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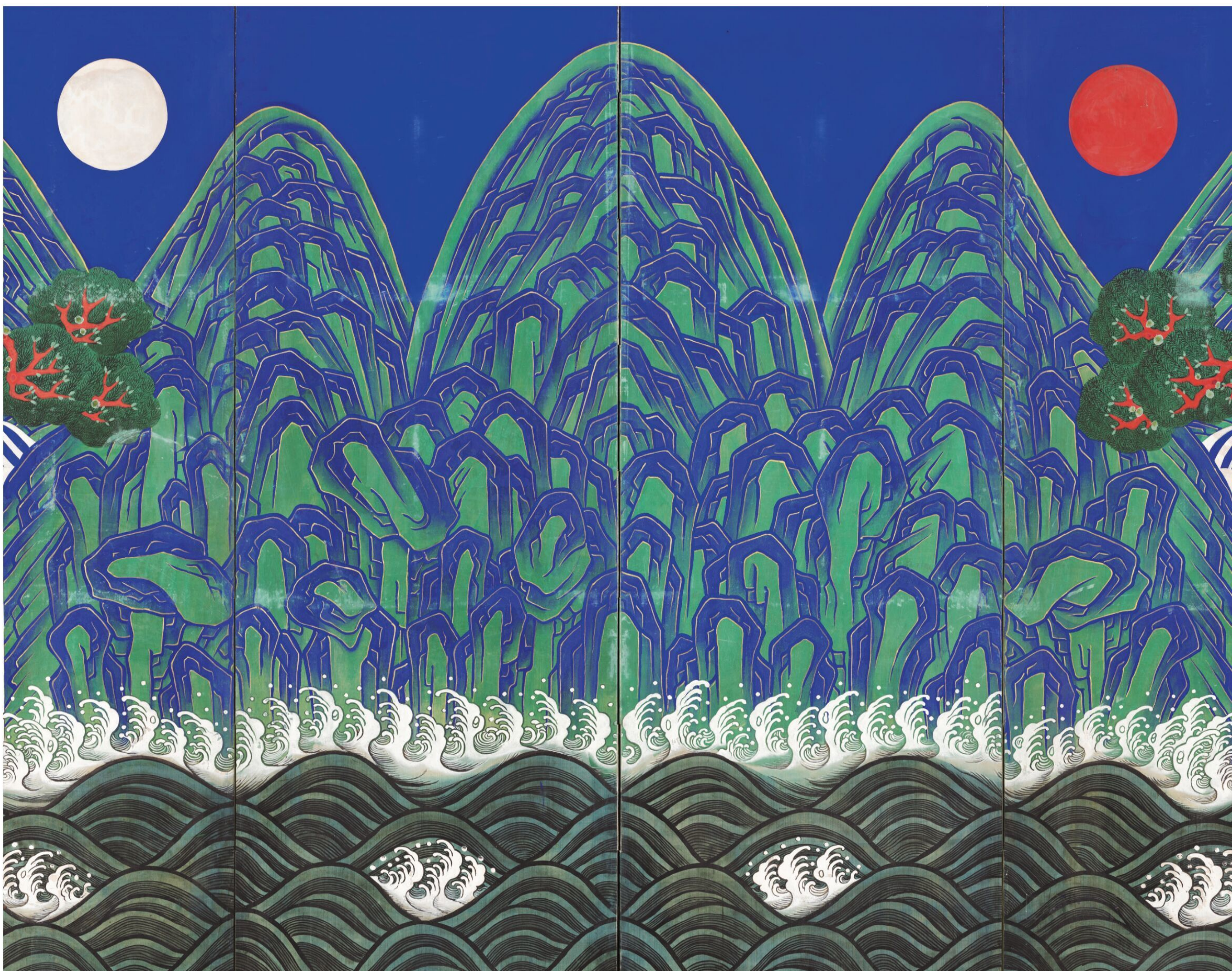
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THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

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Dostoevsky's taste
for the Old Masters

