



Neoclassical Acquisition

Yoshida Printmakers

Ellen Lanyon

Material Culture

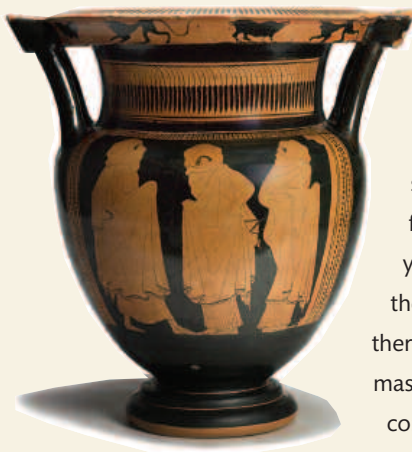
Piecing Together the Past



John Stomberg
 Florence Finch Abbott Director
 Mount Holyoke College
 Art Museum
 Photograph Jim Gipe

COVER:
 Etienne Aubry (French,
 1745–1781), detail of page 11

Eupolis Painter (Greek,
 Attic, active 450–420 BCE)
*Red-figure column krater with
 veiled dancers*, 450–440 BCE
 Earthenware
 Purchase with the Nancy
 Everett Dwight Fund
 Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe
 1913.1.B.111



Philbrook & Tucker (American,
 19th century) Manufactured in
 Boston, Massachusetts
Bottle, 1865–1874
 Glass
 Joseph Allen Skinner Museum
 Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe
 SK 2006.598



The Material Culture Issue.

DECORATIVE ART, material culture, and visual culture have been on my mind a lot lately. As you'll read inside this newsletter issue, objects that fit into these three overlapping categories increasingly are coming to the forefront of both museum display and our work with students, faculty, and the community. Considering the current heightened interest in these terms, it is worth examining why material objects are so valuable in teaching.

Let's consider these terms briefly.

First, all art is **material culture**, but not all material culture is art. When Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he created one of the most readily identified artworks in history. Few would argue ascribing the title "art" to this magnificent work. But it is also a reflection of the values, beliefs, aspirations, and activities of the people living in Rome in the first decades of the 16th century. We learn the significance of the Papal palaces, the Christian faith, the power and politics of Rome, and the role of attending services in the chapel, all from studying the ceiling without regard to its artistic merit—that is, by studying it as material culture. And we can also learn a lot from other objects that we would not construe as art. Imagine if we had Michelangelo's brushes, the clothes he wore to paint and those he wore to greet the Pope at the unveiling of the ceiling, or his favorite wine glass or serving dish. These objects would speak volumes about the life and times of the Renaissance painter and would handsomely repay scholarly attention.

Likewise, all **decorative arts** are material culture, but not all material culture is decorative art. Of course, there are areas of debate and overlap in these definitions, but generally speaking, decorative arts are the domain of objects whose function is soundly trumped by the exquisiteness of their manufacture. Think of a common wine carafe and then turn your attention to the great Greek red-figure *krater* by the Eupolis Painter. While both were made to hold wine, there is really very little else in comparison. The first was mass-produced mechanically while the *krater* was hand-constructed and beautifully painted. The care and inspiration that went into the ancient piece far surpasses its role as a container, whereas mostly the carafe succeeds only on a functional basis. Now we can complicate matters even more by introducing the pig-shaped glass bottle pictured here.

LETTER

American
Crate labels, ca. 1925–1945
Lithograph
Gift of anonymous donor
Photograph Laura Shea
1992.3.104 and 188

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Announcing new member
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It held an elixir reputed to have healing powers, and yet, it is clearly much more alluring and complex than a common carafe. It is fascinating and lovely, but is it decorative art? With thoughtful analysis, the krater, the carafe, and the bottle all reveal important and interesting narratives about the times in which they were created and, to some extent, about the lives of the people who created and used them. The categories into which they fit can be harder to settle upon than the roles they have played for the people who lived with them.

