

Vedute di Roma

Kara Walker
Extended

Albert Bierstadt
and the Legacy of
Concern

Matisse
Foundation Grant

FROM THE DIRECTOR



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

COVER:

Chinese; Song Dynasty
(960-1279) or Yuan
Dynasty (1279-1368)
Guanyin (Avalokitesvara)
Wood, gesso, paint, and
gilding
Gift of the Arthur M.
Sackler Foundation
Photograph Petegorsky/
Gipe
2012.40.2

Part of a landmark gift of 17 objects from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, this painted wood sculpture represents Guanyin, the bodhisattva associated with compassion. The Sackler donation significantly extends MHCAM's holdings in works of art from Asia and the Near East.

Engage

Teaching museums have come far in the last two decades. It has been a time of rapid redefinition. We no longer toil under the banner of becoming “mini-Mets,” but thrive as institutions with object-based learning as the core mission. Each semester our activities move deeper into the curriculum and we attract professors from a wider range of disciplines. The use of the Museum and its collections by these varied scholars adds substantially to the breadth of how we understand the objects in our care. Art historians demonstrate the grand story of art from antiquity to yesterday and from Tokyo to Toledo. Sociologists study art’s various functions in the context of social interaction. Biologists focus on developing close observation skills. Philosophers discuss aesthetics and the concept of beauty. Neurobiologists discuss vision and how we know what we see. This list goes on, but the story remains—the huge curricular potential of art is no longer a secret. As teaching with art moves away from the fringe of the College’s pedagogy, the dramatic promise of object-based learning offers the potential for the Museum to assume an even greater curricular role on campus in the 21st century.

So, what’s next?

The Museum’s staff has been asking this question over the past year, and it becomes ever clearer that teaching with art can expand beyond course curriculum support to become college mission support. What is it that we want from our students? On one level, of course, we expect them to become proficient in a number of specific topics. But in the true spirit of the liberal arts we also have expectations that are more universal. As stated in the College mission, we want students to work toward a “purposeful engagement with the world.” This goal lies deep in the original conception of the liberal arts which aimed to teach individuals to lead active, participatory civic lives. We believe that the Museum’s programs, which already add significantly to the efficacy with which material is taught, can achieve the broader goal of helping to train students for “purposeful engagement” by focusing on creativity skill-building as well as the material covered by the class.

I am pleased to announce that starting in January the Museum will be supported by The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation in a three-year project called “The Museum as Catalyst for the Creative Campus.” Details of the project are outlined on page 9, but in essence the grant allows the Museum to explore ways of turning creativity theory into sustainable practice. Working with faculty across the spectrum, we will focus on facilitating object-based teaching and learning opportunities that enhance skills associated with creativity. While all this takes place in the context of teaching with art, these skills are widely considered to be universally applicable keys to success in numerous fields. With the Matisse Foundation support, we will work to move the creativity initiative from design to implementation.

And in other news . . .

The collection will continue to be the basis for our exhibitions, programs, and even for our advancement efforts. We have had terrific success to date in adding significant works of art to the Museum’s holdings in honor of the 135th anniversary last year. At that time too, we launched a publication project

FROM THE DIRECTOR

titled, *Engage: The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum*. It will highlight 135 great works in our collection and, thanks to a generous gift from Ann Aceves ('56), it will be a truly beautiful volume featuring color illustrations, essays from multiple authors, and a feature on the Skinner Museum. This book will exemplify the Museum's goal of having students actively engage works of art and our belief that in so doing, they will gain habits and skills that will further their personal goals in every endeavor.

A highpoint of the spring schedule will certainly be our new exhibition, *Vedute di Roma*, the work of our current Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow Emily Wood ('09). For this project, Emily initiated the full restoration of our fabulous *Nuova Pianta di Roma* by Giovanni Battista Nolli, better known simply as the Nolli map of Rome. In celebration of the conservation, she has put together an exhibition centered on the map (which measures over six by seven feet) that also includes views of Rome by other artists from Giacomo Lauro to Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Professor John Pinto from Princeton University will be delivering a not-to-be-missed lecture based on his research into 18th-century depictions of Roman ruins.

Also this spring, we are holding over our Kara Walker exhibition. The show has turned out to be such a runaway hit with our faculty that they have asked to have it up for another semester. The work is not only beautiful on many levels, but lends itself well to constructive dialogue on issues of class, race, and gender both historically and today. Note, too, that our featured speaker for the spring run of the exhibition will be MHC president Lynn Pasquerella, one of the many faculty members using Walker's art in their courses this year. President Pasquerella is writing a new lecture for the occasion titled: "Aesthetic Disruption and Ontological Doubt in Kara Walker's *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)*."

Two student interns, who have been with the Museum for two and a half years, Maureen Millmore and Xingxi (Lucy) Gong, both now seniors, will spend the winter months cataloguing all the works from the recent Arthur M. Sackler Foundation gift. Those 17 objects of Asian and Middle Eastern origin, all of which are on display, will be the subject of a new brochure. This gift has transformed how we can present the arts of this area, and the brochure will help tell that story. Look for it in the gallery sometime in late spring.