An interview
with Tacita Dean

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Feline groovy: the
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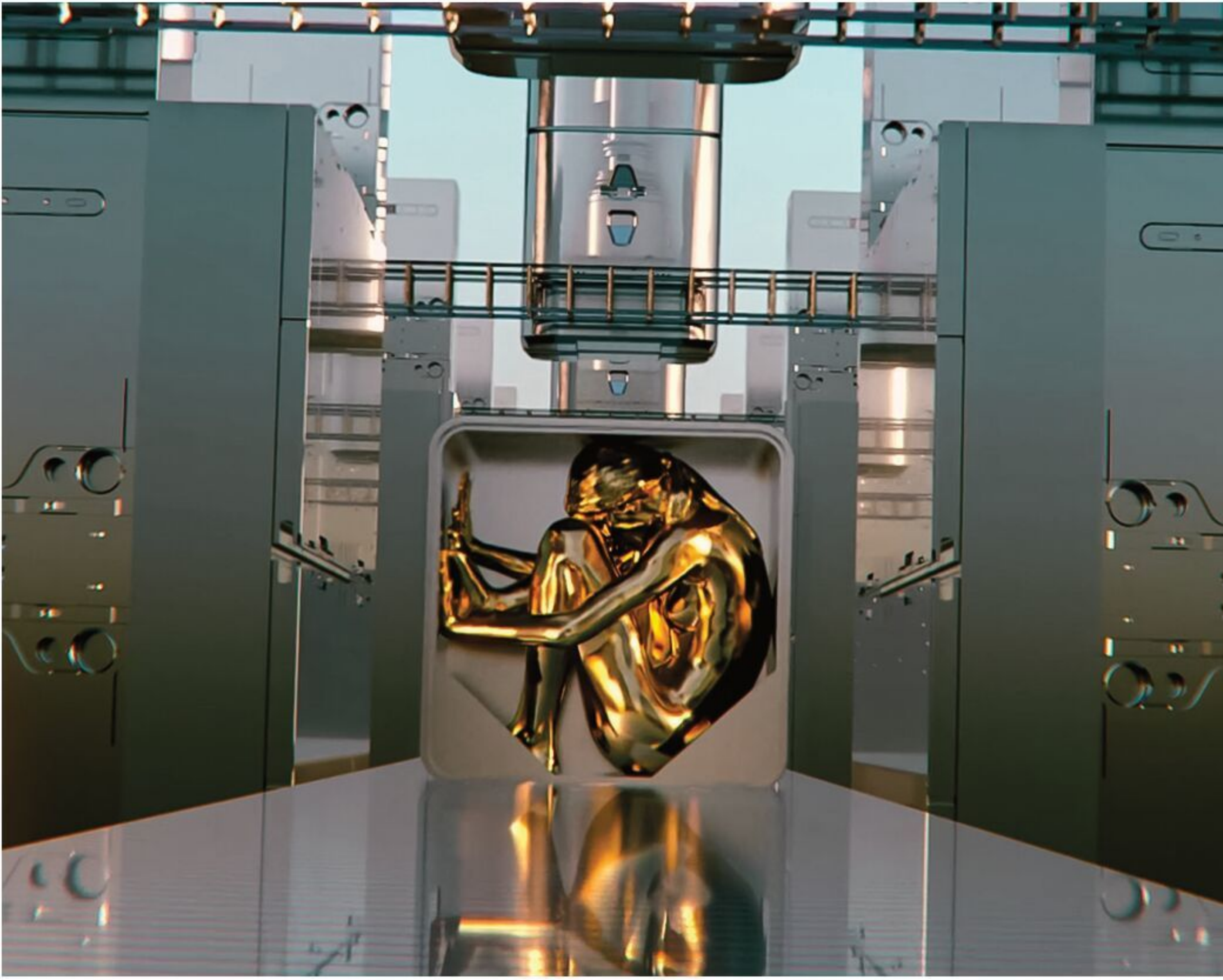
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