Finally, **visual culture** refers to the domain of objects where the primary function is the visual exchange of information. Of course the Eupolis krater spans this gap. It is an object to be lifted, held, and moved around, but we also take in the pictures on the side. Other objects are more simply visual. We do not handle the fruit crate labels pictured above or use them physically; they exist to convey information through text and image. Regardless, most of us are hard-pressed to consider them art. Happily, in the context of visual culture studies such designations are irrelevant. Understanding these images provides valuable insight into the people who sold the fruit as well as those who consumed it. These are charged, complicated examples of visual rhetoric, and they need to be understood in the context of history, geography, sociology, and political science. Some of the methods used in art history come in handy to get there. This, then, is the rich field of visual culture studies.

As you can see, taking all our objects seriously is opening new and complex avenues for study. We can and should analyze both the elixir bottle and the new Etienne Aubry pictured on the cover. While we do not confuse the two—they are categorically quite far apart in terms of use, aesthetic complexity, and mode of interaction—they do both inspire intellectual engagement, and the Museum is working daily to encourage scholarly encounters with all the objects in its collection. I hope you have a chance to come to see for yourself the many new and recently rediscovered objects on view at the Museum.

JOHN STOMBERG
Florence Finch Abbott Director

The Yoshida Family: An Artistic Legacy in Prints

20 January–31 May 2015

Yingxi (Lucy) Gong '13
Art Museum Advisory
Board Fellow

Yoshida Hiroshi (Japanese,
1876–1950)
*Hansen: Asa [Sailboats:
Morning]*, from the series *Seto
Naikai Shū [Inland Sea
Collection]*, 1926
Woodblock print
Gift of Dorothy L. Blair (Class
of 1914)
Photograph Laura Shea
1964.108.Q.RII

IMAGINE A FAMILY that developed a tradition of artistry during Japan's Edo Period (1603–1868), sustained it into the 21st century, and produced more than nine artists (four of whom are women) among the most recent four generations. What strengths are at the core of this family? How did it survive the social turbulence at the turn of the century and still retain its artistic trajectory? *The Yoshida Family: An Artistic Legacy in Prints* highlights the Art Museum's collection of prints by Yoshida family members, accompanied by materials from the Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.

The earliest Yoshida artists served the Nakatsu warrior clan on the island of Kyūshū—the most southwesterly landmass of Japan—and continued to produce traditional Japanese art throughout the Edo Period until Yoshida Kasaburō (1861–94) picked up Western-style oil painting during the Meiji Restoration era. Although the family boasted many noteworthy artists, it was Kasaburō's adopted son, Yoshida Hiroshi (1876–1950), who made the family name famous both in Japan and across the Pacific.

Hiroshi traveled widely and exhibited abroad as a watercolorist and oil painter, but he later discovered the popularity of traditional Japanese prints among Western collectors and started printmaking in 1920. He worked briefly with Watanabe Shōzaburō, (1885–

1962) the famous forerunner and publisher of the *shin-hanga* ("new print") movement, which aimed to revitalize traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* printmaking. When the Great Kanto earthquake hit Tokyo in 1923 and destroyed Watanabe's workshop and most of the woodblocks and prints, Hiroshi traveled again to the U.S. as an ambassador of the *shin-hanga* movement, intending to open up the foreign market for his struggling fellow artists. With his business acumen, Hiroshi was able to persuade J. Arthur MacLean, the director of the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis, to organize three consecutive exhibitions of Japanese *shin-hanga* prints in 1926, 1930, and 1936 (the latter two at the Toledo Museum of Art). The 1930 exhibition circuit-ed the country and showed in nine other museums, immediately sparking excitement among collectors.

Another figure who played an important role in this tide of *shin-hanga* enthusiasm is Dorothy L. Blair (1890–1989), a Mount Holyoke College alumna from the class of 1914 who was the assistant curator at the Toledo Museum of Art from 1928 to 1950. During her year-long study at Kyoto Imperial University, she reconnected and continued her friendship with Yoshida Hiroshi and his wife, Fujio,



whom she met previously in Indianapolis. When Blair returned to the U.S., she dedicated her studies to Japanese art and refocused her curatorial career path. She is the author of the famous “*shin-hanga* bible,” *Modern Japanese Prints*, a catalog that went viral among Japanese print collectors in the 1930s. During her years of museum work, Blair kept in touch with the Yoshidas and passionately supported their art business overseas. Most the prints on display in the exhibition—apart from one contemporary work of art and an early museum purchase—were given by Dorothy Blair to the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum during the 1960s and '70s.

Yoshida Hiroshi's prints are famously romantic and atmospheric. His most acclaimed sailboat series (1926) is one of the highlights in this exhibition. The four large prints all depict the same subject—a sailing junk and dinghy in the water—but each uses a different tone to indicate varying light and weather conditions: morning, noon, mist, and night. Heavily influenced by French Impressionist paintings such as Monet's various studies of Rouen Cathedral, Hiroshi mastered woodblock carving and excelled in creating these subtle and beautiful impressions on the printed page.

Other members of the family, however, gradually developed different styles, sometimes in sharp contrast to that of Hiroshi. Hiroshi's wife, Fujio, was famous for her still-lives and abstract depictions of flowers, which remind many viewers of those by Georgia O'Keeffe; Hiroshi's two sons, Tōshi and Hodaka, both became artists who experimented with a range of subjects and styles; Tōshi's wife, Kiso, and Hodaka's wife, Chizuko, were also talented artists. Finally, the contemporary generation of the Yoshida family, Ayomi and Takasuke, are both active artists who explore installation, printmaking, and other artistic forms. Drawing attention to prints by the Yoshida artists, this exhibition will examine the development of the Yoshida family's remarkable artistic tradition, as well as the collecting history and social milieu in which it flourished.

Note: The names in this exhibition are preserved in the Japanese tradition with surname first, followed by the given name.

Dorothy L. Blair
(Class of 1914) near
the end of her year
of study in Nara,
Japan, December
1927. From the
Archives and Special
Collections, Mount
Holyoke College,
South Hadley, MA.



Yoshida Tōshi (Japanese,
1911–1995)
Untitled, No. 9, 1952
Woodblock print
Gift of Dorothy L. Blair (Class
of 1914)
Photograph Laura Shea
1964.136.Q.RII

Aaron F. Miller
Assistant Curator of Visual
and Material Culture

Roman
*Fragment from a relief of
Perseus and Athena with
Medusa's head, 27 BCE–14 CE*
Earthenware (terracotta)
Purchased in Rome by the
Department of Art and
Archaeology
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe
1910.6.C.C

Piecing Together the Past

IF YOU CONTEMPLATE what objects make up the preponderance of materiality of ancient life, ceramic fragments and potsherds are surely among the most prevalent. Nearly every archaeological site produces thousands of these sherds, which even in their incomplete state can act as indicators of the form, function, value, and period of manufacture of the original whole. These often diminutive artifacts can reveal clues as to their fascinating contexts—be they stratigraphic, geographic, or historic. The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's holdings include hundreds upon hundreds of potsherds and other ceramic fragments from Ancient Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. This type of object makes up an area of the collection that holds enormous potential for scholarship at all levels.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, women like Mount Holyoke College professors Caroline Galt and Louise Fitz-Randolph, alumna Caroline Ransom (Class of 1896), and others reached out to archaeologists and museums across the globe looking for “representative pieces” of pottery for the purpose of teaching at Mount Holyoke. Through their efforts, study collections of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman pottery arrived from sources as diverse as the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, The Society of Antiquaries of London, the Candia and Heraklion Museums, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Their



Students in the history class “Eternal Rome: The Renaissance City in Mind, Myth, and Imagination” work to solve some of the mysteries housed in Museum storage.



early ambition to teach with “the real thing” still flourishes today. Campus classes from a variety of disciplines use these materials each semester to meaningfully engage with past cultures.

The shelves of Museum storage often offer moments of surprise and discovery; recently, an exceptional ceramic fragment from the collection (illustrated at left) emerged for the use of a class and revealed unexpected results. The fragmentary imagery on the portion of the molded terracotta wall plaque captivated students, faculty, and staff alike when pulled for Professor of History Fred McGinness’s course, “Eternal Rome: The Renaissance City in Mind, Myth, and Imagination.” Intrigued by the design, we sought to know more. This type of object is referred to as a Campana plaque (after the individual who first published on the topic in the 19th century). These often large-scale architectural reliefs decorated the upper walls of Augustan Roman temples, public buildings, and villas. The Museum’s rediscovered gem was purchased by Fitz-Randolph in Rome in 1910, and now graces the “Stories in Fragments” section of *The Potter’s Tale* exhibition. Although fragmentary, there was enough detail on the object to piece together the full story.

