



MOUNT HOLYOKE
COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

SELF
GUIDED
TOUR

**Museum
Highlights**

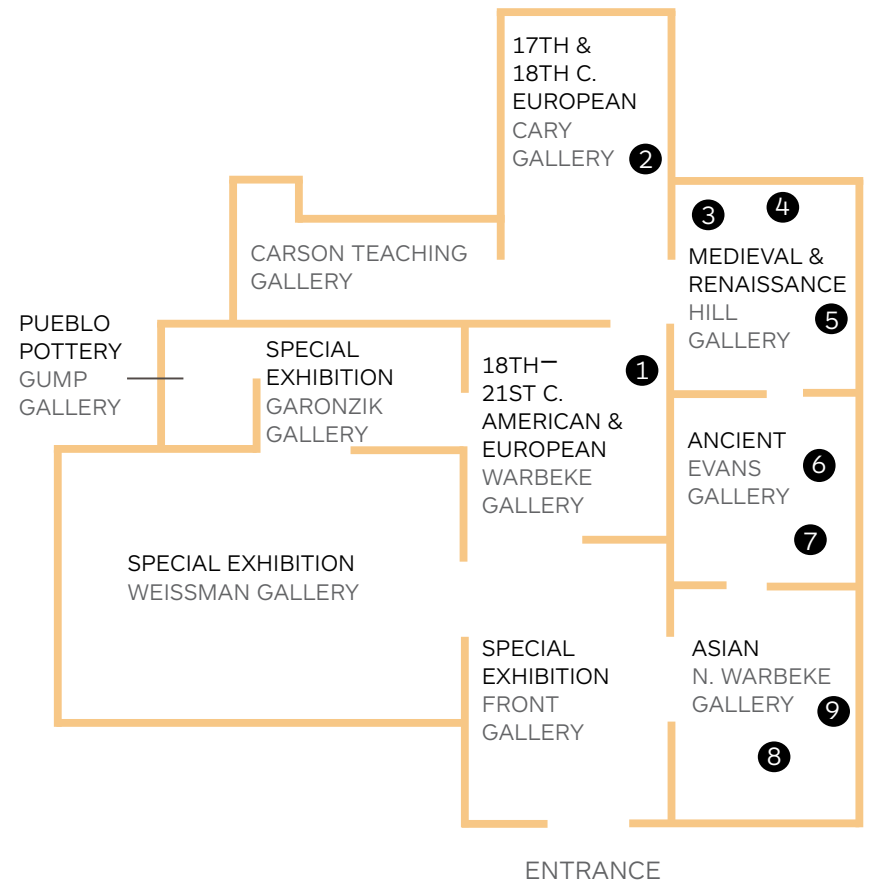




WELCOME to the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, and thank you for picking up this self-guided highlights tour. The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum was founded in 1876, as one of the United States' first college art museums. The collection consists of over 17,000 works of art from all over the world, ranging from the ancient to the contemporary. The works you will see on this tour are among the most significant in the Museum, and reflect the diversity of the collection as a whole. There are many other wonderful works of art on view in addition to the ones discussed in this booklet, and we hope you will continue to explore the Museum on your own!

MAP OF THE GALLERIES

Tour stops marked and numbered



1

WARBEKE GALLERY

ALBERT BIERSTADT (AMERICAN, 1830–1902)
HETCH HETCHY CANYON, 1875



Oil on canvas
MH 1876.2.I(b).PI
Gift of Mrs. E. H. Sawyer and Mrs. A. L. Williston

This awe-inspiring landscape was the Museum's very first acquisition on the occasion of its founding in 1876. Bierstadt was born in Germany, but lived and painted in the United States. Associated with the Hudson River School of painters, Bierstadt was famous for large scale works like this one, which came to exemplify the majesty of the American landscape. The artist's depiction of Hetch Hetchy Canyon, in California, is filled with soft, warm light that seems to permeate the valley. The small elk in the foreground give us a sense of our own scale in this sweeping landscape. Try standing about ten feet away from the painting, and slowly come closer to it, noticing how your perspective changes, and what details emerge as you get closer.

The scene before you is an important document of a bygone era; in 1913 Congress authorized the flooding of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to build a reservoir for the city of San Francisco, almost completely erasing the landscape depicted here.



Hetch Hetchy Valley today.
Photograph by Galen Rowell (MH 2006.15)

2

CARY GALLERY

PIERRE HENRI DE VALENCIENNES
(FRENCH, 1750–1819)
CLASSICAL GREEK LANDSCAPE WITH GIRLS
CUTTING THEIR HAIR IN SACRIFICE TO DIANA
ON THE BANK OF A RIVER, 1790



Oil on canvas

MH 2000.1

Purchase with Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, Jean C. Harris Art Acquisition Fund, Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, and the Warbeke Art Museum Fund

We often talk about paintings as belonging to certain genres—portraits, landscapes, history paintings, and still-lives, among others. Looking closely at this painting, consider which category you might put it in. While it is clearly a landscape, there are also figures and other details that make it seem historical or mythological. When this was painted in 1790, a new type of artistic genre was emerging in France, called *paysage historique*, or historical landscape painting. By combining the widely popular historical genre (that is, paintings that depict historical events) with the less popular landscape genre, artists like Valenciennes hoped to raise the status of landscape painting in France.