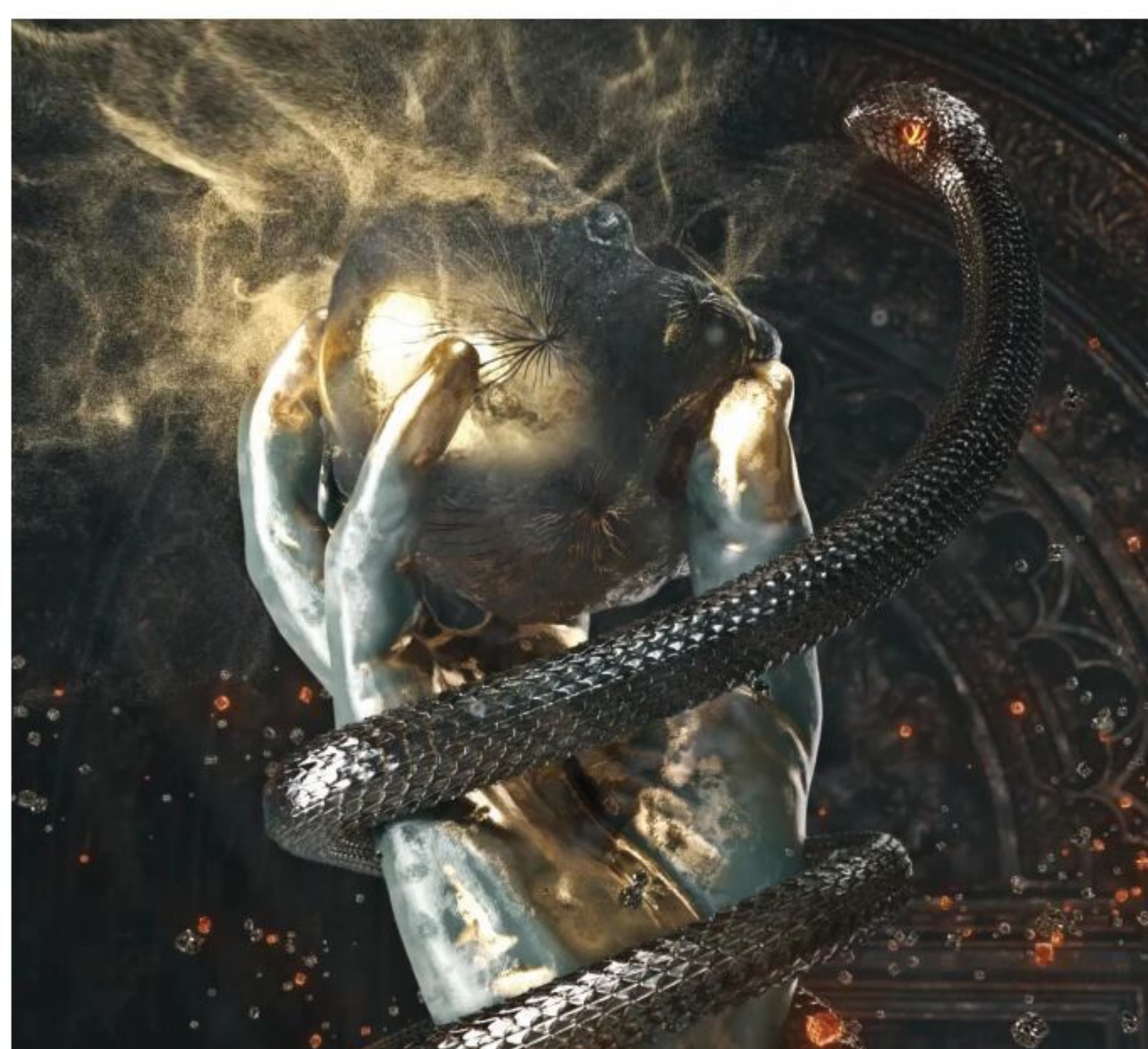
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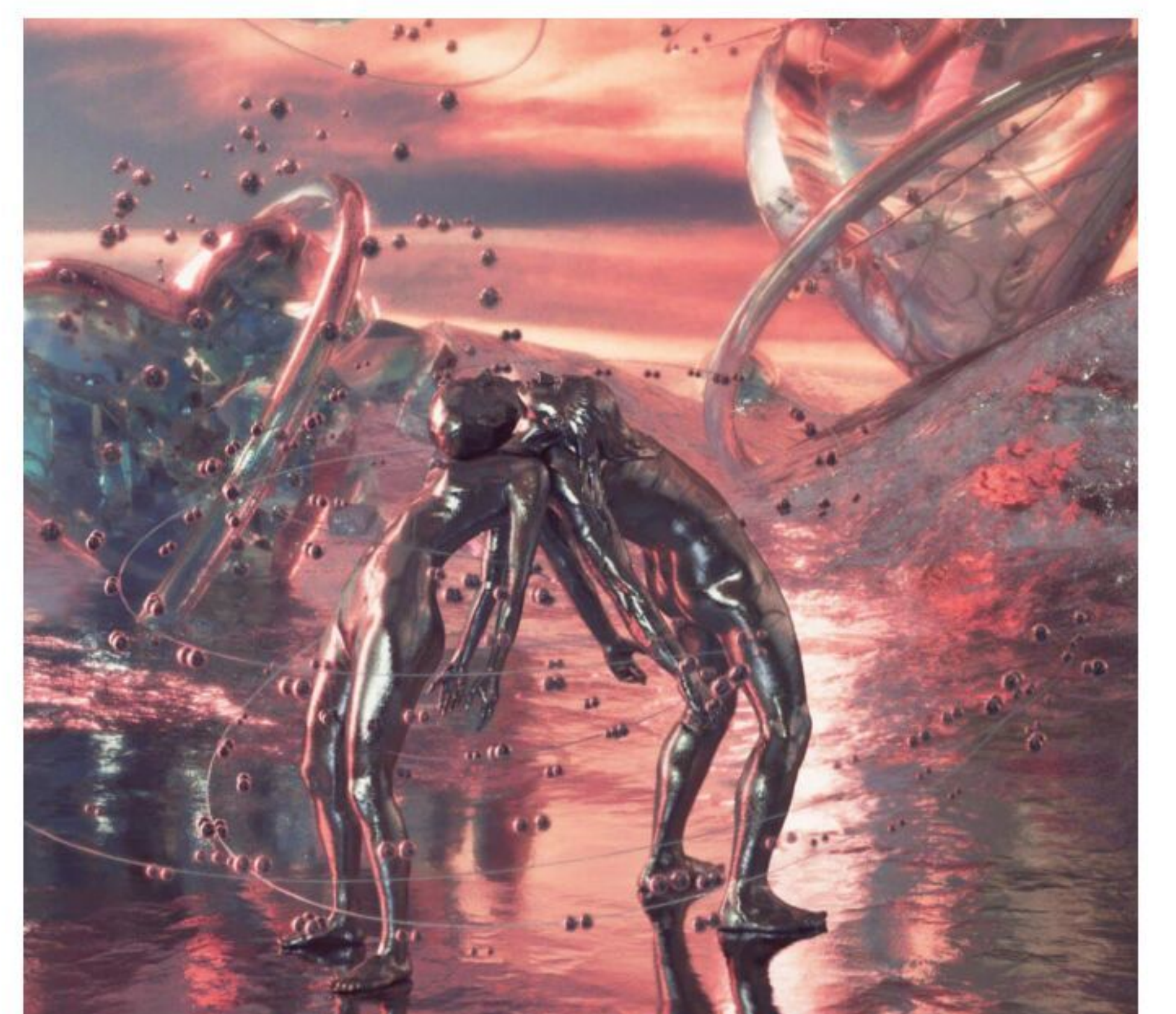
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Height: 43cm Length: 33cm

