

Gifts and Acquisitions

Robert Seldon Duncanson, *Still Life with Fruit and Nuts*

African American artist Robert Seldon Duncanson (1821–1872) was widely recognized during his lifetime for pastoral landscapes of American, Canadian, and European scenery. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to focus on a small group of still-life paintings (fewer than a dozen are known) that Duncanson produced during the late 1840s. Spare, elegant, and meticulously painted, these works reflect the tradition of American still-life painting initiated by Charles Willson Peale and his gifted children — particularly Raphaelle and Rembrandt Peale. Still-life paintings by Duncanson are extremely rare and highly coveted. Signed and dated 1848, *Still Life with Fruit and Nuts* is a particularly fine example and the first work by Duncanson to enter the Gallery's collection. Classically composed with fruit arranged in a tabletop pyramid, the painting includes remarkable passages juxtaposing the smooth surfaces of beautifully rendered apples with the textured shells of scattered nuts.

Self-taught and living in Cincinnati when he created his still-life paintings, Duncanson exhibited several of these works at the annual Michigan State Fair. During one such exhibition, a critic for the *Detroit Free Press* wrote, “the paintings of fruit, etc. by Duncanson are beautiful, and as they deserve, have elicited universal admiration.” The artist's turn from still-life subjects to landscapes conveying religious and moral messages may have been inspired by the exhibition in Cincinnati of Thomas Cole's celebrated series *The Voyage of Life*. Cole's allegorical

paintings were purchased by a private collector in Cincinnati and remained in that city until acquired by the National Gallery in 1971. Exposure to Cole's paintings marked a turning point in Duncanson's career. Soon he began creating landscapes that incorporated signature elements from Cole and often carried moral messages.

Following the outbreak of the Civil War, Duncanson traveled to Canada where he remained until departing for Europe in 1865. Often described as the first African American artist to achieve an international reputation, Duncanson enjoyed considerable success exhibiting his landscapes abroad. His achievement as a still-life painter has only recently become apparent. The exceptional quality of *Still Life with Fruit and Nuts* suggests that much remains to be learned about this little-known aspect of his career.

Thanks to the generosity of Ann and Mark Kington/The Kington Foundation and the Avalon Fund, Duncanson's masterful still-life painting hangs in the American galleries not far from Cole's *Voyage of Life* • Nancy Anderson, *Curator, American and British Paintings*

Robert Seldon Duncanson, *Still Life with Fruit and Nuts*, 1848, oil on board, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Ann and Mark Kington/The Kington Foundation and the Avalon Fund





William Bell, *Looking South into the Grand Cañon, Colorado River, Sheavwitz Crossing*, 1872, albumen print, National Gallery of Art, Eugene L. and Marie-Louise Garbaty Fund

William Bell, *Looking South into the Grand Cañon, Colorado River, Sheavwitz Crossing*

English-born photographer William Bell (1830–1910) immigrated to the United States as a child and later embarked on a prolific and varied career as a photographer. His first foray into photography came with employment in his brother-in-law's daguerreotype studio in Philadelphia in 1848, shortly after his return from fighting in the Mexican-American War. He eventually opened his own studio in 1860, but with the outbreak of the Civil War, he joined the Union Army in 1862, serving as an infantryman until he accepted the position as chief photographer for the United States Army Medical Museum. During his two years at the museum, he documented the physical injuries suffered by soldiers during the Civil War as well as a variety of medical and surgical procedures. Many of these photographs were reproduced in the *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion (1861–65)* (Washington, DC, 1870–1888), one of the earliest and most important records of the medical impact of war.

In 1867 Bell moved back to Philadelphia to open a portrait studio, but he returned to government service five years later, this time to replace Timothy O'Sullivan as the photographer accompanying the Wheeler Survey of 1872. Led by Lieutenant George M. Wheeler, this U.S. Army-sponsored expedition surveyed and documented the American territories west of the 100th meridian. A detailed study of topographical features and natural resources for settlement and mining, the project brought together topographers, cartographers, a geologist, an artist, a journalist, and a taxidermist. Bell photographed along the Colorado River and the upper parts of the Grand Canyon in southwestern Utah and northwestern Arizona, creating some

of the nineteenth century's most spectacular images of the American West.

Bell made *Looking South into the Grand Cañon, Colorado River, Sheavitz Crossing* for the Wheeler Survey. With its vertical orientation, breathtaking vantage point, and dramatic contrasts of light and dark, the photograph is characteristic of Bell's majestic presentations of landscape; more than a topographic description, Bell's image evokes the striking grandeur of the Grand Canyon. This print is the third work by Bell to enter the National Gallery's collection. The acquisition of this work was made possible by the Eugene L. and Marie-Louise Garbaty Fund. • Francine Weiss, *Department of Photographs*

Edward Steichen, *The Oochens*

Fifteen witty "portraits" make up the *Oochens*, a fanciful series of drawings by Edward Steichen (1879–1973) created in 1919–1922. Gagaboos, nosy neighbors, puppy dogs, painters, and poets inhabit the Oochen Republic, an imaginary world more harmonious than our own—a place where life is simpler because everything is arranged according to a single proportion, the Golden Mean. Steichen would entertain his two young daughters with stories of the *Oochens*. His intention, which was never realized, was to publish these works as illustrations for a children's book.

Each Oochen character was based on a preliminary design made from three proportional triangles arranged to form a suggestive shape. In *Madame X and Johnny Marine*, the green triangles, at top right are Johnny Marine, who

peeks down from his red perch (note his beady eye). The yellow and aqua triangles below constitute Madame X, donning a dark blue coat and warily holding Johnny's gaze. An accompanying caption written by Steichen identifies at least one of the subjects of this satiric scene as the American artist, and Steichen's friend, John Marin: "Madame X and Johnny Marine, also known as Sailor John the Painter. He has run up a bar of vermilion after painting Madame X's portrait on the back of her cloak, and she is wondering if he has run up the bar of vermilion to look at her or her portrait." Madame X may refer to the Hollywood film, *Madame X*, released in 1920, or to John



Edward Steichen, *Madame X and Johnny Marine*, c. 1919–1922, tempera and ink over graphite on paperboard, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Joanna T. Steichen

Singer Sargent's celebrated painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Golden Mean, or Golden Section, is a ratio that is manifest in some of nature's basic structures — the growth of plant cells or the curves of an ammonite shell. For centuries artists and architects have used this ratio to produce visually pleasing proportions. Seeking a universal principle for composing modern art, Steichen experimented with the Golden Mean in the early 1920s. He studied theoreticians such as Jay Hambidge and Theodore Andrea Cook and also taught himself plane and solid geometry. He later recalled that he felt freer working within geometric constraints than working with no rules at all.

Steichen was equally devoted to painting and photography for the first twenty years of his career, but sometime between 1920 and 1923, in a personal and artistic crisis, he burned and slashed all of the painted canvases in his possession, thereafter devoting himself wholly to making photographs and later serving as curator of photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art. As a result, little is known of his non-photographic work from the early 1920s — a period Steichen considered the most productive of his life. The Oochens and *Rabbit (Le Tournesol)*, c. 1920, recent bequests by the artist's widow, Joanna T. Steichen, survived the catharsis and remained in the artist's personal collection until his death. These hard-edge abstractions provide an in-depth look into a critical and little-known period of a major figure in twentieth-century art. Now among the Gallery's holdings, they join the painting *Le Tournesol (The Sunflower)*, 1920, purchased by the Collectors Committee in 1999, and a study for the latter, given by Joanna T. Steichen in 2007. • Amy R. Johnston, *Assistant Curator of Modern Prints and Drawings*

Jean Morin, *The Crucifixion*

The Crucifixion by Jean Morin (c. 1590–1650) is a print of exceptional visual power and historical significance. Morin, with Claude Mellan, was the most admired and prolific printmaker in early seventeenth-century France. Unlike Mellan, however, who worked in pure burin in an idealizing style, Morin combined etching and engraving to achieve a naturalistic effect. His works convey peculiarities of appearance, variety of texture, and modulation of light with extraordinary sensitivity. Most of his work is portraiture, establishing the format and function that would dominate the genre for the next 150 years. At the same time, his landscapes were the most refined of their time. Yet most impressive are his large-scale interpretations of religious subjects by Philippe de Champaigne, a painter closely associated with the austere Catholic reform sect, the Jansenists.