Finally, thanks to new support from William Armistead, a direct descendent of Joseph Allen Skinner, an important conservation project at the Skinner Museum will begin in January. The Skinner houses over two dozen rare and significant historical documents, many with original signatures from the likes of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. This spring, the documents will all be restored, photographed, and reframed in micro-climate frames. Expect to hear more about this project—and to see the exciting results—in an upcoming newsletter.

JOHN STOMBERG
Florence Finch Abbott Director

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Vedute di Roma · 22 January–26 May 2013

Emily Wood, Art Museum
Advisory Board Fellow

THE EXHIBITION *Vedute di Roma* brings together a number of early modern prints from the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's permanent collection to trace the development of the printed *veduta*, or 'view', from the 16th through the 18th century, when the genre reached its height. Initially conceived to celebrate the return of the Museum's copy of the 1748 map of Rome by Giambattista Nolli from conservation, *Vedute di Roma* situates Nolli's groundbreaking work in a historical context using the printed images that captured the changes and building projects that reshaped the city of Rome in the centuries before Nolli's plan was made. These prints also reveal the underlying trends and motives behind both the redevelopment of the city and the expansion of the print market during these centuries.

Through roughly the three centuries prior to Nolli's creation of his *Nuova Pianta di Roma*, the city of Rome saw an incredible number of changes to its architectural fabric. Popes and wealthy families commissioned artists and architects for projects meant to reestablish the cultural predominance of the Eternal City, dramatically altering the city's landscape and appearance in the process. While Rome remained a very important city as the seat of the Catholic Church and its bureaucracy, and as home to the most powerful religious figure in Europe, other metropolises in Europe had surpassed it as centers of learning and artistic development. Great universities were founded during the later Middle Ages in places like Bologna, Paris, and Cambridge, and during the 15th century, Tuscany, especially the city of Florence, rose to predominance as the leader in artistic cultivation. Rome, on the other hand, was in many ways still a small medieval city—and one set in the midst of the remnants of an antique city that had once been the vibrant center of an Empire.

Beginning in the Renaissance, especially with the popes Julius II and Leo X, the papacy and the various courts associated with it made concerted efforts to refurbish the city and to foster a more impressive, modern architectural image that they felt matched the importance of the city as the center of the Catholic community and as home to some of the most significant pilgrimage sites for Christians. Under papal patronage, Bramante and Michelangelo redesigned the basilica of St. Peter's, and Bernini designed a striking new courtyard for it; streets were straightened, piazzas expanded, and palaces constructed. These grand—and expensive—building projects came to a peak in the early 18th century with the commissions of two popes, Clement XII and Benedict XIV, who built numerous new churches and renovated many of the major churches in Rome, including San Giovanni in Laterano, the cathedral church of Rome.

Nolli surveyed the city just after this period of significant change wound down, unwittingly capturing the culmination of centuries of redevelopment. Wonderfully, the Museum's collection of vedute prints allows us to outline the moments of the various building projects throughout Rome and to situate Nolli's *Pianta* in this timeline. This genre

of drawings, paintings, and prints—which has roots in both the art of the Low Countries, brought by the northern European artists who visited Rome, and the trends in mapmaking that developed in the early Renaissance—flourished on the Italian peninsula in Venice and Rome. Rather than idealized or invented views, vedute are naturalistic, topographic portrayals of cityscapes and buildings (and, in Rome, ruins) and so act as records of what specific sites looked like at the moment of printing. Spurred by the antiquarian desire to accurately depict the decaying remnants of ancient Roman architecture and by the importance of Rome as a destination for pilgrims visiting its many holy sites, the seeds of the vedute began in the Renaissance and flourished in Rome in the 16th century when publishers like Antoine Lafréry (1512–1577) employed talented printmakers like Etienne Dupérac (ca. 1525–1601) to produce views of the important monuments in the city, both ancient and modern. In the 17th century, artists such as Giacomo Lauro (1561–1645) continued to develop the vedute and to sell them on the open market in Rome, primarily to pilgrims to the city and to people with antiquarian interests. They captured ancient monuments such as the Arch of Constantine, the Colosseum, Trajan’s column, and the forum of Nerva; the seven major pilgrim churches of Rome; and also modern developments, such as Michelangelo’s redesigned Capitoline.

While pilgrims to the Eternal City and antiquarian scholars were key audiences for the Roman print market, the veduta truly found its niche with the advent of the Grand Tour, a trend that began in the late 17th century and grew exponentially in the 18th. Grand Tourists were Europeans, mostly men and frequently English, who spent sometimes up to two or three years visiting the well-known and important cities and sites of Italy and other European countries. They were mostly young, mostly wealthy, and, just as with tourists today, enjoyed purchasing souvenirs and mementos from the places they visited. Rome was an essential stop on the Tour, and to accommodate the Grand Tourists’ tastes—which included strong antiquarian interests fostered by their education in the Classics—printmakers and painters churned out hundreds of vedute, sculptors and mosaicists made copies of



Giovanni Battista Piranesi
(Italian, 1720–1778)
Arco di Settimio Severo
[The Arch of Septimius Severus]
from the series *Vedute di Roma*
[Views of Rome]
Etching, plate 1759; printed
before 1778
Transfer from the Mount
Holyoke College Library
Photograph Laura Shea
1972.74.6.P.111



Giovanni Battista Nolli
 (Italian, 1701–1756);
 Domenico Pronti (Italian,
 active late 18th century)
Nuova Pianta di Roma
 Engraving, 1748 (Nolli map);
 1795 (Pronti prints)
 Bequest of Helene Brosseau
 Black (Class of 1931)
 Photograph Laura Shea
 1991.4.681.A-J

famous antique works, and antiquities dealers sprang up across the city.