STANDING MAN, ARMS OUTSTRECHED

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Andrea Solario Ecce Homo. Oil on panel, 66,5 x 47 cm. Sale 20 Nov.

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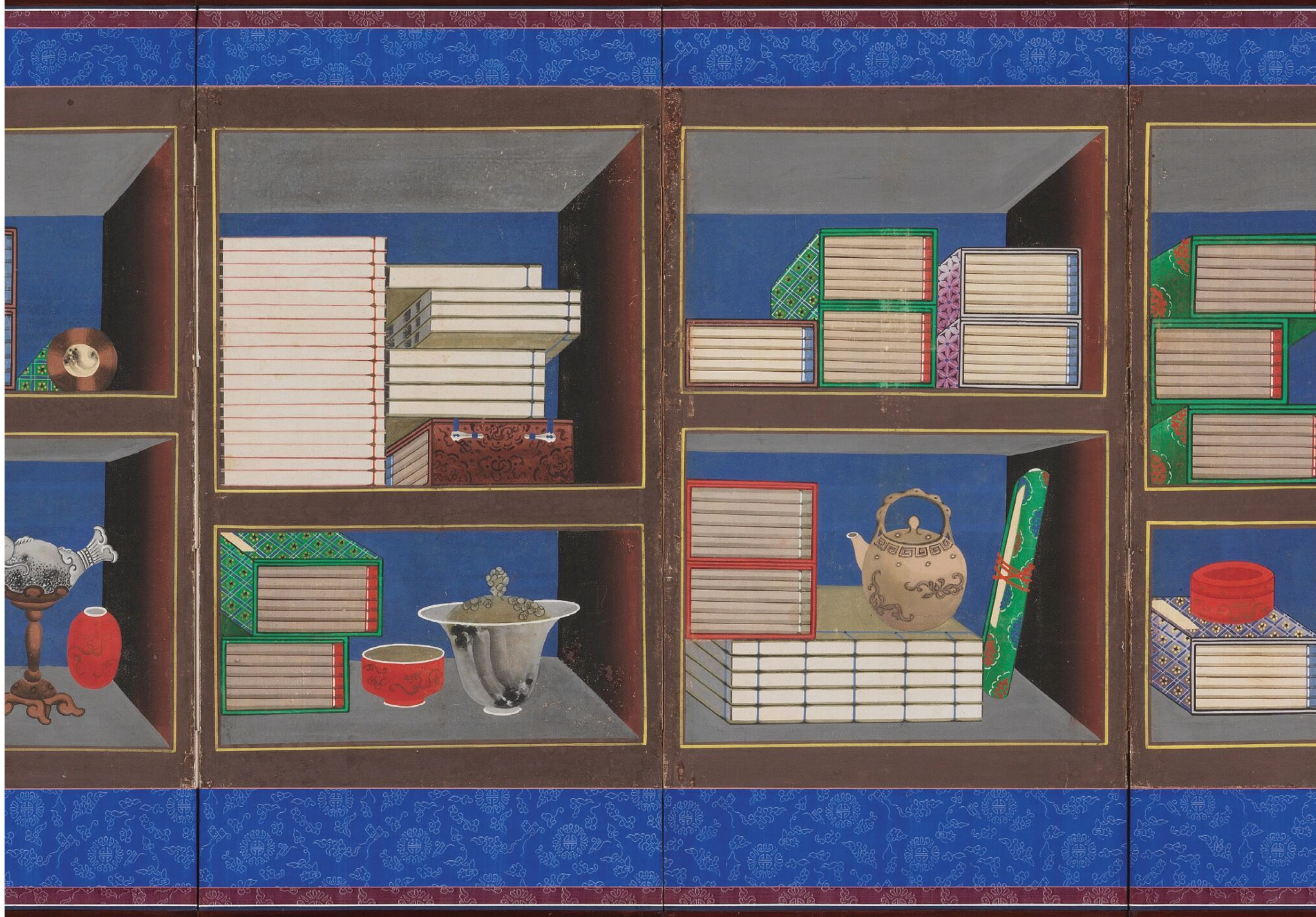
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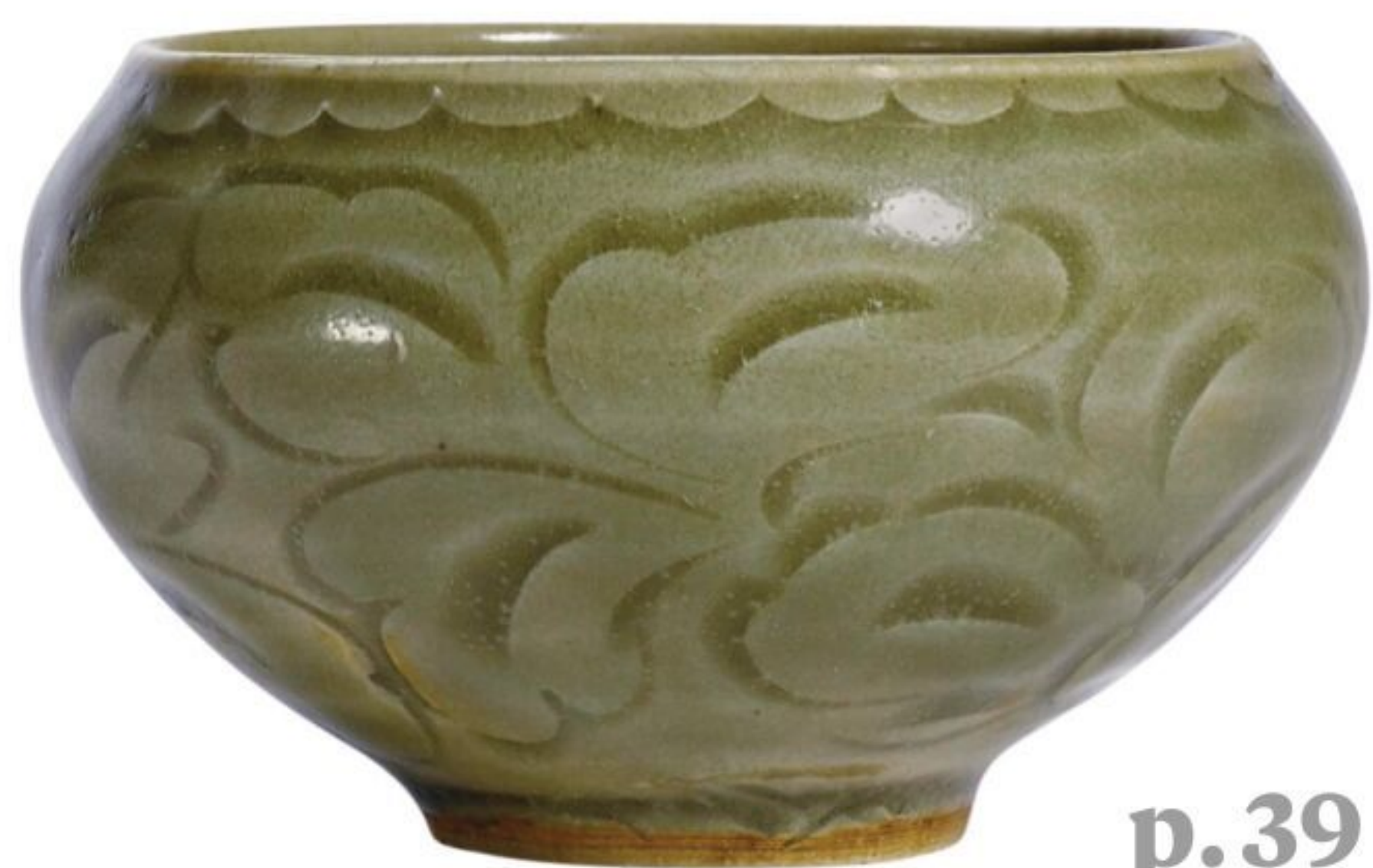
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19th