The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Global Perspectives

Exploring *The Art of Devotion*

9 February-30 May 2010

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum
Lower Lake Road
South Hadley, MA 01075

Global Perspectives: Exploring "The Art of Devotion," 9 February-30 May 2010

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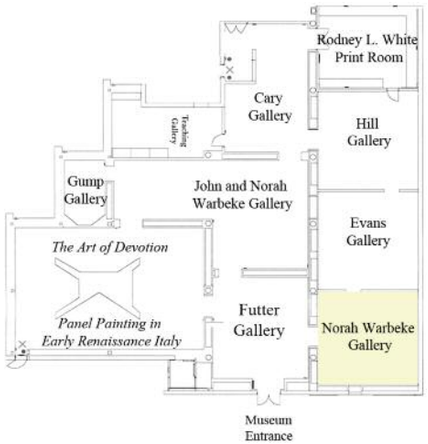
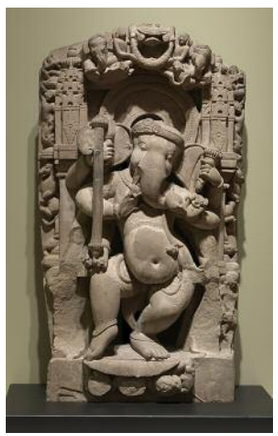
Exploring *The Art of Devotion*

The expressive power of visual art to articulate important religious values as well as complicated spiritual beliefs has been utilized by artists throughout the ages. From elaborate sculptures representing important deities, to paintings of sacred spaces, to small vessels that mediate contact between the earthly realm and the divine, devotional artwork has served an essential function for those pursuing spiritual understanding and enlightenment.

This companion exhibition to *The Art of Devotion: Panel Painting in Early Renaissance Italy* explores devotional traditions manifest in visual art from a diverse array of cultures and time periods. Reflecting both the thoughtful interpretations and scholarly expertise of contributing faculty, students, staff, and other friends of the Museum, the texts included in this brochure seek to provide insight into why these objects have inspired humans of every tradition, enhancing their faith and connecting them to a higher purpose.

—Rachel G. Beaupré and Ellen Alvord
Project Coordinators





1. Indian, *Dancing Ganesha*

1. Indian, from Madhya Pradesh
   Dancing Ganesha
   Sandstone, 800-900 CE
   Purchase with the Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, 1996.3

2. Chinese
   Guanyin (Avalokiteswara)
   Wood, gesso, paint, and gilding
   On loan from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, 2004.L1.2

Norah M. Warbeke Gallery

1. Indian, from Madhya Pradesh, *Dancing Ganesha*

He has the face of an elephant; he holds an axe, a lotus, and other objects in his many arms; he has a potbelly and the legs of a child. At first glance, an odd conglomeration of features. Yet the figure of this dancing Ganesha exudes sensuous grace and dignity. The sculptor who fashioned this image, the patron who commissioned it, and the worshippers who viewed it in its temple niche were united by the Hindu culture of devotion (*bhakti*), expressed in the ritual worship (*puja*) of images of gods and goddesses. *Darshana*, viewing the god's image, is itself an act of devotion, a connection that elicits the deity's beneficence and grace.

Every feature of the Ganesha icon tells a story about his nature, powers, and deeds. The goddess Parvati created Ganesha to be her guardian. When Ganesha barred the way of Parvati's husband, Shiva, the god beheaded him. Relenting, Shiva then replaced Ganesha's original head with that of an elephant and made Ganesha the leader of his dancing hosts (*gana*). The comic and the sublime meet in Ganesha's form. The potbelly signals his love of sweets, and he rides on a mouse (shown at the bottom of this stela). Yet he is the god of wisdom, and his curved trunk embodies "Aum," the sound-symbol of the cosmos. Ganesha is the "God of Beginnings" and "Remover of Obstacles." His blessing of success must be sought before any new undertaking—a journey, the first day of school, a concert. Not surprisingly, he is the most popular of Hindu gods.

This richly ornamented image, set in a shrine replete with figures of celestials and devotees, is meant for priestly worship. But devotees worship simpler Ganesha images at home shrines, making food and other offerings, accompanied by the Sanskrit chant: "I bow to the lotus feet of the elephant-faced god! O god with the curved trunk, radiant as a million suns, destroy every hindrance in my path, grant me success in my endeavors!" And every autumn, at the end of the festival of Ganesh Chaturthi, clay images of Ganesha are taken in procession to bodies of water, where they are immersed. Sad to see their beloved god depart, the devotees cry, "Lord Ganesha, please come back soon, come again next year!"