The complete relief likely once decorated the interior of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill of Rome, dedicated in the year 28 BCE on the site of a lightning strike. A nearly intact version of an identical wall plaque portraying Perseus presenting the head of Medusa to Athena (illustrated at right) was recovered from the temple site during the excavations by Gianfilippo Carrettoni in the mid-20th century. The plaque was originally one in a series of 20 repeated panels depicting popular scenes from Greek mythology—objects which are seldom seen in collections other than the Palatine Museum in Rome. Surviving pigments on other plaques from the series suggest that the figures would have been colorfully painted on a vibrant field of blue. Although now fragmented and monochrome, with its newfound context and a bit of imagination, the Museum’s object can conjure up images of the marvels of Octavian’s Rome.

Such fragmentary pieces are what most commonly survive as representations of past human experience. But it is the realness of these seemingly modest objects that make them such a profound tool for learning. Faculty and student interest in these artifacts has led to continued efforts to analyze and expand our understanding of these early acquisitions. Unearthed in the 19th and early 20th century, the quest to link these potsherds and fragments with their archaeological and documentary context continues with new purpose in the 21st.

Visit *The Potter’s Tale: Contextualizing 6,000 Years of Ceramics* to view this remarkable fragment in person through 31 May 2015.



Roman
Reconstructed relief of Perseus and Athena with Medusa’s head, 27 BCE–14 CE
 Earthenware (terracotta)
 Collection of the Palatine Museum
 Image courtesy of the VRoma Project (www.vroma.org)

Collection Spotlight: Ellen Lanyon's *Beyond the Borders*
20 January–26 April 2015

Elizabeth Kendrick '14
Curatorial Assistant

TO ELLEN LANYON, being an artist meant having the power to “transform flowers into fire, create the animate out of the inanimate, and utilize osmosis and gravity to create illusion.” Few painters have embraced the metaphor of artist-magician as fully as Lanyon, who could conjure surrealistic scenes using decorative items and curios from the domestic realm.

A prolific painter and printmaker, Lanyon is particularly associated with Chicago Imagism, a regional movement that embraced figural painting despite the dominance of abstraction during the mid-20th century. Throughout her career, Lanyon taught painting at

institutions such as the Cooper Union, had over 75 solo exhibitions, and received numerous awards. After Lanyon's death in 2013, her estate offered the MHCAM a series of seven paintings, which we were honored to accept. The suite of paintings, titled *Beyond the Borders*, will be featured in the Hinchcliff Reception Hall throughout the spring.

Beyond the Borders captures Lanyon's fascination with both material culture and the natural world. In the series, a menagerie of animals emerges from the precise geometric and floral designs of wallpaper patterns. The environmental abstractions of the wallpaper—highly stylized flowers and leaves and repetitive geometric forms—are overtaken by an irrepressible animal energy. Elk emerge sparring with their antlers entangled; a stampede of zebras seems to be on the verge of breaking through the painting itself.

The complete *Beyond the Borders* series was created from 1996 to 2007, and was inspired by Lanyon's purchase of a 1915 book of wallpaper samples. Attracted to their early-Art Deco designs, she initially created collages using colored paper and then drew animal life emerging from the real borders of the wallpaper samples. Her later paintings, featured in this installation, translate this theme to a larger and more



Ellen Lanyon (American,
1926–2013)
Beyond the Borders: Zebras,
1996–2007
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of the Estate of Ellen
Lanyon
Photograph Laura Shea
2014.20.2

demanding scale—the designs carefully reproduced in Lanyon's preferred medium of acrylic paint. Lanyon fulfilled her vision for the series in multiple media with a suite of lithographs.

The childhood discovery of a small figurine of an anthropomorphized toad at her grandfather's house led Lanyon to become a devoted collector of material oddities, filling her studio and compositions with objects containing the possibility of magic and metamorphosis. In her later work, Lanyon turned more explicitly to zoological and natural themes after a trip to the Florida Everglades, where she observed the environmental damage wrought by human technology and activity. Where she had once brought life to the figurines that filled her studio, she increasingly turned to the wonder already embedded in the natural world.

Two Caricature Drawings by Pier Leone Ghezzi

THE MUSEUM'S WORKS ON PAPER collection contains many treasures, but two 18th-century drawings by the pre-eminent caricaturist of the period are particularly notable. Donated by Thomas Cassirer, husband of Sidonie Cassirer who taught German at the College for four decades, the drawings are by Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674–1755), a native of Rome who spent most of his life in the Eternal City portraying members of the church Curia and the social elite. Ghezzi has been called the first professional caricaturist, and his graphic oeuvre consists of nearly 4,000 sheets dispersed among some of the world's greatest museums.

Ghezzi's caricatures are famous for their succinct characterizations drawn with a few firm strokes of the pen. They are often witty, but are never sarcastic or demeaning. Typically, the subjects are depicted in full-length poses amidst very spare settings. Ghezzi's overall artistic achievements did not go unrecognized during his lifetime: he was first appointed Secretary of the prestigious Accademia di San Luca, and then in 1708, named *Pittore della Camera Apostolica* under Pope Clement XI. Contemporary biographers like Leone Pascoli included Ghezzi among the most noteworthy artists of the day.

Mount Holyoke's two drawings—made just a day apart on May 26 and 27, 1707—portray individuals who are not from the leisure class. According to inscriptions on the two versos, the first represents Marco Ballarin, cook of Giovanni Leoni, and the second, a young mason known as Beretta who worked for a certain Mastro Carlo. Each is sympathetically drawn in their professional environments. Proud men both, they make eye contact with the viewer and convey a sense of dignity that goes well beyond their circumscribed station in life. The nobility of Ballarin's expression recalls Nicolas Poussin's famous *Self-Portrait* in the Louvre. Ghezzi's likeness—we may be surprised to learn—is the very first depiction of an identifiable cook.

Together, the two Ghezzi drawings remind us that not all was frivolity and make-believe in the world of the late Baroque and early Rococo. Depictions of everyday life were not a signature trait of the early 18th century, nor was Ghezzi moved by political motives to record the conditions of the working class—as later 19th-century artists like Courbet and Daumier would be. As impartial likenesses, these caricatures offer the viewer a glimpse of unofficial life in the margins of papal Rome.



John Varriano
Professor Emeritus of Art
History

Pier Leone Ghezzi (Italian,
1674–1755)
*Marco Ballarin, Cook, 27 May
1707*
Iron gall ink on paper
Gift of Thomas Cassirer
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe
2004.21.11

Pier Leone Ghezzi (Italian,
1674–1755)
Beretta, A Mason, 26 May 1707
Iron gall ink on paper
Gift of Thomas Cassirer
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe
2004.21.12

Wendy Watson
Curator

New Acquisition: A Neoclassical Painting by Etienne Aubry

ETIENNE AUBRY was born in Versailles, outside Paris, in 1745 and died there just 36 years later, his life cut short at a pivotal moment in his promising career. *Coriolanus Bidding Farewell to his Wife* was the last of his major paintings; it was exhibited at the Salon of 1781 just after his death. His teacher, Jacques Augustin de Silvestre (1719–1809) subsequently acquired the painting, and it remained in the Silvestre family until their collection was sold at auction in 1811. The catalogue entry described Aubry's *Coriolanus*, as having a "well-constructed composition, beautiful color, and a fluid, painterly execution."

After the sale, the painting—and the only known preparatory drawing for it—vanished.

The painting re-emerged in 2012, when the contents of the Burgundian Chateau de Digoine came on the market in Paris, bringing to light Aubry's missing canvas, still in its original signed frame. New York gallery owner Jack Kilgore alerted us to the rediscovered painting and gave us a first look at it. It didn't take long to realize that it would both fill a major collection gap and be a perfect companion to our Neoclassical landscape by Pierre Henri de Valenciennes.

As an artist, Etienne Aubry stands at the turning point between the decorative Rococo style and the more austere Neoclassical period, with its renewed interest in the art and literature of the ancient world. After Silvestre, Aubry went on to study with the history painter Joseph Marie Vien (1716–1809), a pioneer of Neoclassicism and later the teacher of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825). At 26, Aubry was admitted to the Royal Academy as a portraitist, although he established his reputation as a painter of genre scenes that recall the earlier stylistic tradition. Several of these were shown at the prestigious Salon exhibitions of the 1770s and were avidly collected.