century/early 20th century, Korea, colours
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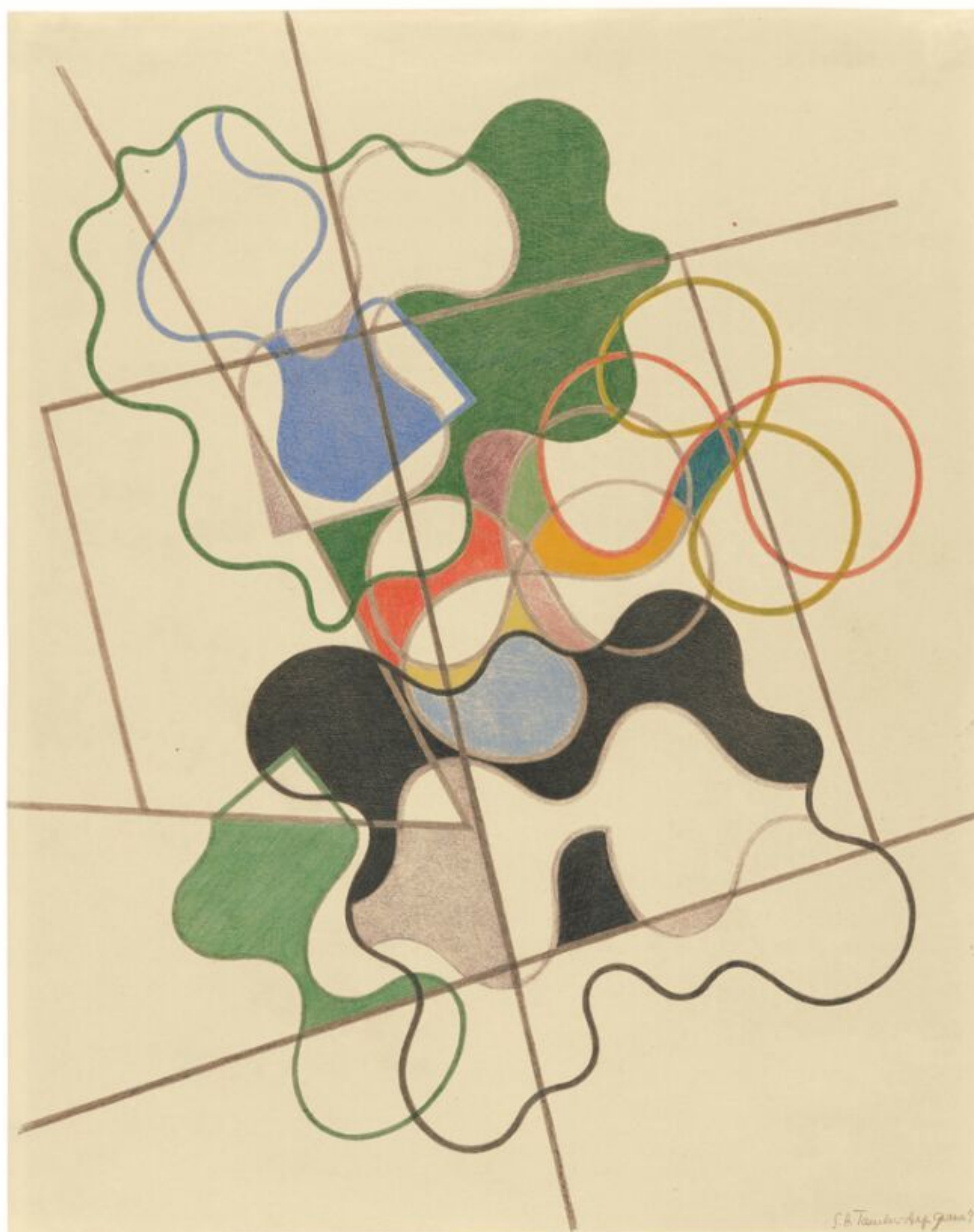
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The reel thing



1. Still from *Craneway Event*, 2009, Tacita Dean (b. 1965), 16mm colour anamorphic film, optical sound, 1 hour 48 mins

In 2009, the artist Tacita Dean completed a long film about the choreographer Merce Cunningham, to follow another, shorter one she had made two years before. For one hour and 48 minutes, *Craneway Event* (Fig. 1) observes the Merce Cunningham Dance Company rehearsing over the course of three days in the former Ford Motor Factory in Richmond, California – a craneway being the part of a factory where the raw materials are unloaded, and an ‘event’ being Cunningham’s term for the performances he would regularly put on in non-theatrical spaces, from the Piazza San Marco in Venice to the Park Avenue Armory in New York. In 2010, when the film was shown in the galleries representing Dean’s work, I watched it through twice in one sitting (it was a year in which I had rather more time). What had drawn me to the film in the first place was its subject. Before Dean had finished cutting the film together, Merce Cunningham had died and the Company was about to embark on its farewell tour, prior to disbanding according to its founder’s wishes. What made me stay is the fact that Dean’s film is

not so much a documentary as a sympathetic commentary on Cunningham’s methods and what seems like an almost telepathic rapport with the dancers.

It can sometimes seem unsophisticated, even reductive, to be drawn to art simply because of its subject. In her essay, ‘Against Interpretation’ (1977), Susan Sontag argues against ‘reducing the work of art to its content’, to make it easier ‘for arrangement into a mental scheme of categories’. But Dean’s achievement in *Craneway Event* and in her other, more direct portraits of visual artists, such as David Hockney, Mario Merz and, most recently, the painter Luchita Hurtado talking to a much younger practitioner, Julie Mehretu, is to make her subjects matter in new ways, to make them harder to categorise by the end of the film than they were before. This she achieves through her mastery of her chosen medium: 16mm film. The medium – a word Dean insists on when she talks to Robert Barry for this issue (see Feature, pp. 42–47) – is responsible for the watchful, painterly quality of her work and for the attentiveness of the fixed takes (partly

determined by the shortness of the film reels) by which her camera seems to slow the passing of time. Thanks to its abandonment by the cinema industry, however, analogue film – and, crucially, the means by which to process it – is in grave danger of becoming extinct; a state of affairs Dean has been campaigning against with great energy for a decade.

Jasper Johns, an artist who is often described as ‘famously taciturn’ – perhaps he is too busy thinking about his next artistic move to enjoy giving interviews – has sometimes been more forthcoming about the peers he admires. In 1968, for instance, he told *Newsweek*, ‘Merce is my favorite artist in any field’ and he was the company’s artistic adviser from 1967 to 1980. As a monumental, two-part survey of Johns’s painting and sculpture runs at both the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Whitney in New York (see pp. 90–91), one can’t help thinking that Tacita Dean, who has referred to what she calls ‘my history with old men!’, might be just the artist to record his restless spirit. **A**

Fatema Ahmed, Acting Editor

AGENDA

November highlights

La Chine: The 18th-century China Collection of the Dresden Kupferstich-Kabinett

Residenzschloss, Dresden
19 November–13 February 2022
www.skd.museum

Augustus the Strong brought Chinese porcelain production to Europe – but his love of China did not stop at ‘white gold’. This show presents highlights from his vast collection of watercolours, prints and drawings.



Peru

British Museum, London
11 November–20 February 2022
www.britishmuseum.org

From the birth of Chavin culture in around 1200 BC to the fall of the Incas in 1532, this display charts the history of six successive Andean societies. More than 40 of the objects on display are rare loans from Peruvian museums, and range from ancient burial regalia to ceremonial drums and vessels.



