A SPRING AWAKENING

This spring, more than most, we are all feeling a sense of excitement and hopefulness. With the vaccine roll out and favorable weather returning, life is beginning to look a little more “normal.” Many of us are starting to gather with family and friends and to visit public places.

For the remainder of 2021, all the DIA’s seminars and events, including VCESDA’s, will remain virtual. We are thrilled with our upcoming programming, so please make sure to read about it in our calendar of events.

The museum will continue to be open five days a week—reservations required. In February, the museum released a visitor satisfaction survey where it received a 91% overall visitor satisfaction score; 90% said they went to the museum as an escape and to relax. The DIA remains one of the safest and most enriching places to visit during the pandemic.

We appreciate your continued dedication and generosity to VCESDA and the museum during this unusual time. We wish you and your families a wonderful spring season, and we hope to see you in person soon.

Alan P. Darr

Charles L. Dunlap
Megan Reddicks Pignataro is thrilled to be back working with new and familiar colleagues in the European Art department as well as the DIA’s incredible collection. Many long-time VCESDA members may remember Megan from her time as the Curatorial Assistant for the department from 2012-2016 where she worked on exhibitions like *Make a Joyful Noise: Art and Music from Renaissance Florence* and publications on the DIA’s Italian maiolica collection and recent acquisitions.

During the intervening years, Megan returned to academia to pursue her doctorate at Temple University in Philadelphia. Her dissertation focuses on issues of optics and the artistic techniques used to create illusionistic space in Florentine relief sculpture and painting in the fifteenth century. Megan taught a variety of courses at universities in the greater Philadelphia area ranging from surveys of global art history, sacred art and spaces in the Roman Empire, portraiture in early modern Europe, and global Baroque art.

In her new role at the DIA, Megan serves as a Research Assistant in the Collections Management department working on renovations to European sculpture and decorative arts storage. This 3-year project is sponsored by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities; it provides the department opportunity to study over 800 ESDA objects, update new research discoveries and photography into the database and online, and plan for improved storage housing for the collection.

**WHAT MEGAN IS WATCHING**

**The Dig**
Carey Mulligan and Ralph Fiennes star in this film about the discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship burial

**A Little Chaos**
Kate Winslet, Alan Rickman, Matthias Schoenaerts, and Stanley Tucci, star in this film about the building of the *Salle de Bal in the gardens of Versailles.*
The Crucifixion, about 1440-80
Nottingham, England,
Alabaster with original polychromy and gilding
21 × 10 × 2 inches
Gift of Richard A. and Joanne Brodie
in honor of Alan P. Darr
English alabaster reliefs constitute a large part of the surviving heritage of late medieval English art and are among the most distinctive artistic products of the Middle Ages in Europe. Created over an extended period between the 14th and 16th centuries, they are called Nottingham alabasters as they originated in this English city.

The DIA is delighted that Joanne and Richard Brodie generously donated their impressive Nottingham alabaster relief of The Crucifixion to the DIA. Unlike many other Nottingham alabasters, which are fragmentary and/or have often lost their color and gilding, this relief survives in an exceptionally rare state of preservation, retaining nearly all its original painting and gilding. The Brodies’ DIA donation is among the finest and best preserved of Nottingham alabasters. This relief depicts the scene of the Crucifixion with Christ flanked by two angels holding chalices to receive the blood from his wounds, referring to the Christian ritual of communion. To the left are the blind Longinus with his lance and St. John the Evangelist. Below them, are Mary Magdalene, Mary Cleophas, and the Virgin Mary who kneels in prayer and mourning. On the right, stands the Centurion, wearing a high crowned hat and cloak, identifying him as the military leader overseeing Christ's Crucifixion. The Brodie alabaster likely dates from ca. 1440–1480, based on the specific forms of helmets the two soldiers wear on the right.

Nottingham alabasters were popular in the 1400s and early 1500s in England and for export to Europe, particularly France and Spain. Unfortunately, Henry VIII’s edict for the Dissolution of Monasteries in England from 1536 and his subsequent Reformation led to the total collapse of the industry, and the general destruction of religious art in England. Today, alabasters are among the most significant categories of English pre-Reformation art to have survived England's iconoclastic years.

Rectangular alabasters were often produced as a series of five panels to create an altarpiece. The Passion of Christ, which typically had a large Crucifixion as the central scene, was among the most common subjects. The large scale, rich materials, and elaborate composition of this alabaster indicate it was once the central image of such an altarpiece.

The Brodies’ generous gift of this well-preserved Nottingham alabaster is a significant addition to the DIA's medieval collection and will be prominently displayed in the Gothic Hall. With this transformative donation, the DIA will represent distinguished English Gothic sculpture alongside other important French, Flemish, German and Italian Gothic sculpture in our renowned Gothic Hall.
Put your DIA collection knowledge to the test with these challenging questions from Chassica Kirchhoff. Answers (and fun facts) are listed on the last page of this newsletter.

Some have compared the elegant figure in this commanding 1816 portrait to the fictional Mr. Darcy from Jane Austen’s beloved 1813 novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, but the likeness represents a fellow artist and good friend of this sculptor.

1. Who was the sculptor and who was his subject?

   ca. 1816, plaster,
   *Museum Purchase, Robert H. Tannahill Foundation Fund,*
   *DIA No. 2017.19*

This sumptuous and striking piece of geographically themed French furniture includes a glistening representation of “Atlas relieving Hercules of the weight of the World.”

2. What is the title of this work and who created it?

   ca. 1720, carcass of oak with veneer of tortoiseshell, tortoiseshell and brass marquetry, and gilt-bronze mounts
   *Founders Society Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Horace E. Dodge Memorial Fund, Josephine and Ernest Kanzler Fund and J. Lawrence Buell, Jr. Fund*
   *DIA No. 1984.87*

This terracotta sketch for a monumental chair was presented to the Pope for approval, prior to the execution of the design in cast bronze, alabaster and other materials.

3. Where was this ornate seat installed and (BONUS!) who was its sculptor?

   1658, Terracotta, *Founders Society Purchase, Ralph Harman Booth Bequest Fund*
   *DIA No. 52.220*
**Saturday, May 22, 2021**

**SPRING PROGRAM**

**Dr. Coleman Mopper Memorial Lecture**

Seminar: 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
(Zoom Virtual Event- instructions to follow)

“Paris in Amsterdam: French Luxury Decorative Arts in Holland, 1650-1900”

**Featuring Dr. Reinier Baarsen,**  
Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

From the middle of the 17th century until the end of the 19th, Paris was the undisputed leader of fashion and taste in Europe. This extraordinary phenomenon is all the more remarkable, as it was largely the result of an avowed, deliberate policy – normally, attempts to direct the arts for state purposes are doomed to fail. No country could escape the hegemony of Paris – not even the Dutch Republic, whose ruler, Prince William III of Orange, was the archenemy of King Louis XIV of France. Parisian decorative arts form a central part of the collections at the Rijksmuseum, and in 2013, upon the re-opening of the main museum building after a great rebuilding campaign, a major catalogue was published: *Paris 1650–1900: Decorative Arts at the Rijksmuseum*. Reinier Baarsen, who wrote the catalogue, will show highlights from the wonderful collections at the museum, ranging from richly mounted furniture, splendid gold boxes, Sèvres porcelain, and treasures of silver and gold. He will discuss the history of the collection and explain how this has determined its character. Although some pieces come from the collections of the Dutch stadholders and kings, the principal part was assembled by Fritz Mannheimer, a German banker who lived in Amsterdam between World Wars I and II. His collecting activities can be compared to those of the greatest American collectors at the time, and there are many parallels with collections in American museums – not least in Detroit.
Wednesday, September 22, 2021
(Please note- this date is tentative; stay tuned for updates)

33rd ANNUAL MEETING &
PRIVATE TOUR OF THE FRICK COLLECTION

5:00-6:00 p.m.: Annual Meeting
(Microsoft Teams Virtual Event - instructions to follow)

6:00-7:00 p.m.: Online Private Tour of The Frick Collection and the New Frick Madison

Travel virtually to New York for an interactive online tour exploring the history of the Frick’s premier collection of Old Master paintings and European sculpture and decorative arts and the mansion at 1 East 70th Street, which it has inhabited since 1919. The tour will also share details of the collection’s unprecedented and creative temporary reinstallation in the modern Breuer building on Madison Ave while the historic mansion undergoes renovation through 2022.

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

FALL PROGRAM

“Highlights from Hillwood: Marjorie Merriweather Post’s Taste for 18th-Century European Furniture"

6:00 p.m.
(Zoom Virtual Event- instructions to follow)

Featuring: Dr. Rebecca Tilles, Associate Curator of 18th Century French & Western European Fine and Decorative Arts, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973) was one of the most influential collectors, philanthropists, and businesswomen of the twentieth century. Born in Springfield, Illinois to a middle-class family, she inherited the helm of the Postum Cereal Company, eventually inheriting the directorship of General Foods, from her father at the age of 27, making her one of the wealthiest women in America. She designed and decorated a multitude of impressive residences, notably a sprawling 54-room triplex apartment on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan (1925), the Mar-A-Lago estate in Palm Beach (1927), Adirondack Great Camp Topridge, New York (1923), and finally Hillwood, Washington, DC (1955). This lecture will explore Post’s interest in collecting 18th-century European furniture, highlights from Hillwood’s collection (as well as a few that got away) and the dealers she bought from, spanning from the mid-1920s until the late 1960s, during which time Post acquired, renovated, and furnished Hillwood estate with the intention of bequeathing the house and collection to the public following her death. The lecture will also feature future research projects, new acquisitions, and upcoming exhibitions.
For a range of virtual content, Alan Darr recommends visiting the French Porcelain Society, here: https://www.thefrenchporcelainociety.com/  In addition to producing publicly available lectures from luminaries in the field of porcelain and ceramics history, the society also offers links to tours of collections and historic homes and videos focused on other facets of European decorative arts.

VCESDA members have been invited to the very popular EPC book club September book discussion. Led by VCESDA and EPC Board Member Mark Haimann, the next selection will be of interest to all members of these groups: Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man and his Times by William Wallace. This lauded biography is available in many formats. The Zoom event will be September 18th at 10:30 am, so mark your calendars for what is certain to be a riveting conversation.

1. Antonio Canova’s Bust of Giuseppe Bossi
FUN FACT: The next issue of the DIA Bulletin will feature an article by Alan Darr and Lara Roney on the importance of this sculpture by the great neoclassical sculptor Canova and his influence on four other European neoclassical marbles in the DIA collection. Stay tuned!

2. The Clock of the Four Continents, by Andre Charles Boulle and workshop
FUN FACT:: This clock is one of four Clocks of the Four Continents created in early 18th century Paris by Boulle and his collaborators. The other examples are preserved in the James A. Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire; the Wallace Collection, London; and the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Paris. It is published in the DIA’s The Dodge Collection of Eighteenth-Century French and English Art, by Alan P. Darr, Theodore Dell, et al., Appendix II, pp. 235-240 (entry by T. Dell).

3. Saint Peter’s Basilica, Rome; Gianlorenzo Bernini
FUN FACTS: The Chair of Saint Peter was conceived by Bernini as a monumental reliquary, which encloses the humbler wooden seat said to have been used by the saint during his lifetime. The DIA’s terracotta model recently received new attention from our photographers, and will also appear in a forthcoming article in the next DIA Bulletin by Curator of Prints and Drawings, Clare Rogan.