Notice the dress of the three female figures in the foreground, and the classical temple that sits atop a hill in the background. Valenciennes' work is full of references to classical culture and architecture, though, as in this example, he often mixes Greek and Roman elements to fantastical rather than realistic effect. Valenciennes is widely considered to be the founder of Neoclassical painting, a style that used Greek and Roman subjects and scenes to celebrate the glory of the past.

DUCCIO (ITALIAN, CA. 1255–BEFORE 1319)
ANGEL (PINNACLE FROM THE MAESTÀ
ALTARPIECE), CA. 1308–1311



Tempera, gold leaf on panel
MH 1965.45.P.PI
Bequest of Caroline R. Hill

This small, delicate painting once adorned the top of the *Maestà* altarpiece—one of the greatest masterpieces of late medieval Italy. The altarpiece was commissioned in 1308 for the Cathedral of Siena, and consisted of more than forty sections, most of which are now dispersed. In medieval and Renaissance Italy, large works like the one this panel came from were usually completed by multiple artists under the supervision of one chief artist—in this case the famous Siennese master, Duccio. The angel's elegant and slightly elongated features and the panel's rich gilding are typical of Duccio's distinct style.

The size and subject of Mount Holyoke's panel reveal that it was one of the altarpiece's pinnacles (the top-most portion in the digitally reconstructed altarpiece shown below). The angels' position at the top of the altarpiece indicates their role as heavenly hosts. There are only a few Duccio paintings in the United States, making this small masterpiece all the more significant.

Museo dell'Opera del
Duomo, Siena. Digital
reconstruction by
Lew Minter.



**BARTOLOMEO DI GIOVANNI,
(ITALIAN, ACTIVE 1488–CA. 1500)
MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS JOHN THE
EVANGELIST, BENEDICT, ROMUALD AND
JEROME, 1498**



Tempera on panel
MH 2013.18

Purchase with the Warbeke Art Museum Fund, the Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund, the Marian Hayes (Class of 1925) Art Purchase Fund, the Susan and Bernard Schilling Fund, the Art Acquisition Fund, the Henry Rox Purchase Fund, the Teri J. Edelstein Art Acquisition Fund, the Nancy Eisner Zankel (Class of 1956) Art Acquisition Fund, and the Jean C. Harris Art Acquisition

The city-state of Florence was a major center for the artistic and cultural development known as the Renaissance, a flourishing of arts and culture marked by an interest in classical antiquity. Bartolomeo's altarpiece displays many emblematic features of this rebirth, as the earlier Gothic style was abandoned in favor of new trends toward naturalism: a blue sky replaces the gold backgrounds of earlier paintings, and the figures are rendered with more individualism and three-dimensionality. Notice the plump arms and legs of the baby Jesus and how he stands unsteadily on his mother's lap —characteristic of a small child.

Surrounding the Virgin and child are saints, each accompanied by their symbolic attribute. To the left of the Virgin is Saint John the Evangelist; his attribute —the eagle—peers out from behind his vibrant red cloak. To the right of the Virgin stands Saint Jerome, with his distinctive red cardinal's hat. The two saints kneeling on either side of the throne are particularly connected to the women's convent for which this altarpiece was commissioned. Saint Benedict, whose teachings the nuns followed, kneels beneath Saint John, accompanied by a book and a bundle of rods. Saint Romuald, the founder of the convent's order, kneels to the right of the Virgin accompanied by a model of a church.

HENDRICK ANDRIESSEN
(FLEMISH, BEFORE 1607–1655)
VANITAS STILL-LIFE, CA. 1650



Oil on canvas
MH 1993.14
Purchase with the Warbeke Art Museum Fund

Before you read further, take a few moments to just look at this remarkably detailed painting. As your eyes move across the canvas, try to identify the objects that you see on the table. Often when we think of a still-life, we imagine a painting of fruit or flowers, so you might be surprised by some of the objects you see. This is a *vanitas*—a specific type of still-life that emerged in the 17th century in the Netherlands and grew out of a long artistic tradition known as *memento mori*, meaning “reminders of mortality.” While looking closely at this painting, you probably noticed several objects that could be called reminders of mortality, such as the skull, the wilting tulip, and the dying wick of the candle.

Vanitas still-lifes were appreciated for both their beauty, rendered in incredible detail, and for their deeper symbolic significance. Andriessen’s contemporary audience may have recognized the crown as a specific, haunting reference to the recent execution of King Charles I of England in 1649. Every element of this painting also has broad symbolic power: the skull, bubbles, extinguished candle, flowers, and glass vase remind the viewer of the impermanence of life; the watch symbolizes the passing of time; the jeweled crown and bishop’s mitre lying behind it point to the fleeting nature of power.