By the mid 18th century, because of this Grand Tour patronage, the vedute reached the pinnacle of its popularity. Probably the best known vedutista of this period is Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) who, though not originally from Rome, came to define the Roman veduta as we know it. Trained under an engineer and theatrical stage designers in Venice, Piranesi first moved to Rome in 1740 and would eventually settle there permanently. He worked for a short time with Giuseppe Vasi (1710–1782), the leading vedutista in Rome prior to Piranesi's ascent, and also collaborated with Nolli on the engraving of a smaller version of his *Pianta*. The Museum has a large number of Piranesi vedute with wide-ranging subjects, reflecting the breadth of his interests. Antiquities, ruins, and Baroque buildings all appear in his prints, often juxtaposed next to each other as they were in the early modern city, and can be seen in his veduta of the Arch of Septimius Severus where the church of Santi Luce e Martina is visible in the background.

When studied as a group, Nolli's *Pianta* and the vedute in this exhibition reveal the remarkable architectural palimpsest of Rome. Even within individual prints, it is possible to examine multiple millennia of history in a single view—an aspect of the Eternal City that enchants visitors and viewers to this day.

The *Nuova Pianta di Roma* by Giambattista Nolli is a richly detailed ichnographic (or ground plan) map of Rome. Originally sold as a portfolio of twelve separate sheets which would then be laid together to form the map, the *Pianta* is so accurate in its detail that it was used into the subsequent centuries as the basis for modern maps of Rome and can still be used, to a certain extent, in the modern city. With the sheets united as intended, Nolli's map measures roughly six feet high by seven feet wide—obviously too large to be of practical, navigational use. Instead, maps of this scale were created to be displayed by their owner as a visual statement of their connection to the city of Rome.

The Museum's *Pianta* was clearly used as a display piece, most likely by a Grand Tourist. At some point in its history, an owner assembled all twelve sheets into the map and pasted them together, adding a border of 78 vedute of Rome and its surroundings by Domenico Pronti. This tapestry of prints was then, at some later date, cut into smaller pieces (each roughly nine by nine inches) and glued down to a linen backing, probably to make the map foldable and therefore more portable while still keeping it ready to display by hanging it on a wall. Unfortunately, while increasing the map's portability, this process also led to greater wear on the map and to damage from the paste used to glue it to the linen. Furthermore, the map had, at some time in its history after the linen backing was added, been damaged by water, leading to the appearance of what are called 'tide lines' where the water seeped into the paper, bringing dirt and discoloration with it.

Needless to say, by the time this Nolli map entered the Museum's collection, it was very much in need of conservation in order both to correct past damage and to prevent further injury. Last winter, staff from the Museum brought the map to Louise Baptiste, a paper conservator in Boston who also works with the Harvard Map Collection, for a consultation. Over the next eight months, Ms. Baptiste painstakingly worked to peel the old linen lining away from the map, to remove the adhesive that had been used to bind them together, and to remove the tide lines from the sheets of paper before laying them on Japanese paper using wheat paste. This new mounting is entirely reversible because of the archival materials used and has stabilized the map, making it much easier and safer to handle the map for class use and display.

Detail of Nolli map



New Catalogue Heralds the Extension of Kara Walker Exhibition

A new publication by MHCAM, the exhibition catalogue *Kara Walker: Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)*, coincides with the extension of its special fall show of the same name. Used extensively to teach such classes as critical race theory, women's history, and printmaking, the exhibition has also attracted a wide public audience and the attention of journals like *ArtNews* and *Art New England*. By extending it until May 26th, the Museum offers the opportunity for even greater engagement with these striking works recently acquired by the Museum.



The 60-page catalogue contains original essays by Mount Holyoke College faculty Elizabeth Young, the Carl M. and Elsie A. Small Professor of English; Patricia A. Banks, Assistant Professor of Sociology; and John R. Stomberg, the Florence Finch Abbott Director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. The essays cover such subjects as Kara Walker's place in depictions of the Civil War; Walker's status in the African American art market; and Kara Walker the artist. An introduction by Stomberg discusses the controversy surrounding Walker's use of African American stereotypes included in her imagery. Also included are beautiful reproductions of the 15-image series, as well as the referenced images from *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War*. Compiled in 1866, *Harper's Pictorial History* was an attempt to present a definitive visual account of the war. In Walker's version, created in 2005, the artist offers a stunning visual commentary on those images that demands a reconsideration of the historical account and a recognition of the ghosts that haunt it.

On April 4th, Mount Holyoke College President Lynn Pasquerella will present a public lecture entitled "Aesthetic Disruption and Ontological Doubt in Kara Walker's *Harper's Pictorial of the Civil War (Annotated)*."

