and his superbly executed mezzotints. He also held patents for porcelain production from his time as director of Bow Porcelain Factory in London.

Help Us Enrich the Collection

Museum Associates is asking your help in funding an acquisition for the Museum of Art and Archaeology. We hope you will donate generously so that the Museum can add this wonderful and significant addition to the Museum’s collection of works on paper. A total of $6,500 is needed to purchase this mezzotint print. Donations may be made online through Museum Associates secure website at https://mniumuseumassociates.org by clicking on the Donation button at the bottom of the page. You may also mail a check made payable to Museum Associates to the address below. Please write “Maria Gunning Print” in the memo line on the check. Thank you in advance!

History of Mezzotint

Mezzotint is a printmaking process that was the first to enable half-tones in a drypoint method, creating thousands of little dots on a metal plate. The mezzotint method gives a depth and richness to printmaking not seen in prints before this process. This method was widely used in England in the eighteenth century, especially between 1750–1820, the great period of the British portrait. This places Frye’s print toward the beginning of this period of portraiture prints.

About the Artist

Thomas Frye was born in Ireland (ca. 1710) and probably trained in Dublin, perhaps with portraitist James Latham (ca. 1696–1747). Due to limited patronage in Ireland, he moved to London in 1735, where he remained until his death in 1762. A successful painter, printmaker, and porcelain manufacturer, Frye’s greatest contributions to the history of art are his insightful painted and printed portraits and his superbly executed mezzotints. He also held patents for porcelain production from his time as director of Bow Porcelain Factory in London.

The Significance of the Print

Frye’s portraits are distinctive in the history of printmaking, not only because of their life-size scale, which is unusual, and their dramatic use of light and shade, but also because they are original portraits created specifically for the mezzotint medium. They were not based on paintings, like so many other prints of this period. His influence on later generations of artists surpassed the graphic arts; for example, Joseph Wright of Derby imitated the richly atmospheric effects of Frye’s mezzotints in his painted portraits.

Frye issued his first set of twelve life-size mezzotint portraits in 1760, from designs in the manner of the Italian Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (1682–1754). A year later he produced a second set of mezzotints representing six fashionable ladies, including this portrayal of the famed beauty Maria Gunning, Countess of Coventry (1733–1760). Maria had then just recently died at the age of twenty-seven; we now know the cause of her death was very likely lead poisoning from her cosmetics. This mezzotint by Frye would be an excellent addition to the Museum’s collection, not only for its exquisite craftsmanship and large size, but also because the Museum has fewer examples of works on paper from the British Isles. “The Frye is a stunning example of the art of the mezzotint, truly among one of the best examples of the medium,” according to Carolyn Bullard, an expert in museum-quality European and American prints.
Alisa McCusker  
Curator of European and American Art

Openwork Clay  
Utility and Improbability

Ever malleable when wet and remarkably durable after firing, clay can do so much from the ordinary to the extraordinary. We often discuss vessels as containers—an amphora for wine, a pyxis for cosmetics, a lamp for oil, a vase for flowers—but ceramics also serve as permeable forms with various associated functions. These range from the practical to the decorative to the seemingly magical, and even combinations thereof. Let’s consider just a few examples in the Museum’s collection from diverse times and places.

Beginning with the more practical, an incense burner naturally must be perforated in order to emit smoke from substances being burned inside it. A Byzantine handled incense burner from Palestine (Fig. 1) is a utilitarian object to be sure, but the ceramist who perforated it took the time to layout a crisscrossed grid pattern in order to evenly distribute the holes and, thus, evenly diffuse the aromas of incense smoke. The pattern was useful indeed, but also reveals a concern for balance and harmony in the design, clearly an interest in aesthetics even when crafting time was limited, probably due to the demands of mass production.

In the case of a Daunian double-spouted askos from the third century BCE (Figs. 2 & 3), the dot patterns of the strainer spout appear to have inspired other elements of the decoration. Dots were painted adjacent to the holes of the strainer, making it appear that there are more holes than there actually are. In addition, dots in circular patterns appear throughout the complex decorative scheme of the vessel. Such designs are likely not merely decorative, but also conferred protection on those who drank or poured from these bottles. Much of Mamluk design is derived from stylized calligraphy of the period, and incantations of words—like the daily prayers of Islam—had power.

Jean Mann’s Five Blessings Bowl (Fig. 6) also incorporates stylized text to express well wishes to all who see it. The filigreed design includes five Chinese characters for the traditional Five Blessings, or Wufu: health, wealth, love of virtue, old age, and natural death. These blessings first appear in Chinese culture over two millennia ago, but their meaning is universal.

The decoration of the fenestrated stand for a Greek Orientalizing bowl (Fig. 7) may have had sacred or spiritual purposes, but the specific cultural context is difficult to place, and this particular work remains quite mysterious. Fenestrated bases begin to appear as early as 900–700 BCE, but none are as elaborate as this one. The geometric fenestration of the base corresponds to the painted decorative scheme of the vessel. While these patterns may have had significance for the ancient Greek viewer, they may also have been created simply as a means of expression and aesthetic appeal.

Ceramic filters in water bottles from Mamluk Egypt (Figs. 4 & 5) are examples of perforations that are functional both in their actual utility and in their metaphysical purpose. These forms are tiny; the diameters of the filters shown here are only 1½ and 2 inches! When simply punching holes would have been far easier and more time effective, the artists of these bottles went to great pains to carve precise, intricate, and symmetrical designs to create these filters. Such designs are likely not merely decorative, but also conferred protection on those who drank or poured from these bottles.

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Finally, contemporary artist Jennifer McCurdy took advantage of the pliability and resiliency of porcelain with her stunning Wave Vessel (Fig. 9). The artist carved this wheel-thrown form after considerable drying during a stage called leather-hard, when the clay is no longer malleable. Inspired by patterns formed by nature, McCurdy’s vessel and others like it reflect the intrinsic beauty and harmony in the natural world. The artist cites conch shells and milkweed pods as sources for designs, which do not merely imitate nature, but use a natural vocabulary that allows her to create unique artworks.

Whatever their purpose, these ceramic works are exemplars of masterful techniques of their makers and aesthetic standards of their respective cultures. And yet, they can be—and are—fully appreciated forms across the ages.

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Although our doors are closed due to the community health crisis, merchandise is still available.

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