EUPOLIS PAINTER (GREEK; ATTIC, 450–420 BCE)
RED-FIGURE COLUMN KRATER WITH VEILED
DANCERS, 450–440 BCE



Clay with black glaze
MH 1913.1.B.SII
Purchase with the Nancy Everett Dwight Fund

Take a close look at the costumes of the female figures on this vase; their shrouded forms and veiled faces are an unusual and mysterious subject rarely seen in Greek vase painting. As you move around the vase looking at its painted decoration, consider why someone might choose to veil their face. Concealing costumes like the ones seen here were worn during religious rituals in ancient Greece. Similar drapery and veils were also worn by professional dancers, and the inclusion of a woman playing a double-flute strongly suggests we are viewing a scene of dancing and music. Although we can't know for sure whether the women on this vase are dancing or taking part in a religious ceremony, the mystery is part of what makes the object so fascinating.

This krater, a vessel used for mixing water and wine, was made around the same time as the iconic Parthenon Temple in Athens—at the height of the Classical period. The vase's graphic decoration is an example of red-figure painting, in which the background areas are covered with a slip that turns black during the firing process, leaving the figures and other designs reserved in red clay. This technique was perfected during this period, largely replacing older forms of ornamentation because it allowed for a greater degree of detail and naturalism.

7

EVANS GALLERY

FAUSTINA THE ELDER
SECOND HALF OF THE 2ND CENTURY CE
ROMAN

Marble
MH 1997.15
Purchase with Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Marian Hayes (Class of 1925) Art Purchase Fund, Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, Warbeke Art Museum Fund, Abbie Bosworth Williams (Class of 1927) Fund

This marble head depicts Faustina the Elder, a celebrated Roman matron and wife of Emperor Antoninus Pius. One of the first things you probably noticed about this sculptural head is the milky whiteness of Faustina's skin, rendered in pure marble. While we often associate classical sculpture with white marble, sculptures and buildings were actually painted in bright colors. You can imagine how this already lifelike face must have come alive when painted to more closely resemble the subject, Empress Faustina. When Faustina died at the early age of 40 in 141 CE, her devoted husband honored her with deification, essentially making her a goddess.

Faustina epitomizes the attributes of the ideal Roman woman: beauty, elegance, traditionalism, and the maintenance of marital harmony. Images of Faustina the Elder are identifiable by her unique hairstyle, which is interwoven in the back, and piled high in braids at the top of her head. Elaborate hairstyles were not just fashionable in ancient Rome; they could also be important political and social statements. For instance, many Roman women adopted Faustina's imperial coiffure in an attempt to publicly represent themselves as possessing the same virtues as the admirable empress.



At its height, the Ottoman Empire controlled lands covering modern-day Turkey, North Africa, the Middle East, and even parts of Europe. The very finest Ottoman ceramics were made in the city of Iznik, and from there they were exported across the vast Empire. Prized today, Iznik ceramics were valuable luxury objects in their own time as well, and were commissioned in huge numbers by the Ottoman royal court. The relative stability and prosperity of the Empire allowed for a flourishing of the arts, and the collecting of luxurious ceramics spread well beyond the Empire's capital of Istanbul.

Ottoman art is, in part, characterized by a deep interest in naturalistic forms, such as flowers, leaves, trees, and birds. When combined, these motifs can create fantastical and lush garden scenes, like the one seen on this plate. If you look closely at this dish you may notice its edge is slightly scalloped. This detail, and the blue and white "cloud scroll" design of the rim, are derived from Chinese ceramics, which were popular import items in the Ottoman Empire.

Ceramic with white slip and polychrome glaze

MH 2006.5

Purchase with the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund and the Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund

STANDING BUDDHA, 15TH–16TH CENTURY
THAI; AYUTTHAYA PERIOD (1351–1767)



Cast bronze, with gold, shell, and resin
MH 2012.40.1
Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation

Standing before this regal bronze Buddha you are sure to notice his graceful downward gaze and his raised right arm. If you were a 16th-century Buddhist standing before this Thai statue, you would probably be performing a ritual honoring the Buddha with flowers and other gifts, and his gesture and gaze would have special meaning for you. His lowered eyes convey compassion, and his forward-facing palm is a gesture called the *abhaya mudra*—meaning “fear not”—which gives protection and reassurance to the worshipper.

The religion of Buddhism emerged in India in the 6th century BCE and spread widely, becoming a major cultural and religious force in the Himalayas, China, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Representations of the Buddha were produced in all of these regions, each area creating sculptures that reflected both universal precepts of Buddhism, and distinct, local artistic traditions. This work of art, made in the Ayutthaya Kingdom (present-day Thailand) features many common attributes of the Buddha. The elongated earlobes, for instance, are symbolic of the life of luxury the Buddha led before renouncing worldly possessions; before his spiritual awakening, the Buddha was a prince and his ears would have been weighed down with precious earrings.

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