Matisse Foundation Funds MHCAM Creativity Initiative

On December 4th, the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation announced their decision to fund a new initiative at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Supporting a proposal with art and innovation at its core titled *The Museum as Catalyst for the Creative Campus*, the Foundation is giving a strong vote of confidence to an agenda of exploring, refining, and implementing new ideas about the Museum as a hub for object-based learning. The Foundation has committed to sponsor the initial three-year phase of the project with a \$169,500 challenge grant.

Creativity, and the belief that it can be encouraged through museum experiences, is a key conviction informing the Museum's plans to develop itself as a laboratory for innovative teaching. The Museum has already adopted a model of support for curriculum across academic disciplines, and for this reason class involvement has been noticeably increasing each year. In the next phase of its evolution, MHCAM will extend its methodology to include new ways of assisting faculty in achieving the College-wide mission geared toward preparing students for a life of purposeful engagement in the world. To this end, the Museum will work with faculty to reinforce student mastery of skills that lie beyond the direct content of their courses, and embrace visual literacy, critical thinking, and creativity as whole.

A series of faculty seminars to be held during the three-year grant period will gather outside experts in the fields of education, creativity studies, art history, and material culture studies together with Mount Holyoke faculty to discuss the integration of object-based creativity training into the College curriculum. The first seminar will act as a "think tank," helping to shape future Museum programs in the context of a "Creative Campus Initiative." This initiative will offer practical components that faculty could include in their classes to encourage divergent thinking, create "what if" scenarios, receive and apply critical feedback, take risks, and communicate and collaborate productively with others. By helping to advance the College mission of producing a student population of productive thinkers and dreamers in every discipline who can apply and effectively communicate their ideas, the Museum will evolve into a center for innovative thought and skill building. The extraordinary recognition by The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation is an acknowledgement of the substantial strides that have been made by the Museum in its approach to teaching with art. With the support of the Foundation, the Museum, already the caretaker of important and diverse collections of art, will cement its place at the interdisciplinary crossroads on campus and assert its centrality to liberal arts education in the 21st century.

Creativity Lessons from A Digital Art Class

Ellen Alvord, Andrew W.
Mellon Coordinator of
Academic Affairs

At first glance, the following may not seem to share anything in common:

- an international student's first impression of the city of Holyoke after arriving to this country from Botswana;
- a 19th-century landscape painting by Thomas Charles Farrer, hanging in the Art Museum's American gallery;
- and a popular digital art course taught by Tatiana Ginsberg.

But in fact, these were the key ingredients fueling the creation of a new work of art by Tsholo Thekiso ('15) entitled *Becloud*. Their unexpected coalescence this past fall was the result of a creativity skill-building exercise; an example of the type of experience the Museum hopes to foster on a continuing basis in students from a wide range of disciplines with the help of a new grant from the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation.

Thekiso's *Becloud* is both visually and conceptually complex. After hours spent color-correcting a digital reproduction of Farrer's *Mount Holyoke and the Connecticut River* that involved close study of the original painting, she created an entirely new work of art by overlaying a map of the city of Holyoke onto a distorted image of the mountain that was the city's namesake. In her version, Thekiso emphasizes the metaphorical reflection rather than the physical reflection so dominant in Farrer's painting, enabling transparency and dialogue between two worlds now vastly separated through perception, time, and social and economic conditions, despite their geographic proximity.

As this example demonstrates, Museum-related assignments offer rich, often nuanced object-based content, ideally suited to serve as a catalyst for student engagement in creative exploration, practice, and problem solving. To this end, visiting artist Tatiana Ginsberg has been one of a number of key collaborators with Museum staff now beginning to experiment with creativity training. The assignment described above was designed by Ginsberg two years ago as the first in a series of creative projects students undertake in Art Studio 226: Digital Art. This highly effective, two-part exercise "Faithful Reproduction vs. Creative Reinterpretation" gives students a chance to develop skills that are both transferrable and highly desirable in the "real world."

The first part of the assignment is about "authenticity" and cultivates practical, technology-based training. Using the graphics editing software Photoshop, students are asked to make a faithful reproduction of an original work of art selected from objects on view in the Museum's galleries and then produce an 8x10 print that has been accurately color-corrected. The students quickly learn that this is a deceptively simple task that challenges them to combine technical and observational skills with knowledge of intellectual concepts such as color theory in a practical, problem-solving manner. Ginsberg knows firsthand the importance of this skill from the many years she worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art making color corrections of artwork to be used in printed materials.



Tsholo Thekiso ('15)
Becloud
 Digital print on paper, 2012



Thomas Charles Farrer
 (British, active in the United
 States, 1839-1891)
*Mount Holyoke and the
 Connecticut River*
 Oil on canvas, 1865
 Purchase with the Elizabeth
 Peirce Allyn (Class of 1951)
 Fund and the Warbeke Art
 Museum Fund
 2002.6

The second part of the assignment is fully creative and asks students to make a new work of art drawing from the same Museum object but of their own conception. This could mean sampling the colors or textures, picking up on a specific detail, or reworking the image in a new way. The result can be in any medium—painting, print, sculpture—as long as it incorporates some aspect of their photographic reproduction in the process of creating the new work.

The results of this assignment have been stunning in their variety and inventiveness. When students have selected the same Museum object, their new works demonstrate remarkably divergent paths of thinking and problem-solving. The range of approaches is often underscored in the students' accompanying written statements. For each assignment in the Digital Art course, Ginsberg requires students to submit written summaries of their creative process and the specific techniques they utilized to achieve the final versions of their work.

Through this exercise, Professor Ginsberg stretches her students to think about the questions "What is an original?" and "What does it mean to appropriate another's work of

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art into your own?" Having had her students read Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (second version)" as a way to consider "technological reproducibility" in our own era and what it means to experience the "aura" of such a work, she instructs her students to carefully study their chosen Museum object. What was the artist's original intention? What are the formal elements used to communicate the information the viewer receives? How is the object made and what does this tell us about its content?

Simultaneously Ginsberg gives her students the opportunity to transform the information about their object into a new and interesting work of their own by practicing



Tatiana Ginsberg and class

some of the essential aspects of creative thought and production: close observation (akin to repeated close-readings of a text), divergent thinking and idea generation (brainstorming new approaches), risk-taking (trying something new), analysis and synthesis (evaluating options, then streamlining and refining one's thoughts), expressing ideas in multiple platforms (visual and written in this case), and critical feedback (in the form of critique from faculty and peers). Thekiso, who is a computer science major and art minor, remarked that this process enabled her to "expand the life of the image" by first "capturing it in its original state and then changing it to bring new themes to life." By reimagining the work through the lens of her own

ideas, she created something new that was in dialogue with the original in a way that would extend its possible meanings and enable others to view it with a fresh and novel perspective.

Needless to say, the best studio courses have always strengthened and developed the innovative capacities of their students, even those who do not consider themselves to be creative. With the support of the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, the Museum will be able to create new collaborations with faculty from a wide range of departments with the intention of designing hands-on, experiential learning sessions explicitly incorporating creativity training components. In this way, the Museum's object-based learning program will provide an even richer resource to courses across the curriculum seeking to link knowledge acquired in a liberal arts setting with the simultaneous acquisition of the transferrable skill-sets needed for students to become leaders and innovators in both the global work force and our local communities.

New Acquisitions

When he arrived in August 2011, director John Stomberg brought with him some fresh approaches in the shaping of the Museum's collection, particularly in the areas of modern and contemporary art, photography, and African American art. Foremost among a group of transformative new acquisitions is the remarkable portfolio of prints by MacArthur prize winner Kara Walker entitled *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)*. These provocative and visually arresting works are the basis of the current exhibition and a series of programs and classes taking place this year. Another print by Walker that is new to the collection—*No World*, from the 2010 series *An Unpeopled Land in Uncharted Waters*—explores related imagery connected to female slaves shipped from Africa to the antebellum American South.

These and other recent purchases and gifts—particularly the color photographs by Ouyang Xingkai, Julia Komisaroff, Binh Danh, Pok Chi Lau, and Livia Corona from the 2011 exhibition *World Documents*—have significantly increased our ability to accomplish our primary mission of teaching with art in a broader cultural sense. At the same time, the evolution of this distinguished collection—and it's been evolving now for over 136

Wendy Watson, Curator



Wayne F. Miller
(American, b. 1918)
*Chorus girls backstage at the
Rum Boogie Club*, from the
series *The Way of Life of the
Northern Negro, Chicago*
Gelatin silver print photograph,
negative 1940s; print 1999
Purchase with funds given in
memory of Joanne Hammerman
Alter (Class of 1949) and the
Art Acquisition Fund
Photograph Laura Shea
2012.18.1

CURATOR'S DESK

Wayne F. Miller
(American, b. 1918)
Street Car Stop, from the series
*The Way of Life of the
Northern Negro, Chicago*
Gelatin silver print photograph,
negative 1940s; print 1999
Purchase with funds given in
memory of Joanne Hammerman
Alter (Class of 1949) and the
Art Acquisition Fund
Photograph Laura Shea
2012.18.2



years!—more effectively reflects our own community, where students from 82 countries come into contact with faculty and staff who speak more than 50 languages.

Another initiative of the collecting plan is to acquire photographs that illuminate the history and landscape of America's great cities. When the opportunity presented itself to make a purchase in memory of Joanne Alter ('49), a trailblazing activist in politics and social justice in Chicago, it seemed fitting to think of photographs of her hometown. A generous group of Joanne's family and friends, led by Helene Herzig ('49), Odysia Skouras ('54), and Madeleine Pinsof Plonsker ('62), raised a \$10,000 art acquisition fund to honor Joanne for her dedicated service to Mount Holyoke as a College trustee and longtime member of the Museum's advisory board.

We soon singled out the pioneering work of Wayne Miller, who in the 1940s set about chronicling the life of African Americans on the South Side of Chicago. Miller, a photographer in Edward Steichen's Naval Aviation Unit during World War II, subsequently garnered assignments for *Life*, *Fortune*, and *Ebony* magazines and in 1946, funded by grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, turned his lens on his adopted city for a project

he called "The Way of Life of the Northern Negro." A white man, Miller was granted extraordinary access to the world of his Chicago neighbors through his legendary honesty and respect for the dignity of his subjects. On the street, he shot the daily interactions of people at work and play, waiting for the streetcar, looking out the window of a darkened bedroom. In the evenings, he could be found at African American debutante balls, jazz clubs, and even the dressing rooms of dancers, where they seemed unaware of his discreet presence.