Aubry's most important patron at this time was the prominent connoisseur Comte d'Angiviller who urged him to follow his dream of becoming a history painter. With the Count's backing, Aubry travelled in 1777 to Rome—the epicenter of the classical revival—where he spent three years in that incomparably rich atmosphere. The recent excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum were the talk of the town; innovative critical theories about classical aesthetics circulated; and a new awareness emerged of the heroic themes, noble grandeur, and calm simplicity of ancient art. Aubry and his contemporaries eagerly embraced these ideas, along with the lessons of Raphael, Nicholas Poussin, and Charles Le Brun.

Returning to Versailles in the wake of his wife's death and uncertain of achieving his ambitions, Aubry executed what was to be his final history painting. For his subject he chose the story of the 5th-century BCE general Gaius Marcius Coriolanus, in which the proud general is banished from Rome for his contemptuous treatment of the plebeians during a grain shortage. Vengeful, he defects to Rome's enemies, the Volscians, and prepares to lay siege to his home city despite his family's entreaties. In a desperate move, his wife, Volumnia, and his mother travel to the military camp to plead with him, and he relents, finally choosing family over politics. But it is too late—the Volscians kill him. This tale of military valor, political ambition, familial piety, and tragedy, first told by the ancient historians Livy and Plutarch, has endured in the later works of Shakespeare, Beethoven,



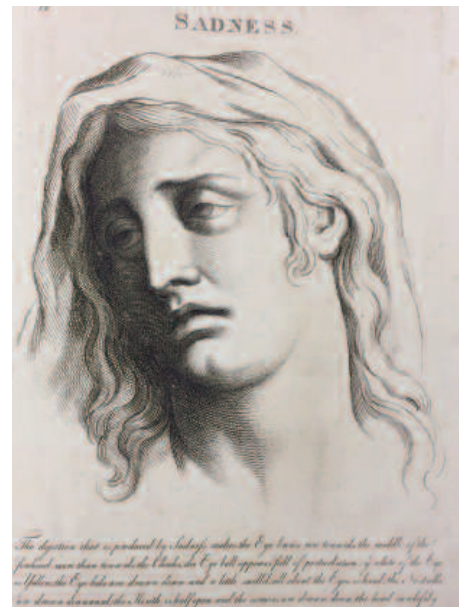
Etienne Aubry (French, 1745–1781)
Coriolanus Bidding Farewell to his Wife as He Leaves to Join the Volscians in their Attack upon Rome, 1780
 Oil on canvas
 Purchase with funds given in honor of Helen Leidner Chaikin by her daughter Joyce Chaikin Ahrens (Class of 1962)
 Photograph Laura Shea
 2014.32

Berthold Brecht, and others.

In Mount Holyoke's painting, Aubry has selected the moment when Coriolanus bids farewell to his family at home. The setting recalls spaces and sculptures the painter would have seen in Rome, and the small slice of landscape includes buildings based on well-known ancient monuments. His wife, Volumnia, sits resignedly in a chair, while his mother's dramatic gesture foretells the tragic ending. Like many of his contemporaries, Aubry was nurtured by the theories and writings of Charles Le Brun, the most influential painter in 17th-century France. It was Le Brun who codified the methods and standards of painting, including the ways in which the "passions of the soul" were translated into facial expressions. Aubry clearly adopted Le Brun's formulaic depiction of *Sadness* (see illustration), in Volumnia's face.

Had Aubry lived longer, he would have seen the development of history painting in the service of French revolutionary politics. Only three years later, David painted his ground-breaking *Oath of the Horatii*. As Art History Professor Anthony Lee commented: "Unlike David, Aubry was no Jacobin, and his turn to a Neoclassical language was far less tinged with political ambition. But all the ingredients of the overall shift are there in the Coriolanus painting: the textual source, the theatrical gestures, the archaeological sensibility, the severity of line, the struggle with narrative. This is Salon painting of the 1770s and 1780s through and through."

The acquisition of this collection-transforming painting was made possible by the generous gift of an endowment in memory of Helen Leidner Chaikin by her daughter Joyce Chaikin Ahrens (Class of 1962; Chair, Art Museum Advisory Board, 1986–1993).



Charles Le Brun (French, 1619–1690)
Sadness, from Heads representing the various passions of the Soul as they are expressed in the human countenance, 1800 edition
 Engraving from a bound volume (London: T. Simpson and J.P. Thompson, 1800)
 From the Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA

Teaching with Objects:
Material Culture in the Museum Classroom

Kendra Weisbin
Assistant Curator of
Education

MATERIAL CULTURE—simply put, the physical products of a culture or group—can provide unparalleled insight into the daily lives of people often separated from us by time, geography, or culture, or all three. The last year saw a remarkable upswing in the exploration and use of material culture at the Museum, evidenced by faculty and students' interactions with the special exhibition, *A Potter's Tale: Contextualizing 6,000 Years of Ceramics*. The curators of the show, Yingxi (Lucy) Gong and Aaron Miller, deftly narrate intertwining stories—both personal and cultural—through carefully chosen ceramics from across the globe.

The exhibition has drawn several classes from a wide range of disciplines to Mount Holyoke College, among them Five College Assistant Professor of Anthropology Elizabeth

Klarich's "Archaeology of Food" course.

While visiting the exhibition in the fall semester, students examined the objects in small groups, focusing on such topics as ceramic technology, archaeological context, and ornamentation. Of her experience exploring the ceramic exhibition, one student remarked, "Visiting the exhibition made me realize that the functionality of the bowl is far more than just a vessel for food. The bowl is an aesthetic, artistic pleasure, a means of conveying meaning, and a marker of social inequality—the bowl is much more than just a bowl!"



The Potter's Tale special exhibition has opened up countless avenues for teaching with material culture.

Material culture was also the focus of another class that recently visited the Museum. Tara Daly, Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish, Latino/a Studies and Latin American Studies at Mount Holyoke College, brought her advanced Spanish course, "Visualizing Indigenous Cultures," to the Museum for a class session. Professor Daly worked closely with Museum staff to select artifacts from the indigenous cultures of Central and South America, choosing from storage a mix of textiles, ceramics, and small sculptural figures, as well as a recently accessioned Peruvian weaving basket and tools.

The students began their visit in the Gump Family Gallery, which houses a selection of the Museum's collection of ancient American art. After discussing the exhibition and display choices, the class split into small groups in the Carson Teaching Gallery to view the objects pulled from storage. They were able to examine each object closely, and used visual clues to piece together the objects' original contexts and functions. The morning was full of unexpected discoveries: one group of students impressively identified a reproduction of an Aztec calendar after noticing designs of waxing and waning moons; another group noticed a small hole in their vessel's bird-shaped finial and remarkably deduced that this ceramic work functioned, in fact, as a whistle.

The students' close observation and analysis of the objects also led to powerful and intimate encounters with the past. One student in the class, Jennifer Hammel '17 (Smith College) observed how material culture helped her forge a personal connection with her course material: "I am a cook, so I work with vessels all day long when I am not in school, and seeing the bowls and other vessels on view allowed me to have a connection with the cultures represented." The familiarity evoked by interacting with material culture was echoed in Professor Klarich's class as well, when Ting Wei '16 remarked: "The pottery pieces evoke a sense of familiarity, as they remind us of the intimacy of home through use of everyday objects."

Professor Daly's museum visit also sparked important conversations about how we acquire and display art and artifacts from indigenous cultures. These conversations resonated with topics central to the course. Of her experience at the Museum, Professor Daly reflected: "The objects [that the students] were able to look at served as visual entry points into another time and way of being in, and conceiving of, the world. Students also gained critical thinking skills through their analysis of exhibition spaces as well as their inquiry into the presentation and acquisition of art."

We continue to look to the Museums' material culture collections as we seek to make meaningful connections with diverse courses and disciplines, including three classes devoted to material culture this spring:

- Professor Christine DeLucia's "The Afterlives of Objects: Revisiting Early American and Indigenous Histories through Material Culture," which will draw heavily upon the collection of the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum;
- Professor Desmond Fitz-Gibbon's "History of Money and Finance," which will utilize the Art Museum's substantial collection of coins and other currency;
- and Professor Ombretta Frau's "Bric-a-Brac, Needlework, Pen and Paper: Gendering Material Culture in Italy," which will explore objects in both the Skinner and the Art Museums' collections.

In addition to these three particular courses, the Museum is enthusiastic as ever to collaborate with all departments; continuing to serve as a resource for the college community and as a center for hands-on experiential learning.

Recent acquisitions, including weaving tools from a Late Intermediate Period (1000–1476) woven basket from Peru, prompts discussion in an anthropology course.



Students are struck by the diversity of forms in an installation of bowls from different geographic and historic periods.

HAPPENINGS



Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Executive Director Alessandra Carnielli joins President Lynn Pasquerella, artist Ellsworth Kelly, and Director John Stomberg, in welcoming guest speaker Olivier Bernier during the opening of the Matisse drawings exhibition.



Faculty, staff, and community alike had the pleasure of meeting artist Ellsworth Kelly, the curator behind the Matisse exhibition.



Collector and author Leslie Anne Miller ('73) reveals how she built her striking collection in a panel discussion with Alexandra Kirtley, Montgomery-Garvan Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Professor of Art History Paul Staiti.



Leslie Paisley, the Conservator of Paper at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, closely examines a William Merritt Chase pastel prior to its departure for a major retrospective exhibition.



Internationally-acclaimed artist Carrie Mae Weems conducts a film project with Mount Holyoke students and community members during her campus visit as the 2014 Leading Woman in the Arts.



Curatorial intern Taylor Anderson '15 acquaints visitors with Museum highlights during Friends and Family Weekend.



CALENDAR

Spring Exhibitions

Collection Spotlight:

Ellen Lanyon's Beyond the Borders

20 January–26 April 2015

The Yoshida Family: An Artistic Legacy in Prints

20 January–31 May 2015

Conversations in Contemporary Art:

Director's Choice

20 January–31 May 2015

The Potter's Tale:

Contextualizing 6,000 Years of Ceramics

Through 31 May 2015

Art à la Carte Gallery Talk Series

Thursday, 5 March 2015 at 12:20 pm

"The Yoshida Family: An Artistic Legacy in Prints"

Yingxi (Lucy) Gong, Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow and exhibition curator

Thursday, 26 March 2015 at 12:20 pm

"Who knows what one object will have to say to another?"

John Stomberg, Florence Finch Abbott Director and *Conversations in Contemporary Art:*

Director's Choice installation curator

Spring Events

Thursday, 19 February 2015 at 5:30 pm

The Fourth Annual Louise R. Weiser Lecture in Creativity,

Innovation, and Leadership through Art

"A Potter's Tale: Ceramicist Mark Hewitt in Conversation with Critic Christopher Benfey"

Gamble Auditorium, Mount Holyoke College

Reception to follow



Photograph courtesy of Mark Hewitt

Thursday, 23 April 2015 from 4:30-6:00 pm

Season Opening Celebration at the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum

Join us for an afternoon of discovery and fun, including "Re-Envisioning Skinner's Collection" museum tours with Aaron Miller, Assistant Curator of Visual and Material Culture, and "Mysteries of History" games, prizes, and refreshments!



British; English, *Set of measures*, pewter, Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Mount Holyoke College, Photograph Laura Shea, SK 2006.273a-e

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Friends of Art provides crucial funding for special exhibitions, publications, and public programs. Friends receive invitations to opening receptions, lectures, and other events as well as the newsletter. Memberships, valid for one year, are tax-deductible contributions to support Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.

ABOVE: Swiss, *Pocket watch*, 18th century, silver, brass, glass, and colored enamel, Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, photograph Petegorsky/Gipe, SK 2006.1359

Museum Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and weekends, 1-5 p.m. Admission is free. Donations are welcome. Fully accessible. 413-538-2245 · www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum

To sign up for *MHCAM News* and receive exhibition and event announcements, go to www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum.

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*Mount Holyoke students or alumnae who graduated within the last 5 years

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- I would like more information on donating art.
- I would like more information on: endowing a fund, gifts that provide income, establishing a bequest.

Memberships are tax-deductible contributions to support the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, a department of Mount Holyoke College. Memberships are valid for one year. Questions? Call 413.538.2245 or email artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu

Thank you for your support!