The Crucifixion is the largest and most striking of these interpretations. It recreates Champaigne's celebrated *Crucifixion of the Jansenists*, painted before 1650 for the Charterhouse of Paris and today in the Louvre. There are two versions of the print. One, created from three plates, reproduces the entire composition of the painting. Showing the rocky mount of Golgotha and the location of the cross, the three-plate composition is a strict translation and thus traditional in iconography. The present variant was printed from just the upper two plates to produce a work of nearly square format and distinct meaning. With the cross filling the frame and seemingly suspended against a distant background, this interpretation offers a transcendental image that would have elicited the most devout contemplation.

Morin's transformation of the painting's appearance is just as striking.

Typical of Champaigne's style, the canvas is imposing and remote. In the print, Morin's mixed technique, personal vocabulary of mark, and sheer sensitivity infuse the figure of Christ with a sensuousness. Contour appears more variable and muted, flesh more nuanced in description and tactile in appeal. Throughout, the range and gradation of tone seem even greater than in the painting. Stark and dramatic in Champaigne's work, light seems fine-grained and warm in Morin's print. This subtlety of observation and technique imparts a poignancy and underscores the human aspect of the figure.

The Crucifixion is a print of utmost rarity. The recent catalogue raisonné of Morin's work records just two impressions of the three-plate version, both in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. The catalogue describes the two-plate version but does not cite the location of an impression. This one is the first to enter an American public collection. It becomes the centerpiece of National Gallery's holdings of Morin and one of its greatest seventeenth-century French prints. • Jonathan Bober, *Curator of Old Master Prints*

Jean Morin, after Philippe de Champaigne, *The Crucifixion*, before 1650, etching and engraving, National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of an Anonymous Donor



NEMO TOLLIT ANIMAM A ME, SED EGO PONO EAM A ME-IPSO. J. Mull. sculp. et.



Bertel Thorvaldsen, *Three Daughters of Richard Bingham, second Earl of Lucan* (likely *Lady Louisa Bingham, Lady Georgiana Bingham, and Lady Elizabeth Vernon, née Bingham*), modeled 1816 and/or 1817–1818; carved c. 1821–1824, white Carrara marble on marble socles, National Gallery of Art, Patrons' Permanent Fund

Bertel Thorvaldsen, *Three Daughters of Richard Bingham, Lord Lucan*

The acquisition of three exquisite marble busts from the early nineteenth century, *Three Daughters of Richard Bingham, Lord Lucan*, brings the name of the renowned Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844), one of the handful of truly great neoclassical artists, into the Gallery's collection for the first time. The sculptures are portraits of daughters of one of Thorvaldsen's most important patrons, Richard Bingham, second Earl of Lucan.

Thorvaldsen was the son of a wood-carver of Icelandic origin. He entered the Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen at the precocious age of eleven. In 1797, he won a stipend to study in Rome, where the cultural landscape was dominated by Antonio Canova (1757–1822), the most famous living artist in Europe. No sculptor at that time escaped Canova's influence, and Thorvaldsen's early concept for a gigantic, classicizing plaster statue of the mythical hero Jason showed that he could not resist Canova's magic either. Canova's partisans, who were largely French and Italian, promoted the misty sensuality of the Italian sculptor's art. Thorvaldsen's defenders, who were primarily German and Scandinavian, instead would praise the Danish artist's frankness and reticent naturalism.

In 1803, Thomas Hope, the eminent British collector of classical antiquities, commissioned the colossal *Jason* in marble, enabling the otherwise penniless Thorvaldsen to remain in Rome. The Dane's subsequent success is demonstrated by numerous commissions for huge equestrian and funerary monuments, as well as the *Lion of Lucerne* for a Swiss mountainside and architectural reliefs for the Quirinal



Palace in Rome, Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen, and the Villa Carlotta near Lugano. Thorvaldsen established his own museum in his native Copenhagen — the first public museum in Denmark. Most of his plaster models, dozens of drawings, marble sculptures, his collection of antiquities and paintings, and his archive are preserved there.

Lord Lucan commissioned the first marble examples of Thorvaldsen's reliefs *Night and Day*, which were replicated in more than a dozen examples during Thorvaldsen's lifetime. Lord Lucan also ordered the first marble example

of Thorvaldsen's *Triumphant Venus*, and he bought the *Standing Baptismal Angel*, originally created for the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen (now in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm).

Although Lord Lucan was said to have considered commissioning portraits of his wife and three of his four daughters, Thorvaldsen's account books list only the busts of the "older (*la maggiore*) Lady Lucan" and the "younger (*la minore*) Lady Lucan." A third bust, recorded as "Madame Vernot" and perhaps ordered separately, must portray Bingham's eldest daughter Elizabeth,



whose married name was Vernon. The plaster model for it and for another bust that corresponds to the marble one identified here as Louisa Bingham Elcho are both in the collection in Thorvaldsens Museum. The busts apparently remained with the Bingham family for more than a century: when they appeared at auction in 1999, the seller attested that his father had bought them from Lord Lucan in the 1960s, which is when, coincidentally, the seventh earl succeeded to the title.

Although the National Gallery of Art owns a bronze statuette by Canova and two marble sculptures completed by his studio, as well as a sculpture by the only American who was employed by Thorvaldsen in Rome (Thomas Crawford, creator of the figure *Freedom*, which stands atop our nation's Capitol), there was nothing in the collection representing the work of the great Danish artist himself. Now the Patrons' Permanent Fund has made possible the Gallery's acquisition of these three marble portraits. With their delicate coiffures chiseled into marble as exquisite as porcelain, they express to perfection the uncanny equilibrium between animate and inanimate that Thorvaldsen achieved when neoclassicism was being transformed, almost imperceptibly, into romanticism. • Mary L. Levkoff, *Curator and Head of the Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts*

Carlo Bossoli, *Balaklava*

This magnificent landscape, a large, 30-by-44-inch gouache on paper in brilliant condition, was created by one of the most popular and successful view painters of the nineteenth century. Although Carlo Bossoli (1815–1884) is little known in America, he was widely collected in Europe. Bossoli reformed the Italian tradition of *vedute* from the late eighteenth century into a nineteenth-century mode—including

industry, railways, war, and exotic places. Above all Bossoli was a romantic, like J.M.W. Turner, frequently showing panoramas, the dramatic heights and depths of soaring mountains and plunging valleys, and strong light effects such as fires, backlighting, and sunsets.

The disastrous Crimean War fostered demand for images of Balaklava, as the site was made famous by reports from the front, and also by Alfred Lord Tennyson's patriotically romanticized *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854). Besides his three more topographical paintings of Balaklava circulated in an 1856 set of color lithographs, Bossoli sold at least three other views in 1855, 1856, and 1857, of which this is the last and by far the grandest, apparently done for the Duke of Hamilton.

Many of the smaller, more detailed images of the Crimea during the war were made by foreigners who came there for the first time and stayed only briefly, whereas Bossoli's panorama was created by someone who actually grew up in the region. He knew from his youth not only how crucial the Crimean peninsula was for controlling the Black Sea, but also how complex was its history: the natural harbor of Balaklava protected by surrounding mountains, the settlement's founding by the ancient Scythians, its control by the Greeks, then the building of the mountaintop fortress by the Genoese in the fourteenth century, its capture by the Turks in the fifteenth century and by the Russians under Catherine the Great.

Again like Turner, infusing contemporary reality with many layers from his knowledge both of history and of the details of nature, Bossoli created a romantic vision of his subject. The mountains are higher, the cliffs more sheer, the fortress lonelier, the valleys more fathomless, with birds whirling in their depths, the sea more panoramic—even including the curvature

Carlo Bossoli, *Balaklava*, 1857, gouache, National Gallery of Art, Florian Carr Fund

of the earth. Yet the foreground of flinty rocks and scrub vegetation is precisely rendered; and the population of allied soldiers—very temporary in the history of Balaklava—is replaced by more timeless shepherds and brigands. All this lies under the majestic sky, proceeding from empyrean blue through varieties of clouds to the mists of infinite distance. This is Bossoli's masterpiece and one of the most splendid of the National Gallery's nineteenth-century drawings, a worthy complement to the Turners as well as to the greatest American romanticized landscapes by Jasper Francis Cropsey, Frederic Edwin Church, and Albert Bierstadt. Its acquisition was made possible through the Florian Carr Fund. •

Andrew Robison, *Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings*

Chuck Close, *Kara*

An artist of immense invention and versatility, Chuck Close (b. 1940) has had a long and rich history with the medium of photography. He first began to use found photographs in 1965, only two years after receiving his M.F.A. from Yale University. Entranced with photography's precise details as well as its cool, black-and-white tonal range, he quickly started to make his own photographs, employing them as models on which he based his photorealist portraits and nudes. In 1979 he began to explore the possibilities offered by the large, 20-by-24-inch Polaroid camera and made a series of composite portraits, each of which consists of many separate Polaroids. These were not intended as studies for subsequent paintings but as works of art in their own right. "It was the first time," Close said, "that I considered myself a photographer."

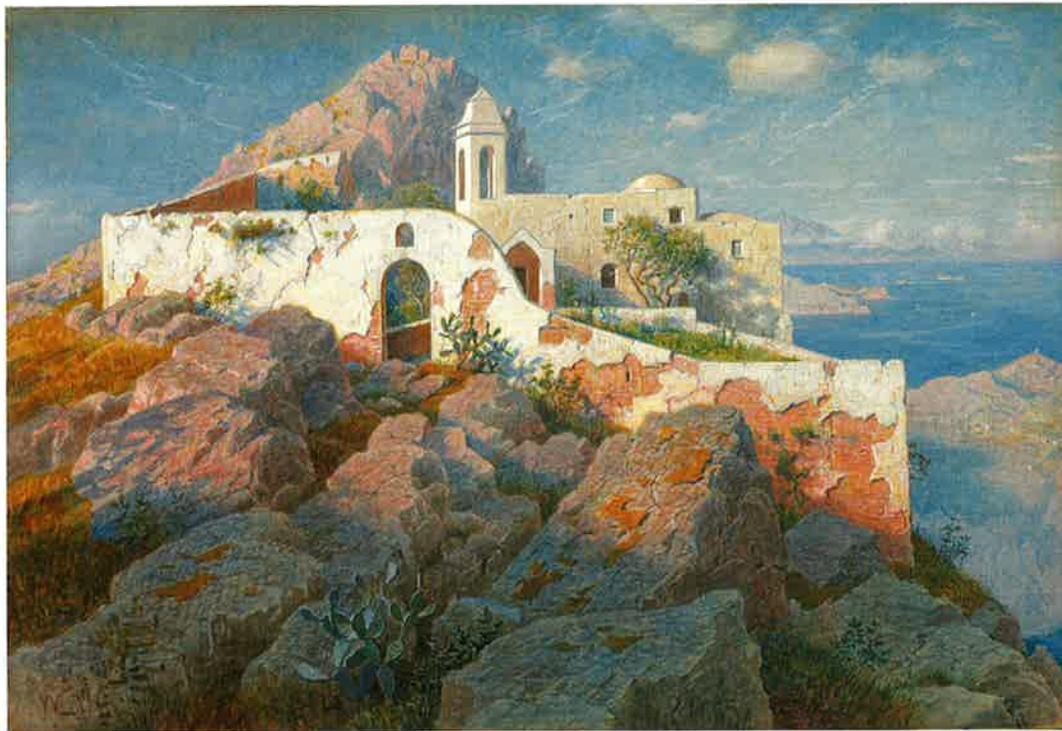
Close has been making daguerreotypes since 1997. Like so many others, he has been fascinated with the almost

magical quality of daguerreotypes—their luminosity and intimacy, and the way the image appears and disappears on the highly polished mirrorlike surface, requiring the viewer's active participation to see it. Although the process is intensely laborious (and potentially toxic), Close works with a skilled daguerreotypist, Jerry Spagnoli, and, as with the Polaroid process, he is able to see results in a matter of minutes. This enables both Close and his subjects—usually family and friends—to make subtle adjustments to refine and perfect his work.

Although he has made many distinguished daguerreotypes in the years since 1997, this portrait of the artist Kara Walker is truly exceptional. Close has come to realize, as he wrote, that most traditional portraits focus on "those key areas of the face which control likeness, while the skin, neck, hair, and background are not considered of primary importance.... I wanted to make those areas almost as interesting and important as the symbolic areas of the face." By backlighting Walker's head and allowing her darkened hair and profile to stand out in sharp contrast to the glowing background, Close constructed an image that reads as a silhouette. It is a work that eloquently evokes—and pays tribute to—Walker's own powerful art and her use of large-scale black paper silhouettes to explore issues of race and gender, sexuality and violence. It also demonstrates how both Close and Walker have reinvigorated older processes, allowing us to understand their historical resonances in new and innovative ways. The Gallery's acquisition of *Kara* was made possible with funds generously donated by Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad. • Sarah Greenough, *Senior Curator and Head of Photographs*

Chuck Close, *Kara*, 2007, daguerreotype, National Gallery of Art, Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund





William Stanley Haseltine, *Santa Maria a Cetrella, Anacapri*, c. 1892, watercolor and gouache over graphite, National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Collection

**The McCrindle Gift:
A Distinguished Collection of
Drawings and Watercolors**

June 17–November 25, 2012

This engaging exhibition celebrates the extraordinary taste and collecting acumen of quite a remarkable individual, Joseph F. McCrindle (1923–2008). Joe, as he was known to his friends and colleagues, was raised in New York City in a family that had great appreciation for literature and the arts, and he immersed himself in these passions throughout his life, both as a publisher and as an art collector. His spacious home on Central Park West and his flat in Kensington in London were filled with works of art by some of the finest European and American masters. He had inherited a number of these, but he bought most of them on his travels to Europe, particularly England and Italy, or from New York dealers. He covered the walls of his homes with his treasured paintings and drawings, and those he could not hang, he crammed into closets and chests of drawers. Joe's wide-ranging tastes in art included

portraits, figure studies, religious and mythological scenes, landscapes, and theatrical designs from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. The collection of drawings and paintings numbered more than two thousand works, but Joe had other collecting interests he pursued just as avidly, including prints, rare books and manuscripts, and pre-Columbian sculpture.

Joe's collection was large, but his heart and his largesse were even greater. He felt strongly that the works of art he had enjoyed should be shared with museums that had nurtured his interests. His patronage of American museums is legendary, and portions of his collection now reside in institutions large and small from coast to coast. He and the foundation that he established, the Henfield Foundation (now the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation), have also provided funds for museum projects as well as for many of Joe's other interests, including writing, music, and dance.

Joseph McCrindle had a special attachment to the National Gallery of Art, and we are extremely grateful for his enormous generosity over the years, starting in 1991 when he donated a wonderful painting by Luca Giordano in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the Gallery's founding. He went on to give eleven more outstanding pictures by Dutch, Flemish, and Italian artists, as well as one by John Singer Sargent, an artist whose work he particularly admired. He was magnanimous in providing funding for our fellowship program, and five former McCrindle fellows have written entries for the catalogue to be published in conjunction with this exhibition.

The McCrindle exhibition and catalogue specifically celebrate Joe's extensive gift of almost three hundred old master and modern drawings, all but two of which came to the Gallery after his death in 2008. The selection of seventy-one sheets from five

centuries is intended to capture the unique character of the McCrindle gift as a whole, while also highlighting the personal taste of the collector. Joe enjoyed the unexpected and the unusual, and he admired works not because of the names of the artists attached to them, but for the verve and rhythm of the pen or brush and, often, the whimsical nature of the subject or image. Some prominent masters do take their bows here — most notably Parmigianino, Polidoro da Caravaggio, and Maerten van Heemskerck — but these works accompany striking sheets by a number of less familiar talents, such as Matthäus Gundelach, Felice Albites, and Jean Léonard Lugardon. No less indicative of Joe's lack of concern for "names" is the inclusion of several appealing drawings that remain unattributed and are now assigned only to a school and a century. Joe's love of color, meanwhile, is captured through a handsome array of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century watercolors, mainly British and American, culminating in a spectacular view at Anacapri by William Stanley Haseltine and three handsome compositions by John Singer Sargent. An illustrated checklist of the entire McCrindle gift to the National Gallery, including paintings, appears at the end of the catalogue.

The exhibition and the accompanying catalogue have been made possible by generous support from the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation, New York.

• Margaret Morgan Grasselli, *Curator of Old Master Drawings*, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Curator of Northern Baroque Paintings*

Elegance and Refinement: The Still-Life Paintings of Willem van Aelst

June 24–October 14, 2012

Willem van Aelst (1627–1683) is not a household name today, but this remarkable seventeenth-century Dutch artist was one of the most famous still-life painters of his day, "renowned," as one contemporary art lover wrote, "the world over." Poets described how Van Aelst could convey the inner spirit of the objects he so carefully depicted, whether fruit and flowers, dead game, fabrics, or even elegant gilded vessels.

The artist earned his international fame in part because of the unusual trajectory of his career. He joined the artist's guild in his native Delft in 1643 at age sixteen and quickly demonstrated his ability to render delicate fruit in modestly scaled tabletop still lifes. Shortly thereafter, he left for Paris, where he became part of a small community of Northern artists. During his five years in France, Van Aelst further refined his manner of rendering still-life objects to appeal to the sophisticated Parisian market. He also expanded the scale and complexity of his paintings and began making large,



Willem van Aelst, *Hunt Still Life with a Velvet Bag on a Marble Ledge*, c. 1665, oil on canvas, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston

sumptuous still lifes, notable for their ostentatious display of luxury objects.

In the early 1650s Van Aelst moved to Florence, where he became a favorite at the Medici court. In Florence he painted fourteen lavish still lifes, some of which depict decorative objects in the Medici collections. Among these works are pendant paintings of fruit and flowers that demonstrate Van Aelst's exceptional sensitivity to color and compositional design. He also painted game pieces for the Medici that feature dead animals hanging from ropes, an illusionistic device that he continued to develop throughout his career.

In 1656 Van Aelst returned to the Netherlands, having spent more than ten years abroad in direct contact with wealthy and powerful patrons. In Amsterdam he quickly fashioned himself as the still-life artist for the upwardly mobile elite. He began this stage of his career by painting works similar to those that had met with such success at the Medici court in Florence: elegant flower pieces and depictions of the spoils of the hunt. He emphasized his Italian pedigree by signing his name as "Guillelmo" rather than "Willem." While in Amsterdam, Van Aelst developed a more fluid and rhythmic style to compete favorably in this dynamic new marketplace.

This monographic exhibition, the first ever devoted to this remarkable artist, will consist of twenty-six paintings and his only known drawing. The works, from all stages of his career, will be on view in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art from June 24 through October 14, 2012. The National Gallery of Art has organized this exhibition together with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The Washington venue has been made possible by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art. • Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Curator of Northern Baroque Paintings*

Shock of the News

September 23, 2012–January 27, 2013

A first glance at the front page of *Le Figaro* on February 20, 1909, must have been a shock for readers. The day's lead story, signed by the poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, was a wildly impassioned account of the birth of futurism and an inflammatory manifesto calling for people to "glorify war" and to "destroy museums, libraries, academies." An adjoining statement by the paper's editor denied all responsibility for Marinetti's "singularly audacious ideas."

Four years later Pablo Picasso cut a small section from the front page of the November 18, 1912, edition of *Le Journal* and incorporated it into a pasted paper collage, or *papier collé*. The procedure required little manual effort or technical skill, but it amounted to a radically new way of thinking about representation. Instead of depicting the likeness of a newspaper, Picasso used the real thing.

Although their strategies were poles apart, Marinetti's and Picasso's initiatives prompted visual artists to think about the newspaper more broadly—as a means of political critique, as a collection of ready-made news to appropriate or manipulate, as a source of language and images, as a typographical grab bag, and more. Marinetti and Picasso sparked a trend that spread quickly, in fact at breakneck speed, across continental Europe and to the United States. *Shock of the News* follows that trend as it developed into a phenomenon and traces its path from 1909 to 2009.

With two exceptions, the sixty artists in the exhibition will each be represented by only one exemplary work, ranging from collages, paintings, and photographs to a nearly room-size installation by Mario Merz, *À Mallarmé*, 2003. Many of the most renowned works

shown—by Marinetti, Picasso, Arthur Dove, Juan Gris, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Kurt Schwitters, Andy Warhol—have been exhaustively studied, their fragments and pages of newsprint pored over for meaning. But relatively few works of art that incorporate, comment on, or model themselves on the newspaper have received comparable investigation. One of the aims of *Shock of the News*—along with bringing together great works of art—is to call attention to a history that has escaped focused consideration.

Consider Ellsworth Kelly's cutout from 1949, *Head with Beard*, which draws on the use of newsprint to invite reading but also to suggest shading or atmosphere. The rows of type that run diagonally across Kelly's cutout can be read as either language or as chalky gray lines, the sort an artist might add with a stick of charcoal. Kelly rotated the newspaper more than ninety degrees, presumably to underscore the message that conventional reading was not the point. Nonetheless, one bit of text stands out: the headline "H. C. Lytton, 102, Chicago Merchant Dies." Given that Kelly was in his mid-twenties when he made the cutout and that the cutout was meant to be a self-portrait, his selection of a newsprint fragment that included an article about the death of a centenarian might also be "read" as a meditation on youth and old age. The Gallery is grateful to Estée Lauder for its support of *Shock of the News*. • Judith Brodie, *Curator of Modern Prints and Drawings*

Ellsworth Kelly, *Head with Beard*, 1949, newspaper cutout, Collection of the Artist, © Ellsworth Kelly