The most difficult part of the process was choosing among the varied

and stellar images shared with us by the Steven Daiter Gallery in Chicago. Long discussions took place among Museum staff and with faculty members including Anthony Lee (art history) and Patricia Banks (sociology), both of whom will use Miller's photographs in upcoming courses. The final selection included two made in the 1940s and six more printed in 1999 under the photographer's supervision. The ability to compare vintage and modern prints adds yet another dimension to the ways in which these compelling photographs will be used in teaching.

Albert Bierstadt and the Legacy of Concern: A Collection Spotlight

In celebration of the Museum's continuing fascination with Albert Bierstadt's painting, *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*, this spring in a "Collection Spotlight" the Museum will feature the iconic work alongside some special guests. On loan from a private collection, two of the artist's other western paintings will also be on display. These loans demonstrate Bierstadt's continuing concern with the plight of the natural world and provide context for the artist and his work. Also, a print by Thomas Moran will be on view for the first time, together with photographs that complement and expand our understanding of Bierstadt's approach to the "West" as a theme in American art.

The scene is laid in the Hetch Hetchie Canon [sic], California, which lies some twenty miles north of the Yosemite and is rarely visited by the tourist because of its inaccessibility. It is smaller than the more famous valley but it presents many of the same features in its scenery and is quite as beautiful. The season I have chosen is late autumn when distant objects are mellowed by a golden haze and when the grass is dry and yellow. A few elk, now unfortunately becoming rarer every year, are coming up the valley in quest of one of the few mountain streams that the long dry season has not quenched. In early times the deer were very numerous, as many as a thousand head often being seen together.

—Albert Bierstadt, 1876

Selecting a western landscape in 1876 as the first acquisition for the recently established Art Museum at Mount Holyoke was far from an obvious choice, even if the artist was the best known American painter of the moment. The view from the top of nearby Mount Holyoke, overlooking the oxbow in the Connecticut River, was a thriving tourist destination—one of the most popular spots in the United States. Certainly there was no shortage of paintings celebrating such local natural wonders, but the individuals in charge (both married to MHC trustees) made a much bolder decision to inaugurate active art collecting at the College. They went with a contemporary image of an exotic locale, a mysterious valley almost primordial in its natural abundance and obscured from the rest of the world by its surrounding cliffs.

In the letter the artist sent regarding the acquisition, he describes the view evocatively, setting the scene with mention of the autumnal season and the lack of human presence. He notes too, that the deer were once far more abundant than at present (he painted the scene in 1875). Washed in a glowing yellow light, and only populated by a few elk, the valley seems Edenic. Bierstadt offers a testimony at odds with this perception, and he clearly wanted the College to know. With his observation about the tragically depleted

John Stomberg,
Florence Finch Abbott
Director



Albert Bierstadt
(American, born in Germany,
1830–1902)
Hetch Hetchy Canyon
Oil on canvas, 1875
Gift of Mrs. E. H. Sawyer and
Mrs. A. L. Williston
Photograph Laura Shea
1876.2.1(b).P1

SPOTLIGHT

Albert Bierstadt
(American, born in Germany,
1830–1902)
Tuolomne Meadows
Oil on canvas
Loan from a private collection
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe
2010.L4.1



Thomas Moran
(American, 1837–1926)
Mountain of the Holy Cross
Etching, 1888
Purchase with the Art
Acquisition Endowment Fund
Photograph Laura Shea
2012.36

deer population, we realize that the scene has a subtle “innocence lost” motif. Without benefit of his words, however, we could be excused for missing this secondary significance. Certainly the light, the magnificent cliffs, and the majestic trees on the right all suggest that the viewer has stumbled into paradise. Bierstadt only hints at the sub-theme: the elk have stopped what they were doing and look up at us (the artist/viewers). This little gesture changes the picture dramatically. Nature, represented here by the elk, is not in a pristine, undisturbed state. Rather, nature contends already with the human intrusion, and does so warily.

The ethical heft found in many major 19th-century paintings derives from the artists’ desire to parallel their literary colleagues in tackling enduring philosophical problems. Perhaps no one issue received as much attention as the human impact on and relationship to the natural world, a world that for many artists reflected directly the hand of an omnipotent creator. Bierstadt delights and cautions simultaneously. He reveals this hidden valley far away in California. It is a place of clean running water and old growth trees, but

it is also the site of change. With the elk noticing our arrival in the valley, the artist acknowledges that upon seeing this valley, we have also participated in changing it. While the act of looking is clearly not the original sin that brought an end to paradise, it is not without its closely related responsibility. In the letter offering this significant gift, the donors note the appropriateness of having Bierstadt’s painting come to Mount Holyoke, a place where young women study morality. The theme of moral responsibility clearly underlies the beautiful scene of this peaceful valley.

Maritime Treasures from the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum

When Joseph Allen Skinner compiled and thematically organized the 7,000 objects that make up his eclectic collection, a key element of his vision, and one of the central themes of the Museum, was the material culture of early America. Its holdings include a significant maritime component that endeavors to illuminate the naval history of the British colonies and the Early Republic. Among them, a meticulously constructed model of a two-masted ship with the name Cabot etched into the stern is constructed almost entirely of delicately carved and shaped bone and ivory held together by copper pins. All the ship's details are reproduced in miniature, including the cannon carriages, the ship's wheel, and the impossibly small pulleys and other hardware that make up the masts and rigging.

The origins of this style of model can be traced to the long period of warfare between Great Britain and France in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15). French soldiers (many of them skilled tradesmen) who were captured by British forces were often imprisoned in English prisons and prison-ships. Some of them spent their time in captivity (often of long duration), painstakingly constructing models of ships out of the animal bone left over from their diet rations. Many of these pieces were subsequently sold to the British public, and demand for this type of artwork rose.

The Skinner ship was constructed in the style of the French prisoner-of-war models. The object stylistically represents a vessel from the period and was created in a technique most common during the first years of the 19th century. The original label displayed within the wood and glass case reads: "U.S. 12 Gun Brig 'Cabot' of 1775. One of the finest four American man of war". This brigantine of the Continental Navy was commissioned in 1775 and had a short but successful career, taking part in various operations and claiming a number of British prizes. In 1777, *Cabot*, outmatched in a skirmish, was ultimately seized and recommissioned by the British. One discrepancy with the model representing the *USS Cabot* is that instead of the 12 guns boasted in the Skinner label, she was in fact a 14-gun vessel. However, few of these bone models are to scale, so this inconsistency is not necessarily cause to doubt the attribution.

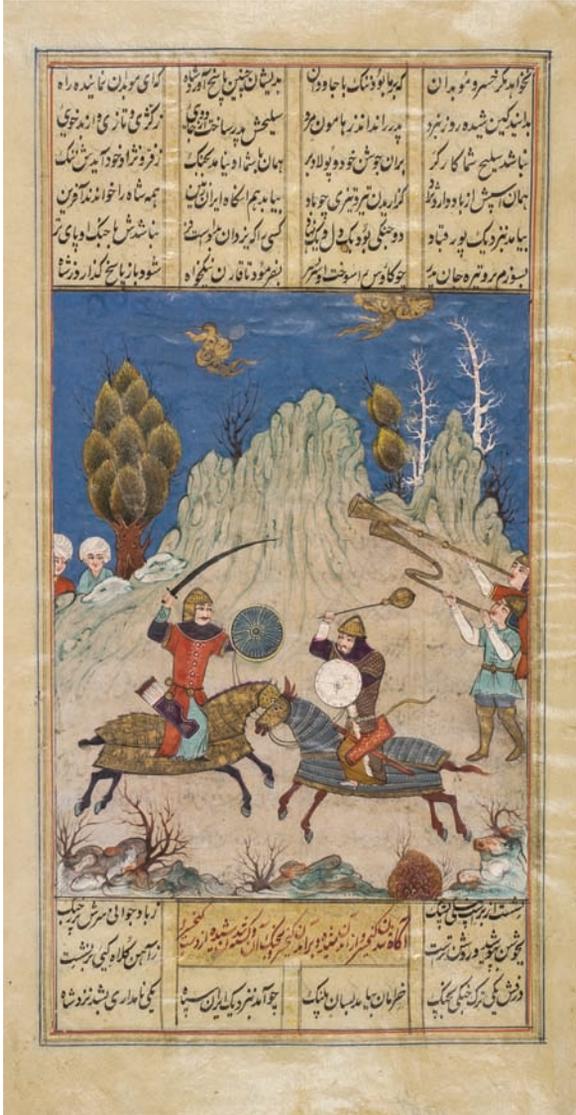
Having no concrete provenance, the possible origins of the piece are cause for

Aaron Miller, Assistant
Curator, Joseph Allen
Skinner Museum

Bone and ivory ship model
19th century
Collection of Joseph Allen
Skinner Museum
MHSK 2006.249.INV



query, and much is left to speculation. Most of the Museum's collection was accumulated in the 1930s and early 1940s, and Skinner obtained many of his objects from relatives, acquaintances, antique dealers, and auction houses. As the item is subject to continued research, new data regarding its history and origins are awaited with great anticipation. The thousands of objects from the Skinner Museum represent so many different places, cultures, and time periods, and the majority of these artifacts, objects of daily life, and works of art are just now beginning to reveal their secrets.



Artist Unknown
(Persian; Qajar)
Battle scene from Shahnameh
Ink and gouache on paper,
19th–20th century
Gift of Dorothy Cogswell
Photograph Laura Shea
1973.10.A(c).PI

On the Road

This spring, Williams College graduate students in Professor Holly Edwards' course, *Seeing is (perhaps not) Believing*, will explore the diverse image-making traditions of the Islamic world through a special exhibition at the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA). Part of the Museum's *Teaching with Art* series, the installation highlights eight Persian paintings on loan from the MHCAM alongside objects from WCMA's permanent collection.

While many people believe that Islam forbids figural representation, *Teaching with Art: The Persian Image* demonstrates its extensive history of figuration and challenges students to consider how painting and photography emerged as disparate manifestations of a longstanding visual culture. Students will grapple with questions of medium, convention, and religious conviction, while analyzing a varied spectrum of image types and subject matters. MHCAM's *Battle Scene from the Shahnameh*, for example, testifies to the enduring ties between the art of painting and the rich literary traditions of Iran. Animated by the rhythmic patterning of blue, red, and gold pigments, the curvature of the sounding horns at right, and the raised arms of the charging warriors at center, the dynamic image is one of

many to illustrate the *Shahnameh*, or *Book of Kings*. This celebrated epic poem of the 10th century describes the mythical and early history of pre-Islamic Iran, and has been the impetus for some of the most brilliant paintings from this region.

Teaching with Art: The Persian Image is on view from 2 February–12 May in WCMA's McNicol Gallery, a space dedicated to exhibitions that support academic courses.



CALENDAR

Spring Exhibitions

Vedute di Roma · 22 January–26 May 2013

Kara Walker: Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated) · Extended through 26 May 2013

Albert Bierstadt and the Legacy of Concern: A Collection Spotlight · Ongoing

Encounters: Faces of the Ancient Americas · Ongoing

Hello Is Not a Question: An Andy Warhol Production · 22 January–21 April 2013

Spring Events

Thursday, 7 February 2013, 5:30 p.m.

Vedute di Roma Exhibition Opening and Lecture
"The most glorious place in the universal world: Rome in the Age of the Grand Tour"
John Pinto, Howard Crosby Butler Memorial Professor of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University
Made possible with the generous support of the Leon Levy Foundation
Gamble Auditorium
Reception to follow

Thursday, 21 February 2013, 6:00 p.m.

Artist's Talk
"Everything Else Has Failed! Don't You Think It's Time for Love? And Other Works: An Artist Talk By Sharon Hayes"
Sharon Hayes, Artist, and Assistant Professor, School of Art, Cooper Union
Gamble Auditorium
Reception to follow
(Co-sponsored by Film Studies Department)
Sponsored by Mount Holyoke College Film Studies with support from the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Art Studio Department, and Amherst College Film & Media Studies



Thursday, 4 April 2013, 4:30 p.m.

Lecture
"Aesthetic Disruption and Ontological Doubt in Kara Walker's *Harper's Pictorial of the Civil War (Annotated)*"
Lynn Pasquerella, President and Professor of Philosophy, Mount Holyoke College
Gamble Auditorium
Reception to follow



Art à la Carte Gallery Talk Series

Thursday, 21 February 2013, 12:20-12:50 p.m.

Gallery Talk
"Vedute di Roma"
Emily Wood, Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow and Curator of the exhibition



Thursday, 7 March 2013, 12:20-12:50 p.m.

Gallery Talk
"Albert Bierstadt and the Legacy of Concern"
Timothy Farnham, Director Miller-Worley Center for the Environment and John Stomberg, Florence Finch Abbott Director

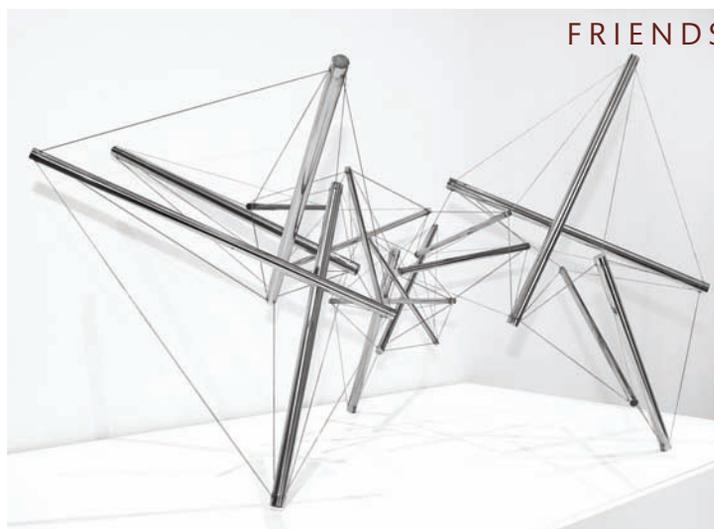
Thursday, 11 April 2013, 12:20-12:50 p.m.

Gallery Talk
"Hello Is Not a Question: An Andy Warhol Production"
Ken Eisenstein, Visiting Instructor in Film Studies and Natalie Kulikowski, Research Assistant

Thursday, 9 May 2013, 12:20-12:50 p.m.

Joseph Allen Skinner Museum Gallery Talk
"Whales and Sails: Maritime Treasures from the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum"
Aaron Miller, Assistant Curator, Skinner Museum

For more information, call 413.538.2245 or visit www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum



FRIENDS OF ART MEMBERSHIP

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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: Kenneth Snelson (American, b. 1927), *Wing I*; Stainless steel, 1992; Gift of the artist; Photograph Laura Shea

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.

Membership categories

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Director's Circle	\$1,000
Benefactor	\$2,500 and up

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I would like information on bequests, life insurance annuities, endowed funds, gifts of art, and other planned giving opportunities.

Please send form and check, payable to *MHCAM Friends of Art*, to Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Lower Lake Road, South Hadley, MA 01075-1499. Questions? Call 413-538-2245 or email artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu.