Object Selection Guide

Festival of Flowers
April 2-5, 2020
D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts

Gallery: 19th Century American

George Inness
American, 1825-1894

Clearing Up, 1860
Oil on canvas

During a trip to France in the 1850s, George Inness was introduced to the art of the Barbizon school, a group of artists whose painterly approach emphasized the mood, rather than the geographic features of a landscape. Inness returned to the United States feeling inspired, and began to experiment with the Barbizon style, favoring his own poetic vision over a more formulaic approach that is evident in his early work.

Clearing Up is an exemplary piece that demonstrates this transitional moment in the artist’s career. When Springfield collector George Walter Vincent Smith purchased the painting from Inness in 1861, he recognized that the particular atmosphere elevated George Inness’ usual mastery of form. Here, deep shadows and a range of colors evoke a sense of hopeful relief after the clearing of a summer storm. Blue sky appears in the foreground and heavy, purple clouds float towards the horizon. Additional canvases by George Inness are on display in the American Paintings Salon in the nearby George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum.

Collection of the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum
D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts

Gallery: Early 20th Century American

Paul Sample
American, 1896-1974

Church Supper, 1933
Oil on canvas

Like many other artists of the 1920s and 1930s who have been called American Scene painters or realist, Sample painted American subjects in a realist style. He chose a specific setting for this painting, the town of Westmore, Vermont, where his wife’s family lived and where he spent his summers painting. In addition to representing a typical rural church supper, Sample created a humorous, even satirical, narrative by showing the town residents reacting in different ways to the arrival of a stylish young woman. Sample has included other interesting characters in this painting in addition to the symbolic temptress: a child holding an apple to her innocent young lips, a faithful dog, and a crone-like figure.

The artist used townspeople and family members as models for the painting. The woman holding the tray of food was based on a Mrs. Tatoo, who often served the food at church suppers.

The James Philip Gray Collection
33.87
Unknown Artist
Hispano-Flemish, 15th century

Faltarces Retable (Altarpiece), about 1490
Gilt and polychromed carved wood

In 1469, a chapter of Spanish history was initiated with the marriage of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. The new king and queen supported the religious enthusiasm of the time and promoted the construction of churches and the restoration of older religious structures. Artists were commissioned to decorate the churches with monumental retablos placed on the high altar, statues and elaborate decorative carvings for walls and facades. Many of the artists working in the churches were from Flanders, a country which also promoted Catholicism. Flemish craftsmen journeyed to Spain to work in the expanded art market or filled orders, such as for carved and gilded retablos such as this one, in their native land. Decorative items created in Flanders were shipped to Spain and then assembled and installed by Spanish craftsmen. Thus, retablos were often not the work of one artist, but rather the product of a team of people, each specializing in distinct phases of the object’s creation.

This retablo was made for the Church of Fuentes, a small town, now nonexistent, near the city of Valladolid, Spain. The altarpiece is a triptych, an object divided into three parts. The left panel depicts the Nativity of the Virgin to Joseph and the Annunciation to the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin. The central panel contains the Adoration, including Mary who worships the Infant Christ. In the mid-section are mountains and buildings and the three Wise Men and their followers. In the top portion of the middle section is the figure of God the Father with the orb of the world in his hand. On either side of God are pairs of angels and flanking clouds. The right panel contains the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple and the Epiphany. Framing the entire composition is a canopy of delicate Gothic-style tracery. At one time the retablo had doors, which were probably painted in the Gothic style.

The altarpiece was recently restored, making it possible to once again place the object on view in the gallery. Although old repairs exist with new ones, the retablo is in a remarkably good state of preservation.
D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts

Gallery: Italian Baroque

Francesco Trevisani
Italian (1656-1746)

Allegory of Painting
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mr. Channing Blake
79.13

An allegory picture makes an invisible concept, such as art, visible by using personification and symbols. In Francesco Trevisani’s Allegory of Painting a young artist attired in a colorful satin dress with gold fringe is seated before an easel in a studio. Hanging from a gold chain around her neck is a small mask which represents the artistic skill that a student receives from a teacher. The richness of the artist’s costume refers to the infinite variety of pleasure that may be found in the art of painting. Present are the tools of painting: brushes, a palette, a compass and a portrait bust. In front of the artist is a drawing, its subject obscured from view except for Trevisani’s monogram. The classical statues in the background, the mask pendant and the portrait bust portray the human form, thought to be the highest level of artistic expression. Collectively, the elements of the image define painting as an art requiring skill and learning.
D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts

Gallery: 17th c. Flemish

Ferdinand Bol
Dutch, 1616–1680

Self-Portrait, about 1647
Oil on canvas

In his Self-Portrait, Ferdinand Bol, one of the most successful painters of the 17th century, shows his respect for his teacher, Rembrandt (1606–1669), by modeling his own portrait after Rembrandt’s Self-Portrait at the Age of Thirty-four (1640). While Bol honors his teacher, he also uses the portrait to indicate his own ability. Bol shows himself holding a scroll and wearing a double gold chain and a cross, both indications of success. The scroll alludes to Bol’s talent as a speaker, a quality that was expected of the best painters of this time, while the gold chain and cross were awarded by the government for great accomplishment in the arts. Finally, Bol depicts himself drawing back a curtain, a device used by artists to indicate their talent for depicting space realistically.

James Phillips Gray Collection
42.02