Indira Viswanathan Peterson
David B. Truman Professor of Asian Studies
Mount Holyoke College

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2. Chinese, *Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara)*

The devotees who bowed before this image of Guanyin worshipped one of the most beloved Buddhist deities of their day . . . and ours. Still found frequently in East and Southeast Asian Mahāyāna Buddhist temples, such images stand on altars—either alone or in the company of other deities—with offerings of incense, lights, flowers, and fruit placed before them.

Guanyin's name means "perceiver of [the world's] sounds." It is a Chinese translation of the deity's original Indian Sanskrit name, Avalokiteśvara, which means "the lord who looks down [on the world]." According to the Buddhist scripture, the Lotus Sūtra, Guanyin helps anyone who calls upon this deity for aid. Like most Bodhisattvas, Guanyin's compassionate engagement in the world is symbolized by the deity's sumptuous clothing, jewelry, and crown. Guanyin is also associated with Amitābha Buddha, who sits in the deity's crown. Many Buddhists pray that Guanyin will escort them to Amitābha's paradise after death.

Guanyin assumes different forms—from fantastic figures with eleven heads and six arms, to this gentle, human-like figure. Beginning in 10th-century China, the originally male

3. Thai
   Standing Buddha
   Cast bronze, gold, shell, and resin
   On loan from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, 2004.L1.1

4. Tibetan
   Prayer Wheel
   Silver, 18th-19th century
   Gift of Marcus Carleton, in memory of his mother, Celestia Carleton (Class of 1854), 1903.3.J.M

5. Peruvian, Moche
   Figural Vessel
   Terracotta, 200-500 CE
   Gift of Dr. Elizabeth Rosner Richman and Hershel Richman, 1996.9.4

6. German
   Saint Barbara
   Woodcut, ca. 1460-67
   Purchase with the Susan and Bernard Schilling Fund (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932), 2009.17

7. American Indian, Hopi
   Kachina Doll
   Wood and feathers, 19th century
   On loan from the Charles and Blanche Derby Collection

8. African, Ivory Coast, Baule
   Spirit of Nature Statue
   Wood, 19th century
   On loan from the Charles and Blanche Derby Collection

9. African, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kongo
   Nkisi Statue
   Wood and glass, 19th century
   On loan from the Charles and Blanche Derby Collection

2. Chinese, *Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara)*

Guanyin increasingly took on feminine features, as is perhaps the case here. Known today as "the goddess of mercy," the female Guanyin appeals especially to women, who pray to her for children and the happiness of their families.

Susanne Mrozik
Associate Professor of Religion
Mount Holyoke College

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3. Thai, *Standing Buddha*

3. Thai, *Standing Buddha*

Standing before this Thai Buddha, you might perform a *buddha puja*, a ritual of honoring the Buddha through offerings like flowers. In so doing, you would notice his compassionate downward gaze, instilling serenity, and his reassuring raised left hand. With this simple gesture, he rids your fear of suffering, but reminds you that only through faithful prayer and devotion will you be able to achieve enlightenment or *nirvana*.

Images of the Buddha are believed to be endowed with supernatural powers. Particularly in Northern Thailand, it is thought that a properly crafted Buddha image is one that makes the ritual participant truly experience the presence of Buddha himself, providing an opportunity for reflection and meditation. Thus, it is important for all images of Buddha to have representative traits of the thirty-two marks of a *mahapurusha*, a great man, including the long and slender fingers, flat feet, and elongated ear lobes seen in this sculpture. This Ayutthaya period Buddha also depicts the gilded bump on his head, the *ushnisha*, symbolizing his wisdom, as well as his diaphanous royal attire.

In Buddhism, there is an emphasis on the *paramita* or the spiritual perfection accomplished by an enlightened being. Some of the perfections include *sila* (ethical behaviour), *virya* (endeavor or effort) and *prajna* (wisdom). For the student pursuing knowledge and endeavoring great life achievements, the Buddha offers a fitting model.

Miki Yoshida
Class of 2011
Mount Holyoke College

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4. Tibetan, *Prayer Wheel*

4. Tibetan, *Prayer Wheel*

Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum. This simple, rhythmic mantra, difficult to translate but believed to contain the essence of all of the Buddha's teachings, is the basis for a devotional practice held sacred by Tibetan Buddhists. One of the many ways to intensify the effect of this or similar mantras is to incorporate it into a *mani* or prayer wheel, which can take many forms: tabletop wheels, handheld wheels such as this one, and larger prayer wheels powered by wind or water that are often found in sacred sites.

Through the sound of the devotee's voice reciting the mantra, the simultaneous spinning of the mantra's script decorating the silver wheel, and the repetition of syllables written on slips of paper wrapped around the inner axle of the prayer wheel, the worshipper is able to draw upon the larger force of these interlocking circles to invoke a more pure and enlightened state of being. The intention is to emulate Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, who is cherished in myriad incarnations throughout Buddhist cultures.

This prayer wheel was given to the Museum by the son of Celestia Bradford Carleton, who became a missionary in Northern India after graduating from Mount Holyoke College in 1854. While the specific details of this prayer wheel's history remain uncertain, an object such as this still provides the viewer with a direct connection to a spiritual tradition of enduring power.

Ellen Alvord
Andrew W. Mellon Coordinator of Academic Affairs
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

5. Peruvian, Moche, *Figural Vessel*

6. German, *Saint Barbara*

5. Peruvian, Moche, *Figural Vessel*

Finely decorated ceramics of the prehispanic Moche culture of north coastal Peru (100-800 CE) are typically recovered in large caches from elaborate burial contexts. Moche art features both individual subjects—often in modeled forms such as this stirrup spout vessel—and elaborate scenes of processions, burial rites, and human sacrifice painted in fine-line designs. There is an intriguing cast of human and supernatural characters combined into "themes" or "narratives" that we rely upon to interpret religious beliefs from the unwritten past. This vessel represents a category of deity figures in Moche art that is not well understood. At first glance he appears to be a human wearing a headband, large earrings, and a decorated tunic. Upon further examination, attention is drawn to the figure's crossed fangs. Is he a human in costume? A divine ruler? A god? An ancestor? A character from Moche mythology related to the afterlife? The significance of this particular vessel remains ambiguous, but provides interesting interpretive possibilities as to the role of supernatural beings in burial rituals and religious practices for the Moche.

Elizabeth Klarich
Five College Assistant Professor of Anthropology

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6. German, *Saint Barbara*

An object of private devotion, this small, unassuming woodblock print is a precursor to the revolutionary technology of the printing press. Presenting an ideal medium for inexpensively produced religious imagery, woodblocks enabled a wide range of people to own cheaply produced religious iconography for private worship within the home.

Here, Saint Barbara is depicted holding her two attributes which have been conflated into a single object: the tower in which she was imprisoned and the chalice surmounted by a sacramental wafer to symbolize her faith. Often the patron saint of those who work with explosives, she protects against fire and lightning.

Few details are known about the maker, owner, or even place of origin for this print. The holes in the corners show evidence of being tacked up for contemplation, although pasting prints within books was also common. One owner wrote the saint's name in pen above the image in a delicate script. The same hand doodled in the margins and began to make an arching pattern over the haloed head of Saint Barbara, indicating that this piece of paper was used for personal, perhaps intimate, devotion rather than perceived as a work designed for display in a museum.

Sadie Shillieto
Art Advisory Board Fellow (and Class of 2009)
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

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7. American Indian, Hopi, *Kachina Doll*

Hopi Indians of the American Southwest use the term *kachina* in relation to three different aspects of their belief system. The term can refer to: a large group of supernatural spirits that are manifestations of the organic and inorganic worlds; the masked male dancers who impersonate these spirits in celebrations throughout the year; and the carved dolls that represent the likeness of these dancers.

This kachina doll is a classic example of an early carving. It was once covered with an undercoat of white clay, since flaked off through handling, making an older doll like this one look shabby. On its face are two symbols that represent clouds and rain. Probably this doll represents *Talavai*, the early morning kachina.

The word "doll" implies a plaything, but kachina dolls, representing kachina spirits, are unique artifacts given primarily to Hopi girls and women as part of their

7. American Indian, Hopi, *Kachina Doll*

religious education. The dolls are placed on the walls or rafters of their homes, constantly in view, so that girls can become familiar and form an alliance with the different kachina spirits. Often these dolls are associated with fertility.

Kachina dolls aren't idols; they serve to teach the beliefs and practices of the Hopi universe, and provide a daily reminder that the kachina spirits are always nearby, watching over their human companions.

Blanche Cybele Derby
Private Collector and Freelance Writer

8. African, Ivory Coast, Baule, *Spirit of Nature Statue*

8. African, Ivory Coast, Baule, *Spirit of Nature Statue*

The Baule people of Africa's west coast believe that spirits of nature, or genies called *asie usu*, live in the forest. These hideous creatures are uncontrollable and are always the cause of misfortunes. They so hate isolation and desire the company of people that they will sometimes possess a human form. When this occurs, the distraught person contacts a diviner who advises the design of a special statue representing the genie. On this particular statue, the markings on the shoulders and neck are textured scarifications that are a form of body ornament. The figure's face exudes serenity. When the spirit sees how beautiful, symmetrical, and harmonious the carving is, it decides to reside there and leaves the person alone. Were the carving unattractive, the unhappy spirit would continue to wreak havoc.

With a place to stay, the spirit becomes a companion to its owner, protecting him from supernatural forces. The figure is often depicted in a sitting position, a sign that the genie inside has a place to rest. The effigy is given the same name as the spirit so that it feels at home and is shown consideration by its owner through gifts and sacrifices on special days reserved for that purpose. By carving these statues, the Baule have found a way to control their environment, tame crazed beings, and deal with hostile forces of darkness.

Blanche Cybele Derby
Private Collector and Freelance Writer

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9. African, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kongo, *Nkisi Statue*

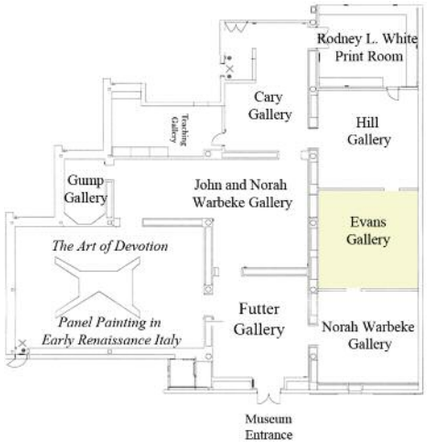
The Kongo people believed that misfortune and disease were caused by disgruntled ancestors, witches, or spirits. To deal with these beings, the *Nganga* (medicine man) used horns, bundles, jugs, and wooden figures to hold healing medicines. At one time, this *Nkisi* figure may have held such medicinal paraphernalia.

Once a Nkisi was sanctified, it acquired a soul fully capable of answering its owner's needs. One can understand how a person could believe in the spiritual power of this carving by looking into its reflecting mirror eyes. This Nkisi also has symbolic iconography on its body indicating a shamanic purpose, including a series of crosses that represent the crossroads, a location important to the healing process. The intersection of the two roads is the point of contact between this world and the land of the dead, and the person in need of help sat by an actual crossroads where the Nganga performed his ritual.

The Kongolese used a hunting dog that did not bark; it wore a gong so its owner could keep track of him. The statue, a similar silent hunter of mischievous spirits, sits atop such a dog—a symbolic indication of its ability to flush out evil. Through this imagery and the intense ceremonial use of the Nkisi, both the Nganga and his patient were reassured that their ritual was successful.

Blanche Cybele Derby
Private Collector and Freelance Writer

9. African, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kongo, *Nkisi Statue*



10. Egyptian, *Stela fragment of Amenhotep I*

10. Egyptian
Stela fragment of Amenhotep I
Limestone with traces of polychrome, New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty (1293-1185 BCE)
Purchase with the Art Acquisition Fund
1910.7.A.G

11. Egyptian
Block statue of the scribe Amunwahsu
Limestone and plaster, New Kingdom, Late 18th-early 19th Dynasty (1386 1278 BCE)
Gift of Mrs. Trent McMath, 1956.36.A.G

Evans Gallery

10. Egyptian, *Stela fragment of Amenhotep I*

What would you do if you had a boundary dispute with a neighbor or suspected an acquaintance of stealing from you? If you lived in ancient Egypt, you might turn to the gods or to certain deified, long-dead rulers for practical assistance with your legal affairs.

For several centuries after his reign in the 16th century BCE, King Amenhotep I, shown here, was worshipped by craftsmen at Thebes, who saw him as their patron and protector. Those hoping for his favor could arrange for a stela to be set up for him at a chapel where they would offer food or recite prayers. The king's mother, Queen Ahmose-Nefertari, was similarly revered and often depicted with him. Each also had devotional statues dedicated to them.

The deified Amenhotep participated in the justice system when priests paraded his statue, enclosed in a portable shrine, at festivals. The procession would stop so supplicants could ask the statue questions requiring a "yes" or "no" answer. An appropriate nod from the image shouldered by the priests could assign blame or innocence.

The scene on this reconstructed stela, of which fragments are found both here and in Italy, once also likely included a text naming the pious individual who dedicated it.

Diana Wolfe Larkin
Visiting Associate Professor of Art History
Mount Holyoke College

11. Egyptian, *Block statue of the scribe Amunwahsu*

I am trustworthy, free of wrongdoing, established, one who does not associate with wrongdoers.

Amunwahsu, a scribe from Egypt's New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1070 BCE), appeals to passers-by to recite the sustenance script encasing his statue. The offering text assures divine reward to whoever recites it. Ancient Egyptians believed that each person possessed a complex soul that survived the body's death but needed all the provisions of life on earth, protection woven by spells, and a physical representation to survive in the underworld. With approval from the Pharaoh, private individuals of status commissioned block statues like this one to reside in temples, signifying their continued participation in sacred rites and ensuring a channel for nourishment after death.

Reflecting ancient Egyptians' concern with eternity, this sculpture not only provides for the immortality of the individual it represents, but also in its very solidity and substantiality, establishes its own enduring presence. By preserving a historical record of ancient Egyptian culture for subsequent civilizations, Amunwahsu truly fulfills his role as a scribe.

Victoria Schmidt-Scheuber
Class of 2012
Mount Holyoke College

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12. Roman, *Fragment of a wall with a shrine in a landscape*

Like a fleeting impression from a boat on a sunlit day, this image provides a glimpse of human forms moving around a shrine shaded by trees on a rocky isle. In the distance, similar sites fade into the horizon. Through the bright façade with its emphatic openings and the animated gestures of the visitors, the wall painter has suggested the ongoing peace and ritual celebration of the *numen*, or spirit of the place.

11. Egyptian, *Block statue of the scribe Amunwahsu*

12. Roman, from Pompei
Fragment of a wall with a shrine in a landscape
Fresco painting, 1st-2nd century CE
Gift of Caroline R. Hill, 1958.4.C.PI

13. Roman
Faustina the Elder
Marble, second half of 2nd century CE
Purchase with the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, Teri J. Edelstein Art Acquisition Fund, Marian Hayes (Class of 1925) Art Purchase Fund, Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, Warbeke Art Museum Fund, 1997.15

14. Roman, Hadrianic Period
Isis
Hollow-cast bronze, 2nd century CE
Purchase with the Nancy Everett Dwight Fund and the Society of Psi-Omega Fund in honor of Mary Gilmore Williams (Class of 1885)
1965.10.C.G

12. Roman, *Fragment of a wall with a shrine in a landscape*

The tranquil site, peripheral to political centers, expresses a nostalgic attachment to the early Italian nature sanctuaries that were increasingly threatened by a new wave of building in the early empire. As the poet Propertius put it, "the shrines lie neglected in deserted groves: piety is vanquished and all men worship gold." The Mount Holyoke landscape is one of many painted on domestic walls that reaffirm the tradition and power of ancient religious customs and offer the viewer a moment in and out of time.

Bettina Bergmann
Helene Phillips Herzig '49 Professor of Art
Mount Holyoke College

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13. Roman, *Faustina the Elder*

Today, we might call our fashion icons divine, but in 100 CE, Rome's most famous and emulated woman really was a goddess. When Empress Faustina the Elder died in the year 140 CE at the age of 40, she was deified by her husband, Antoninus Pius, in commemoration of her exemplary life and officially became Diva Faustina.

The Goddess Faustina promoted cultivation of the qualities representing the ideal Roman woman: elegance, respect for tradition, and skill in maintaining marital concord. Her image was mass produced and integrated into the daily lives of Roman citizens through coinage and public and domestic statuary.

13. Roman, *Faustina the Elder*

Serving as an object of personal domestic devotions and as a visual reference for fashionable Roman women, Faustina the Elder is most easily identified by the distinctive hairstyle seen here. The complicated, precise, and elegantly arranged waves piled into a crown on the top of her head suggest the aid of hairpieces and the assistance of servants for those who would imitate her. Women who admired Diva Faustina's stately beauty likely also practiced personal domestic devotions to her, as evidenced by a three-inch high chalcedony bust now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Faustina also oversaw the ritual toilette of women in Sagalassos, Turkey, where a bust similar to the Mount Holyoke example was uncovered on the grounds of an ancient bathhouse. In a culture in which beauty and divinity were linked, Faustina's eternal image offered a ready guide.

Maureen McVeigh
Class of 2010
Mount Holyoke College

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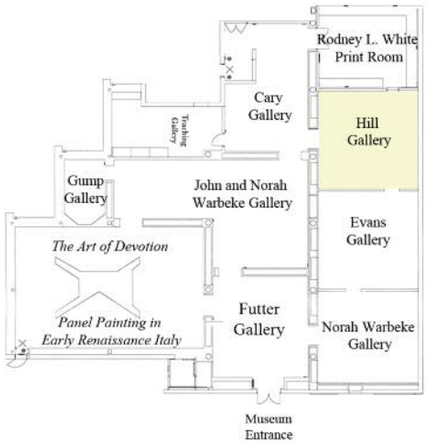
14. Roman, *Isis*

The cult of Isis spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean basin during the Roman period initially among non-Romans, slaves, and women—those on the margins of society—as an alternative to the more staid Roman state religion, from which these groups were largely excluded. The appeal of the cult of Isis, as well as other such mystery religions, was direct communion with the deity, colorful and lively rituals, the possibility of redemption, and the promise of personal immortality. This bronze bust of the Egyptian goddess Isis dates to the high Roman empire (ca. second century CE) when the popularity of her cult was at its zenith. Here she wears a headdress featuring a serpent (*uraeus*), a traditional symbol of Egyptian royal power, and two ears of corn, symbols of fertility and abundance.

An important cult ritual in the Roman period involved the launching of a ship bearing her image in early spring in order to ensure a safe and prosperous navigation season. Initially outlawed in the early empire, the worship of Isis eventually became more accepted—there was a temple of Isis in Rome itself—partly because it included prayers for the well being of the emperor and the senate and therefore (unlike Christianity) was not a threat to the political power structure of Rome.

Geoffrey S. Sumi
Associate Professor of Classics and Italian
Mount Holyoke College

14. Roman, *Isis*



15. German, Rhenish, *Pyx*

The Caroline R. Hill Gallery

15. German, Rhenish, *Pyx*

Eucharistic vessels such as this one, crafted in Cologne around 1400, point us toward a fascinating history of elaborate sacred vessels commissioned for the Catholic Church and the chapels of its wealthy patrons. The term *pyx*, from the Greek pyxis, meaning "boxwood vessel," denoted any receptacle designed to contain the consecrated host or one that had been reserved in a chapel.

After the Fourth Lateran Council's (1215) use of the term *transubstantiation* to explain the mysterious effect of the priest's words at the consecration of the mass, when the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ, a number of reformers challenged the use of this innovative word and the mechanistic conception behind it. In response, many Catholic clergy began to embellish the Eucharist, setting it off in ornate displays, honoring it with processions, and revering it with new devotions. Eucharistic vessels were fashioned in the most ornate manner: pyxes, chalices, ciboria, monstrances, tabernacles, and Eucharistic doves. In their beauty, vessels such as this lovely gilt silver pyx called attention to the real presence of the divine Christ hidden beneath the visible appearances of the earthly bread.

Frederick J. McGinness
Professor of History
Mount Holyoke College

16. Hendrick Andriessen, *Vanitas still life*

Following the public beheading of King Charles I of England in 1649, his devoted followers sought paintings, prints, medals, and coins that depicted the portrait of the fallen monarch. Andriessen's still life evokes the king's untimely death through the portrayal of inanimate objects rather than a physiognomic likeness. These objects not only describe this historical narrative, but also constitute the elements of a *vanitas* still life, cautioning the viewer to be careful about placing too much importance in the wealth and pleasures of this world, and reminding one of life's brevity, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death.

On the one hand, the rendering of the King's accoutrements alongside the frontal skull provide a poignant reminder of the man who was mourned by many Stuart loyalists as a martyr. On the other hand, the ephemeral bubbles, candle, and flowers allude to the life's transience and the vanity of earthly possessions and power. Andriessen's painted memorial is as moving as it is unsettling, allowing faithful devotees to interpret it as a powerful tribute while alternatively providing a ruthless critique of the King's demise.

Nadia Baadj
Ph.D. candidate, History of Art
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

16. Hendrick Andriessen, *Vanitas still life*

15. German, Rhenish
Pyx
Silver with partial gilding, ca. 1400
Purchase with the Art Advisory Board Fund, Marian Hayes Fund, and Jepson Fund of the Department of Art in honor of Susan Eisenhart Schilling (Class of 1932), 1985.11

16. Hendrick Andriessen (Flemish, before 1607-1655)
Vanitas still life
Oil on canvas, ca. 1650
Purchase with the Warbeke Art Museum Fund, 1993.14

17. Hendrick van Streek (Dutch, 1659-after 1719)
Interior of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam
Oil on canvas, ca. 1690-1700
Purchase with the Warbeke Art Museum Fund, 2009.2.1

17. Hendrick van Streek, *Interior of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam*

17. Hendrick van Streek, *Interior of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam*

After the Netherlands separated from Spain in 1581, the Oude Kerk, the oldest church in Amsterdam, was cleansed of its Catholic past. This painting, therefore, reflecting the prevailing Calvinist ethos, contains no images of saints, altars, madonnas, or crucifixes.

The focus of the standing burgher in the blue coat and of his page directs the viewer's eyes to the preacher delivering his sermon at the far side of the nave—the ostensible spiritual heart of the painting. The small scale of these figures in comparison to the immensity of the structure and the ingenious play of light on the walls, pillars, and floor, however, create an atmosphere of space and air, transcendent in its vastness and simplicity.

Nonetheless, Van Streek's painting is not solely about the unadorned majesty of the Oude Kerk; it is also about the importance of human affairs in defining the spiritual character of this house of worship. In addition to the parishioners who sit or stand listening intently to the word of the preacher in the pulpit, two children play in the left foreground, and a woman seated at the right, studies her prayer book. Young and old, standing and sitting, together they all represent the civic community that flowered during the Dutch Golden Age, which has come together for worship.

Jane Gronau
Education and Public Relations Coordinator
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Rodney L. White Print Room

18. Flemish, *Book of Hours*

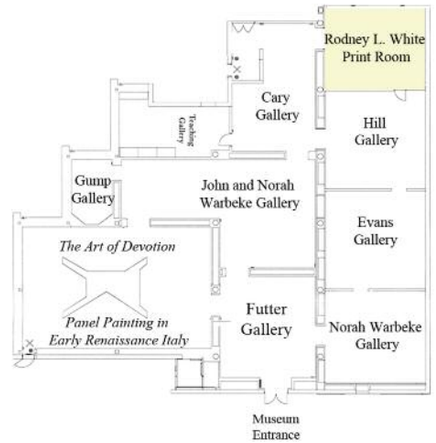
This page opening is from a Book of Hours, the essential accoutrement for private devotion in the late Middle Ages. The miniature of King David precedes the Seven Penitential Psalms, recited for the atonement of one's sins and the sins of the deceased, in order to save the soul from damnation and to reduce time spent in purgatory. The representation of King David serves as both author portrait and as a model for the book owner's devotional practice.

David, guilty of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, looks to the heavens for God's forgiveness. Instead, he is confronted by a golden archangel brandishing a sword, evoking the words of the facing Psalm:

> *Oh Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak...Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul.* (Psalm 6)

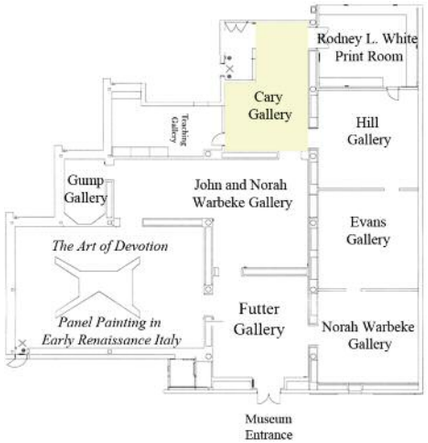
Although penance is the subject of the illumination, its appearance revels in worldly power and beauty, evident in David's rich garments, his grand castle set within a bucolic and finely detailed landscape, and lush, colorful borders of berries, flowers, and leaves. As in contemporary scenes of David spying on the nude Bathsheba, atonement and pleasure coexist.

Christine Geisler Andrews
Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History
Mount Holyoke College



18. Flemish
Book of Hours
Opaque watercolor on vellum with leather binding, 15th century
Gift of Mrs. John Martyn Warbeke
1964.7.L.PI

18. Flemish, *Book of Hours* (detail) *King David*



19. Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, (French, 1750-1819)
Classical Greek Landscape with Girls Sacrificing their Hair to Diana on the Bank of a River
Oil on canvas, 1790
Purchase with the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, Jean C. Harris Fund, Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, and the Warbeke Art Museum Fund, 2000.1

19. Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, *Classical Greek Landscape*

Renee Cary Gallery

19. Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, *Classical Greek Landscape with Girls Sacrificing their Hair to Diana on the Bank of a River*

In this magnificent painting, a group of young girls cut their hair in devotion to the goddess Diana. However, the viewer's eyes quickly pass over the small figures depicted in the foreground and are lifted to the expansive and idyllic natural space that stretches beyond. Even the statue of the goddess directs her attention to the landscape. Thus, it seems the artist did not intend to simply illustrate a mythological scene of maidenly devotion, but rather to portray his own reverence for natural landscapes.

Often hailed the father of *paysage historique* (landscape with historical subject matter), Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819) was especially dedicated to the study and celebration of nature, believing it essential to art. His works are characterized by immaculate and disciplined grand landscapes, harmoniously coupled with classical architecture and figures.

Through the incorporation of mythology and Greek antiquity with historical landscapes, Valenciennes not only expressed his artistic principles, but advanced a larger transition. His style reflects the evolution of late eighteenth-century French aesthetics, from the flamboyant Rococo style to cleaner, neoclassical scenes, inspired by Enlightenment thought. Through his carefully composed canvas, Valenciennes invites the viewer's eyes to roam the entire landscape and consider the wonderful harmony of the idealized scene.

Katherine Block
Class of 2010
Mount Holyoke College

John and Norah Warbeke Gallery

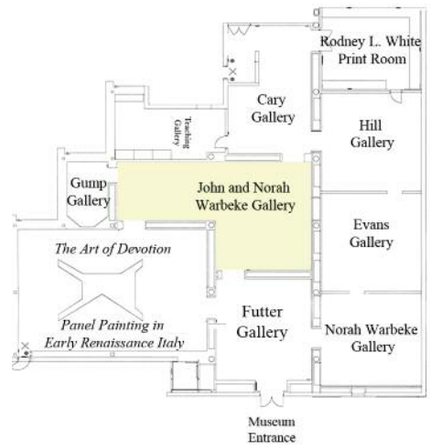
20. Albert Bierstadt, *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*

It seems no accident that Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), who matured during the time of the Transcendentalist movement in the United States, should have painted the majestic landscape of Hetch Hetchy Canyon in Yosemite National Park.

Bierstadt is credited as the first painter to truly capture the vastness and the magnificence of the untainted American wilderness at a moment in our national past when that wilderness symbolized certain values and beliefs about nature. Endowing his image with the romantic and the sublime, Bierstadt presents the natural environment as a source for divine expression.

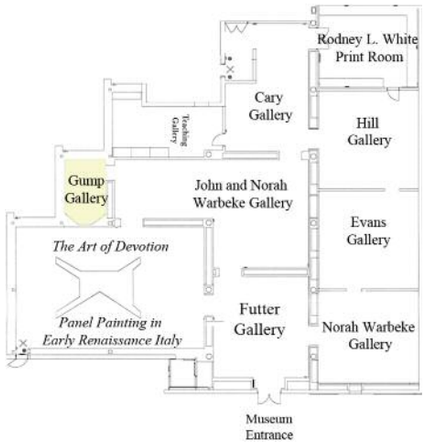
Here Bierstadt depicts the American wilderness as a wondrous Eden, perhaps at the Dawn of Creation, with burbling waterfall and idyllic deer enfolded by rising mountains and trees thrusting upwards to form a vast natural cathedral with high ascending walls, and a clerestory sky. Manifest in the dramatic golden light central to the image, the Divine Presence was no less in attendance for contemporaries than in the luminous gold of early Italian Renaissance paintings in the exhibition, *The Art of Devotion*.

Jane Gronau
Education and Public Relations Coordinator
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum



20. 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, 1876.2.1(b).PI

20. Albert Bierstadt, *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*



21. Joseph Goodhue Chandler
(American, 1813-1884)
Mary Lyon
Oil on canvas
Source and method of acquisition
unknown, 1885.22.I(b).PI

21. Joseph Goodhue Chandler
Mary Lyon

Gump Family Gallery

21. Joseph Goodhue Chandler, *Mary Lyon*

In May of 1834, Mount Holyoke College's founder, Mary Lyon, wrote her mother in frustration: "Sometimes my heart has burned within me; and again I have bid it be quiet.... I have thought that there might be a plan devised by which something could be done.... The future I leave with Him who doeth all things well." Lyon's quest for purposeful direction found resolution in her campaign for a quality women's seminary. Three years later, she opened the doors to one of the country's preeminent women's colleges.

Mary Lyon's efforts were powered by her passion to serve her Lord and promote women in their pursuit of meaningful life work. Her admirable devotion to this cause positioned her as a model of perseverance and piety, and over a dozen glorifying monographs emerged following her death. The very image of Mary Lyon has since become elevated to near icon status—her face immortalized on a Great American Series postal stamp and her figure venerated as the personification of Truth at a chapel in Pittsburgh. Such humble depictions as this portrait by Joseph Chandler capture the school mistress on a dark background, alone save for the text in her hands. Whether holding a literary tome or the Bible that guided her work, Mary Lyon symbolizes the power of a dedicated vision.

Rachel G. Beaupré
Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Assistant
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

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Photography by Petegorsky and Gipe; Laura Weston
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www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum