



Console Table

Italian (Rome), ca. 1700–1725

Gilded linden and poplar, green porphyry, and gilt bronze

W. 69¼ in. (176 cm)

Purchase, The Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation Inc. Gift, 1998

1998.296

During the late Baroque period exuberantly carved furniture took on a sculptural appearance, reflecting the style's tendency to meld different arts into one complicated whole. Large console tables were an obligatory feature of the parade rooms of aristocratic palaces of the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century. Often ordered in units of two or four, with matching mirrors and stools, such pieces helped to achieve the perfect symmetry of the intended stagelike interior. The boldly scrolled legs carved with female busts wearing light-catching tiaras contrast with the almost weightless look of the fanciful stretchers and the pierced apron

friezes. The latter incorporate wing-shaped lambrequins and floral sprays over elongated scrolls, with central theatrical demon masks. The delicate gilding grants an illusion that the base is made entirely of precious metal and complements the table's original top of rare and colorful green porphyry, framed by a gilt-bronze border. The Museum's table is an embodiment of the dramatic and vigorous design of late Baroque Rome and an exquisite example of the contemporary art of cutting semiprecious stones and marble in the Eternal City.

WK

Teapot

Italian (Venice, Vezzi factory), ca. 1724–27

Hard-paste porcelain

H. 5¾ in. (14.6 cm)

Marked (on bottom, in underglaze blue): Ven^a

Purchase, Friends of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Gifts, 1999

1999.92ab



Vezzi was the third European factory to produce hard-paste porcelain, following Meissen (1710) and Vienna (1718). Founded by Francesco Vezzi (1651–1740), it was in existence for only seven years, and production is thought to have been limited to about the last three of those years. Tablewares were the principal output, especially teapots of imaginative (and occasionally eccentric) design. In this example all the influences concurrent in the early manufacture of porcelain have been beautifully coordinated into a disciplined, graceful model. The polygonal form has been borrowed from Vienna, the well-modeled festoons recall Vezzi's background as a goldsmith, and Chinese porcelain is evoked in the painted decoration of a delicate underglaze gray-blue.

The cover is not the original one, being spherical instead of polygonal, but its decoration is the work of the same painter, and it appears to have been fired at the same time.

CLC



Open Robe and Petticoat

French, 1770s

Ivory silk damask trimmed with cream silk gimp

L. open robe (center back) 60 in. (152.4 cm);

l. petticoat (center back) 34 in. (86.4 cm)

Costume Institute Benefit Fund, 1999

1999.41ab

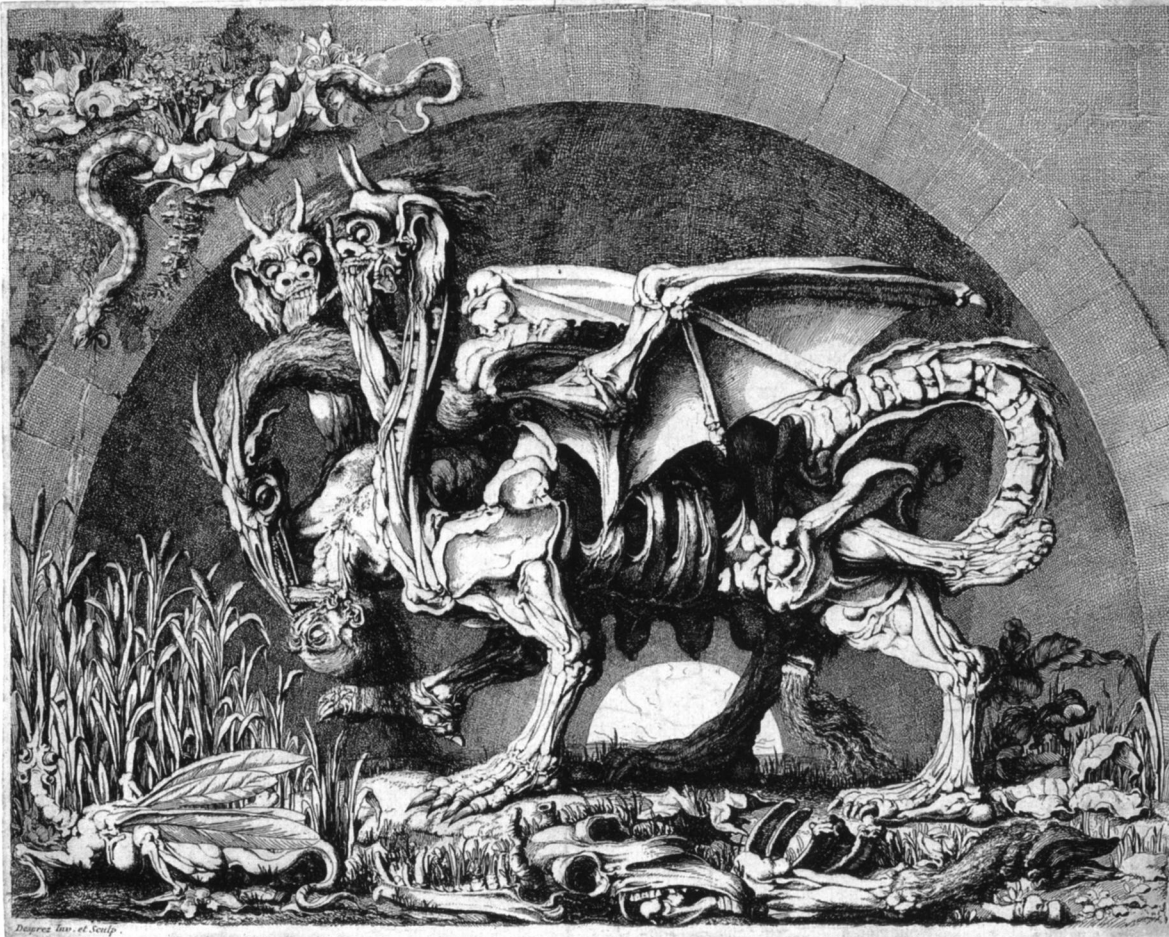
The *robe à la française*, with open robe and petticoat, was the quintessential dress of the eighteenth century. Characteristic of 1770s costume are the piece's low neckline, fitted bodice, narrow sleeves with double-

layered cuffs, as well as the sack back and fullness at the hips supported by panniers. This exquisite example is constructed from a rare Chinese export silk dating from the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The textile is an ivory "bizarre" patterned damask (created by reversing the weave structure so that both the warp-float and weft-float faces of the satin are on the same surface).

As early as the late sixteenth century, Chinese craftsmen created silks for the European market, which were exported by the East India companies of England, France, and Holland. Due to the exchange of design

motifs by both Eastern and Western artisans, Chinese export silks often bore little relation to traditional Chinese aesthetics. While this patterned damask closely resembles the European "bizarre" silks popular during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the selvedge-to-selvedge width, fabric weight, and selvedge markings all indicate Chinese manufacture. To fully appreciate the sumptuousness of this dress, one might imagine the sense of movement candlelight would have created across its surface.

EM



Jean-Louis Desprez

French, 1743–1804

La Chimère de Monsieur Desprez

Ca. 1770–71

Etching, second or third state

11 1/8 × 14 1/4 in. (28.1 × 36.2 cm)

Purchase, 1998

1998.248

Trained as an architect, Desprez won the Prix de Rome for architecture in 1776 and from 1777 to 1784 lived in Italy, where he found employment as an illustrator. In 1784 he left for Stockholm to become theater designer to King Gustav III. Today Desprez is best known for his skills as a draftsman. He also made a small number of etchings after his own designs, of which *La Chimère* is both the most accomplished and the most bizarre.

The subject is described in a lengthy inscription that appears on the fifth state of

the print. Desprez's mythical beast, born on the burning sands of Africa, has three heads: one of a bird and two with features of the devil. The skeletal monster, framed by the dark semicircle of an archway with the pale semicircle of the moon visible beyond, devours its human prey amidst the bones of its previous victims. Seen against the venerable tradition of demonic creatures in Western art, Desprez's macabre vision is a tour de force of his inventive skills and graphic technique.

ps

One of a Pair of Vases

Russian(?) and French, ca. 1780

Granite with gilt-bronze mounts

H. 24 in. (61 cm)

Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1999

1999.122.1

In the second half of the eighteenth century French designers sought ever rarer and more exotic materials for decorative objects. The Museum's newly acquired pair of vases, of a granite called orbicular diorite that is found in both Corsica and the Ural mountains, may have been turned and polished either in Paris or St. Petersburg, where there was a luxury market for hard stone objects. They were then completed in Paris with the addition of gilt-bronze mounts, including large handles in the form of rams' heads and finials with a knob of berries above acanthus leaves.

Objects of this quality were much sought



after by collectors and were sometimes especially commissioned by the Parisian dealers called *marchands merciers*, the merchants who sold furniture and works of art and served as entrepreneurs of taste and fashion.

WR





Jacques-Louis David

French, 1748–1825

The Death of Camilla

Black chalk with brush and gray wash on cream-colored laid paper; repaired loss at the lower left corner

14½ × 15½ in. (36.7 × 39.5 cm)

Gift of Joan K. Davidson, in memory of her mother, Alice M. Kaplan, 1998

1998.203

Before settling on the subject of his groundbreaking Neoclassical icon, *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784, Musée du Louvre, Paris), David made several exploratory drawings of related episodes of the same story, including this *Death of Camilla*, which may have been his first idea for the composition. As recounted in Livy's *Roman History*, the ancient tribes of the Romans and the Albans to spare lives each delegated three warriors to engage in a battle that would settle a larger dispute. When the Roman Horatius, the lone survivor, returned victorious, he found his sister Camilla, who had been engaged to one of his opponents, mourning her slain fiancé. Angered by her unpatriotic response, Horatius killed her.

Although David ultimately chose an earlier and less unsavory moment of the story, he carried over into the final painted version the idea of the female expression of grief as a counterpoint to male acts of bravery and patriotism. Themes of love and duty opposed held a strong attraction for David in the 1780s, seemingly anticipating the impending political turmoil of the French Revolution and its aftermath.

PS

After Augustin Pajou

French, 1730–1809

Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704)

French (Sèvres), ca. 1784

Hard-paste biscuit porcelain

H. 18¾ in. (47.6 cm)

Purchase, Friends of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Gifts, 1998

1998.360

In 1779 Pajou exhibited a marble statue of Bossuet executed as part of a series by numerous sculptors of portraits of twenty-seven “Great Men” of France. Three years later the comte d’Angivillers, director of the Bâtiments du Roi, who had initiated the program on behalf of Louis XVI, instigated the production at Sèvres of small-scale versions of these statues in the hope of attracting a wider market.

This figure of Bossuet, cast from Pajou’s own reduction of his marble, is one of twelve known Sèvres models from the series.

Bossuet was the preeminent churchman of his time, renowned as an orator of exceptional power. Pajou portrays him as bishop of Meaux, the See to which he was appointed in 1681. Richly dressed in lace and fur, he is shown standing, with commanding expression and gesture, the folds of his cape cascading to a tumbled hem.

D’Angivillers’s plan for the portraits called for both standing and seated figures, which offered variety in pose and rhythm. The Museum has long owned a Sèvres example of Clodion’s model of the seated Montesquieu (acc. no. 05.11); with this figure of Bossuet we can now suggest the intended effect of the series.

CLC



Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson

French, 1767–1824

The Mourning of Pallas

Pen and brown ink, brush and gray and brown wash, heightened with white on cream-colored laid paper

9 7/8 × 6 1/2 in. (25.2 × 16.4 cm)

Inscribed: (lower left in graphite) Girodet inv.; (lower center in brown ink) . . . HEI MIHI!

QUANTUM/PRAESIDIUM AUSONIA ET QUANTUM TU PERDIS, IULEI; (lower right in graphite)

Eneide liv. XI

The Elisha Whittelsey Collection,

The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1996

1996.567

Pierre Didot the Elder's project to revive the art of fine book publishing in the years following the French Revolution provided welcome income for a number of David's students, including Girodet. Some of the greatest examples of French Neoclassical book illustration were the result of these ambitious undertakings, most notably designs for a 1798 edition of Virgil, based on drawings supplied by Girodet and François Gérard.

In this scene taken from book 2 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas comforts his son, Iulus, at the loss of the young prince Pallas, who had been felled in battle. Responding to the prescribed format of the publication, Girodet reduced Virgil's cast of characters to four, standing for youth, maturity, old age, and death. Pallas's corpse is bathed in ethereal moonlight—an effect for which Girodet had a lifelong affection.

The depiction of Roman warriors in the work of David and other artists of his circle constituted more than an aesthetic preference for classical sources; it expressed a perceived affinity with the subjects in terms of both political and moral ideology. For Girodet, Virgil's epic story of the founding of the Roman republic provided a natural symbolic association with the founding of the French republic by the heroes and martyrs of the Revolution.



PS



Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson

French, 1767–1824

**Madame Jacques-Louis Étienne Reizet
(Colette-Désirée-Thérèse Godefroy),**

1782–1850

1823

Oil on canvas

23¾ × 19½ in. (60.3 × 49.5 cm)

Signed and dated (upper right): G-T / 1823.

**Purchase, Gifts of Joanne Toor Cummings,
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rodgers, Raymonde
Paul, and Estate of Dorothy Lichtensteiger,
by exchange, 1999**

1999.101

Returning to France after his years of study in Italy, Girodet broke with his master, Jacques-Louis David, to create a personal

style that treated fanciful subjects with imaginative pictorial effects. In portraiture, however, Girodet remained true to the precepts that he learned in David's studio. This work, one of the artist's last portraits, betrays the meticulous technique characteristic of David's Neoclassicism, as well as Girodet's fascination with the perfected forms of Florentine Renaissance painting.

Letters exchanged by Girodet and Mme Reizet indicate that artist and patron knew each other well and that every detail of the picture was the subject of discussion. Girodet thought, for example, that the black velvet dress would complement Mme Reizet's beautiful complexion. Girodet exhibited this portrait at the Paris Salon of 1824, his last.

Mme Reizet's husband was a prominent

government official, and their son, Frédéric de Reiset, was curator of drawings and, later, of paintings at the Musée du Louvre. He ended his career as director of the French National Museums. Until recently, this canvas remained with the family. It is remarkably well preserved.

GT

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

French, 1780–1867

**The Kaunitz Sisters (Leopoldine,
Caroline, and Ferdinandine)**

1818

*Graphite on laid paper wrapping a wood panel
and glued to the back*

11⅞ × 8¾ in. (30.1 × 22.2 cm)

**Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, in
honor of Philippe de Montebello, 1998**

1998.21

Ingres's appealing drawing presents the daughters of Austria's ambassador to Rome, Prince Wenzel von Kaunitz-Rietberg. The young women, aged thirteen to seventeen, are shown in the discreet luxury of Empire fashion in a setting that suggests their privileged, cultured world. They cluster about a piano, probably in the family music room, where Paganini gave a recital in 1819, just a year after the sitting. In fact, as Hans Naef suggests, it may have been Ingres's passion for music and his mastery of the violin that won him an invitation to the Kaunitz residence.

At the time of this work Ingres was clearly at the height of his form as a graphic portraitist. The precise subtlety of his draftsmanship, his almost musical distribution of accents, and the delicacy of his depiction of youth are exquisite. Such a portrait might have helped to secure titled husbands for all three daughters, despite their father's philandering, which brought him judicial review in Vienna in 1822 and, ultimately, exile.

The Museum's rich collection of works by Ingres now totals eighteen drawings, twelve of which are portraits. This, however, is our first and only group sitting, a challenging (and more costly) form for which Ingres only rarely received commissions.

CI



M. G. Del.

1766.

Partie dans le cadre



Jean-Louis-André-Théodore Géricault

French, 1791–1824

***Venus and Cupid in a Landscape,
after Annibale Carracci***

*Pen and iron-gall ink, wash, watercolor, and
gouache over graphite and traces of red chalk on
wove paper*

8½ × 11¼ in. (21.6 × 28.6 cm)

**Gift of Leonardo Mondadori, in memory
of his mother, Mimma Mondadori, 1998**
1998.177ab

Géricault's great appreciation for Renaissance and Baroque masters affected his art profoundly, making it possible for him to forge an original, robust style that veered away from the Neoclassical norm of his period. His study of engravings after Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Rubens, the Carracci, and others, plus his firsthand encounter with Italian painting and sculpture during his sojourn to that country in 1816–17, helped him develop a repertory of muscled bodies in dynamic poses that brought great expressive force to his work.

This fluent drawing done in pen and ink with brush and watercolor interprets freely Annibale Carracci's late-sixteenth-century painting of Venus and Cupid (Uffizi, Florence), imparting to the Italian work a singular

gravity. The composition may have been modeled on an engraving of the picture or on one of its painted copies, if not the original. The luxurious quality and painterly finish of the work bring it into line with several drawings heightened with gouache that Géricault made in Rome in 1817.

On the reverse of this sheet is a similarly finished drawing of a helmeted soldier in battle with a sword and a shield. This composition, too, may depend upon an Italian prototype, perhaps an Antique Roman relief.

Eugène Delacroix

French, 1798–1863

Turk Saddling a Horse

1824

*Aquatint; first of two states; printed in black
ink on wove paper, with additions in graphite
by hand*

Plate 9¾ × 13¾ in. (23.8 × 34.9 cm)

Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Derald

H. Ruttenberg Gift, 1998

1998.529

Even before his momentous journey to Morocco in 1832 Delacroix showed the fasci-

nation with exotic horsemen that would influence much of his work. This rare new addition to the Museum's exceptionally fine collection of Delacroix's prints is one of two known impressions of the subject in the first state and, uniquely, bears the artist's extensive penciled corrections. (When held to raking light, the paper gleams with silvery graphite.)

At the time this image was made Delacroix was under the powerful spell of Goya, whose etchings and aquatints demonstrated to him the wide range of tonal effects to be gained in a monochromatic medium. Today Delacroix, as Romanticism's chief painter, is renowned especially for his brilliant use of color. However, the artist's important production of graphic work reveals his lifelong urge to achieve greatness in black and white. In that respect he resembles closely his follower and champion Edgar Degas, whose close friend Alexis Rouart once owned this print.

CI



(preserved in Berlin and Copenhagen museums). Such experimental materials reflect Schinkel's passion for exploring new production methods, in keeping with the innovations so characteristic for the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

Schinkel based the model on Roman armchairs in the wall paintings of Herculaneum. The Berlin Kupferstichkabinett preserves some of his related working drawings. They include a detailed view of the chair's intended upholstery, recreated here by the Museum's conservation department. Masterfully conceived, this famous and fully documented chair model has rightly been considered among the most accomplished expressions of Schinkel's work and an example par excellence of the German Empire style.

WK

Karl Friedrich Schinkel (designer)

German, 1781–1841

Armchair

German (Berlin), ca. 1828

Gilded mountain ash, brass, and original casters; replacement upholstery

H. 35½ in. (90.5 cm)

Purchase, Gifts of William Randolph Hearst Jr., Irwin Untermyer, and John D. Rockefeller Jr., by exchange, and Bequest of John L. Cadwalader, by exchange, 1996
1996.30

Between 1826 and 1828, at the height of his influence as Germany's leading architect and designer, Schinkel was commissioned by Prince Karl of Prussia to remodel the prince's Berlin palace. For the reception hall, Schinkel designed a luxurious set of gilded furniture, comprising two sofas and eight armchairs, of which the Museum's example appears to be the unique prototype, made under the architect's supervision. Most of the chair's decorative parts, like the sphinxes and relief ornamentation, are carved in wood following traditional cabinetmaking techniques. Later, molds were taken to duplicate those elements in zinc and composite mass in order to apply them to the five other chairs known today





the nude has remained a classic problem repeatedly posed for Western artists since Masaccio's time, but it did not become the photographer's problem until the 1850s, when artists began to use the new medium as a draftsman's aid. Generally painters and the photographers who collaborated with them cloaked the model in paraphernalia to match the artistic intention; Eugène Durieu, for example, draped vaguely exotic materials near the models he photographed for Delacroix. What is surprising here is the absence of the thinnest disguise: the model is utterly naked, and the photographer forgot to apologize. With her intelligent head and dirty feet, this young woman helped found the matter-of-fact modeling sorority joined a decade later by Manet's Olympia.

MMH

R. Berger

German, act. ca. 1844–70

Breech-Loading Percussion Sporting Rifle (detail)

German (Köthen), ca. 1860

Steel, wood, and horn

L. overall 45 7/8 in. (165 cm)

Gift of Eric Vaule, in memory of Anne Lyman Vaule, 1998

1998.464

Frank Chauvassaigne

French, act. 1850s–60s

[Seated Nude in Studio]

1856–59

Salted paper print from glass negative

7 1/2 x 6 in. (19.1 x 15.2 cm)

Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift, 1998

1998.338

This corner of a painter's atelier somewhere in France in the middle of the nineteenth century is scarcely tethered in time or place; it could as easily be a loft in New York today or, had photography existed four centuries ago, a studio in the Italian Renaissance. The lack of distinguishing fashions in furnishings or coiffure emphasizes the simplicity of the intention—to describe a female nude in a relaxed attitude in softly modulated light. Drawing, sketching, painting, or modeling



The nineteenth century witnessed a rapid evolution of European gunmaking, which included the invention of ingenious new ignition systems and the introduction of standardized and interchangeable machine-made parts. The art of firearms decoration nevertheless continued to flourish and indeed was promoted at the international exhibitions held regularly during the second half of the century. Although French manufacturers dominated the field of richly embellished sporting arms, they were not without competition. One of the more ambitious German craftsmen was the little-known R. Berger of Köthen, who was court gunmaker to the dukes of Anhalt. Berger sent displays to the world's fairs of 1855, 1862, and 1867, where his guns were praised for their modernity of design and quality of decoration. Our newly acquired rifle, one of the few nineteenth-century German arms in the Museum's collection, exemplifies these virtues. The extent, variety, and accomplishment of the engraved ornament are noteworthy, with the mechanism and barrel covered with dense foliate scrolls framing cartouches enclosing trophies of arms, classical and allegorical figures, and a hunter in contemporary costume. There can be little doubt that this rifle was created as a showpiece for the gunmaker's skills.

SWP



Manner of A. M. E. Fournier

French (Paris), act. 3rd quarter of the 19th century

Armchair

French (probably Paris), ca. 1860

Carved and gilded beech, modern tufted green velvet

H. 45 3/8 in. (115 cm)

Purchase, Friends of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Gifts, 1998

1998.382

This innovative and amusing armchair, with its deeply tufted back and seat, epitomizes the desire for originality and variety combined with a concern for luxury and comfort that

was characteristic of the Second Empire. With its curvilinear outline, the overall shape of the chair is reminiscent of elegant Rococo pieces. However, the unusual frame of simulated twisted rope—ingeniously looped at the top rail and knotted at the arm supports, legs, and stretcher—clearly shows that this is not a mere repetition of earlier forms. A number of low stools carved in this manner are known, including one in the Museum's collection

(acc. no. 1985.75). They are generally associated with the Parisian upholsterer Fournier, who supplied at least one such *pouffe à cordes*, now at the Musée National du Château de Compiègne. Chairs of this type are rare; although several rope side chairs are extant, the present example seems to be the only known armchair of this wonderful and unconventional design.

DK-G



Vincent van Gogh

Dutch, 1853–1890

Olive Orchard

1889

Oil on canvas

28⁵/₈ × 36¹/₄ in. (72.7 × 92.1 cm)

The Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Collection, Partial Gift of Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg, 1998

1998.325.1

Van Gogh’s fascination with the olive trees that grew in cultivated groves just outside the walls of the asylum at Saint-Rémy is reflected in a series of paintings he devoted to them, beginning with three made in June 1889 and five completed by late November 1889, including the present work. The autumn campaign was undertaken, in part, in reaction to the recent work of his friends Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard, whose symbolic compositions of Christ in the Garden of Olives seemed shallow to him and without real artistic merit. “What I have done,” wrote Van Gogh to his brother, Theo, “is a rather

hard and coarse reality beside their abstractions, but it will have a rustic quality and will smell of the earth.” Van Gogh painted the trees directly from nature in late 1889 in an effort to capture the “contrasting effects of the foliage, changing with the hues of the sky,” and the canvases vary greatly in their rich play of color. Yet the group is distinctive for its stylistic unity: the artist deliberately suppressed his exuberant handling and thick impasto for a more refined approach, notable for its lively staccato application of paint and Seurat-like broken color harmonies.

SAS

James-Jacques-Joseph Tissot

French, 1836–1902

Tea

1872

Oil on wood

26 × 18⁷/₈ in. (66 × 47.9 cm)

Signed and dated (lower right): J.J. Tissot / L. '72

Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1998

1998.170

Although it is not known whether Tissot visited London in the 1860s, the French artist had already oriented his subjects and style to suit British taste by the time he moved there in 1871. He immediately immersed himself in the London scene, with work for *Vanity Fair* and genre paintings with the Thames as backdrop. Hoping to bank on the success of his pictures peopled with fancifully costumed *Incredibles* and *Merveilleuses*, he painted several anecdotal canvases set in Georgian London. *Tea* is a repetition of the left-hand portion of one of his most famous London scenes, *Bad News* (National Museum of

Wales, Cardiff), which shows a young ship's captain and his girlfriend absorbing the news of his imminent departure while a companion prepares tea.

For this variant of *Bad News* Tissot brought his astounding technique to new heights. He reveled in the variety of surfaces—brilliant silver, polished mahogany, matte silk, and flawless skin—and in the complex play of patterns—venetian blinds, slotted shutters, striped silk, and the masts and rigging of the ships at port. *Bad News* shows a bend of the Thames through the tavern windows, while *Tea* displays the dense London cityscape. Tissot's friend Edgar Degas owned a pencil study for this picture.

GT

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

French, 1841–1919

***The Daughters of Catulle Mendès*
(*Claudine, Huguette* [1871–1964], and *Helyonne*)**

1888

Oil on canvas

63¾ × 51⅞ in. (161.9 × 129.9 cm)

Signed and dated (upper right): Renoir 88.

The Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Collection, Partial Gift of Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg, 1998

1998.325.3

Hoping to recapture the success of *Madame Charpentier and Her Children* (acc. no.

07.122) at the Salon of 1879, Renoir asked his friend Mendès for permission to paint his three daughters. Mendès was a well-known writer and publisher of Symbolist poetry; his companion, Augusta Holmès, a virtuoso pianist and composer, was the mother of

these girls. “I beg you to tell me immediately if you want portraits done of your beautiful children. I shall exhibit them [at the Impressionist exhibition] in May, so you can see why I am in a hurry. The eldest girl, seated at the piano, turns to give the note to her sister, who finds it on her violin. The youngest, leaning against the piano, listens as one must do at that tender age. I shall do the drawings at your house, and the portrait at mine.” Renoir proposed a nominal fee of five hundred francs.

The 1888 exhibition was a critical and financial disaster, and the painting was ignored again at the 1890 Salon. It has since emerged, however, as one of Renoir's most impressive works, realized in his new, aggressive coloristic style, an homage in the fluidity of the brushwork and in the treatment of theme to Fragonard and other eighteenth-century genre painters.

GT





Maurice Denis

French, 1870–1943

Springtime

Ca. 1894–99

Oil on canvas

31½ × 38½ in. (80 × 97.8 cm)

Signed with studio monogram: MID (in circle)

Gift of David Allen Devrishian, 1999

1999.180.2ab

With Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard, Denis was a founding member of the Nabis group in France, active from 1888 to 1899. Denis, the group’s spiritual leader and chief theoretician, called for a new pictorial language in response to the rhythms of nature. In date and sensibility his work bridges the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as shown here, he had a firm grasp on modernist thought. He once said, “Remember

that a picture, before being a war horse, a female nude or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order.”

Springtime, a double-sided canvas, describes a purification scene set deep in the forest of Saint-Germain, near Paris. Several pairs of young women—representing the sacred and profane—blend into a bucolic landscape where one of them stands nude in a stream. Denis draws a parallel between the flowering sapling in the center (a symbol of spring, renewal, and Easter) and the maidens.

The composition is a study for a larger, more realistic painting of 1899 (*Virginal Printemps*), and in 1908 was the basis for a wall decoration. Until now, the Museum owned prints and illustrated books by Denis but no paintings, a gap filled by this gift.

LMM

Pierre Bonnard

French, 1867–1947

The Children’s Meal

1895

Oil on cardboard

23¾ × 29¾ in. (59.5 × 74.6 cm)

Gift of David Allen Devrishian, 1999

1999.180.1

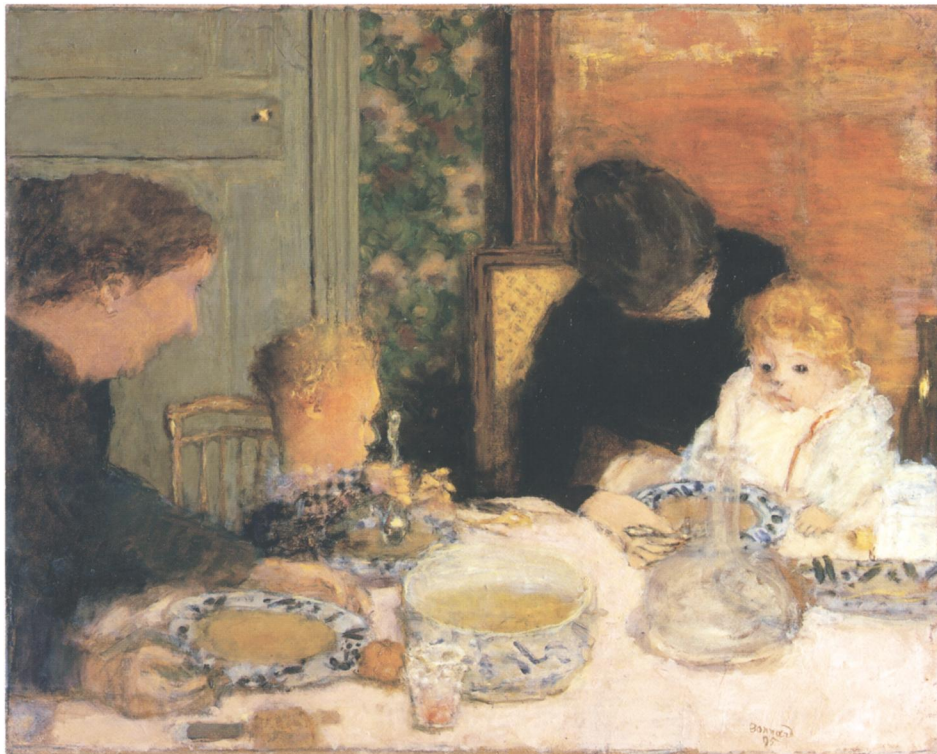
In the early 1890s the artist’s very young nieces and nephews began to spend their holidays at Le Clos, the old family house in the village of Le Grand-Lemps near the French Alps. Their impish presence inspired Bonnard to paint a range of new subjects. Foremost among these were his celebrated “intimist” interiors, in which he also evoked his own childhood holidays in the same house.

Bonnard captured the daily ritual of a meal shared by all generations in this close-up view

of the dining room at Le Clos. Around the curved table sit, from the left, the artist's eighty-three-year-old grandmother, Madame Frédéric Mertzdorff, his three-year-old nephew, Jean, and his thirty-three-year-old sister, Andrée Terrasse, with her two-year-old son, Charles, in her lap. Andrée had married the composer Claude Terrasse at Le Clos in 1890.

In this family scene Bonnard juxtaposes early youth with old age and at the same time records young Jean's first attempts at growing up, as, armed with a very large spoon and without a helping hand, he eats his soup.

SR



Pierre Bonnard

French, 1867–1947

The Checkered Tablecloth

1916

Oil on canvas

19 7/8 × 26 3/8 in. (50.5 × 67 cm)

Partial and Promised Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Dillon, 1998

1998.412.1

This painting continues a succession of scenes of dining-room interiors that Bonnard created with infinite variations throughout his career. The motif first appeared in the early 1890s (see *The Children's Meal*, above). In these scenes figures often flank the far sides of the gently curved dining tables—children, parents, nannies, or grannies—with the children's heads usually level with the still-life objects, sometimes creating humorous effects.

This work is different. The rectangular table is tilted so far upward as to appear nearly parallel with the picture plane. Because figures are absent, the objects—a fruit bowl with apples, pears, and grapes; the bottles; assorted knives with ebony handles; glasses; and small dishes—dominate the show on the strawberry-red checkered ground.

SR