Museum reopening

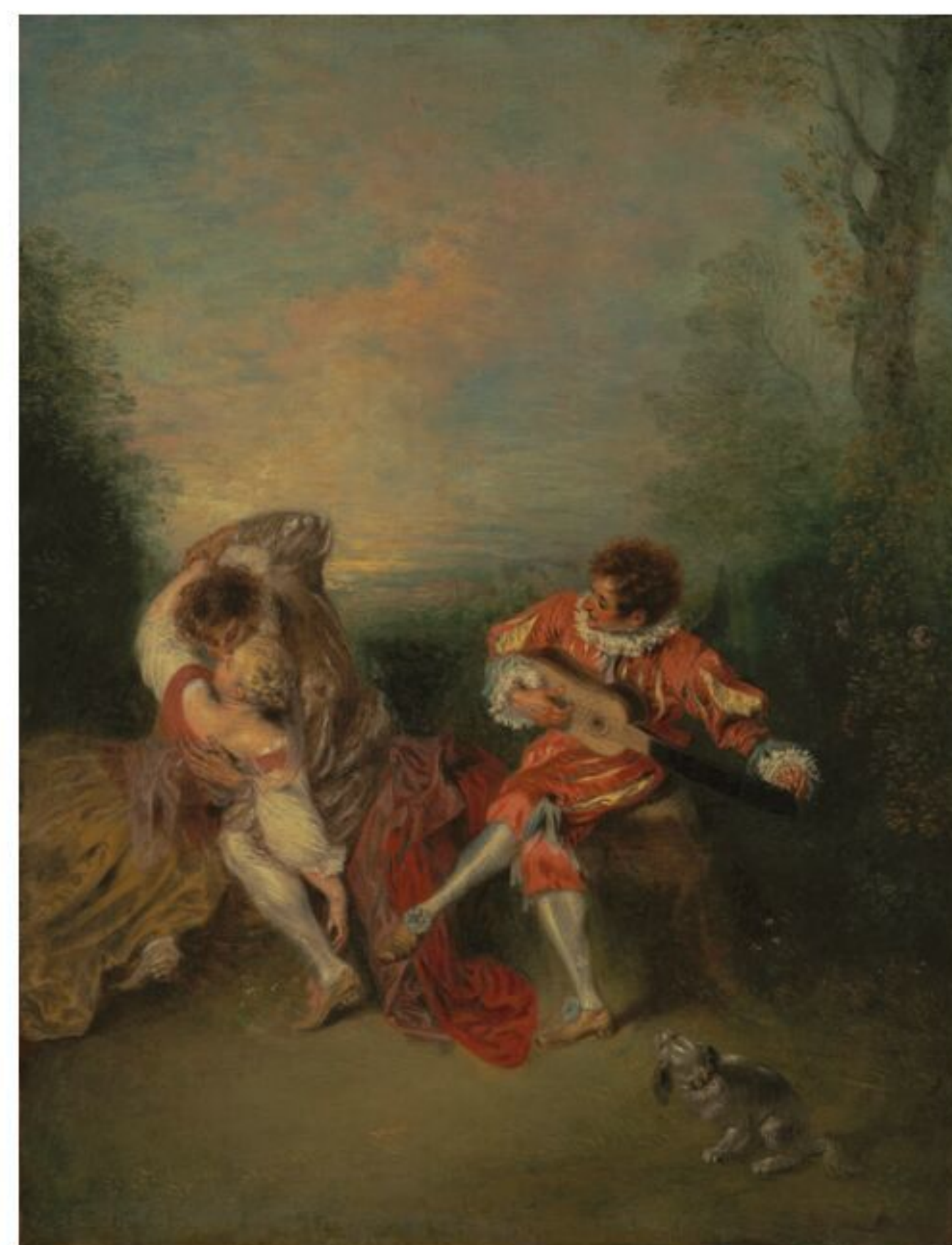
Courtauld Gallery, London
19 November
www.courtauld.ac.uk

After three years and a £9.5m refurbishment, the north wing of Somerset House – William Chambers’ neoclassical masterpiece on the Strand – reopens to the public with more room than ever before to display Samuel Courtauld’s celebrated collections of art, spanning the middle and modern ages.

La Surprise: Watteau in Los Angeles

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
23 November–20 February 2022
www.getty.edu

La Surprise (c. 1718–19; pictured) was esteemed in Watteau’s day as one of the finest of his *fêtes galantes*, but in 1848 it vanished – until 2017, when it was acquired by the Getty. It is at the centre of this display of 12 works by Watteau in LA collections.

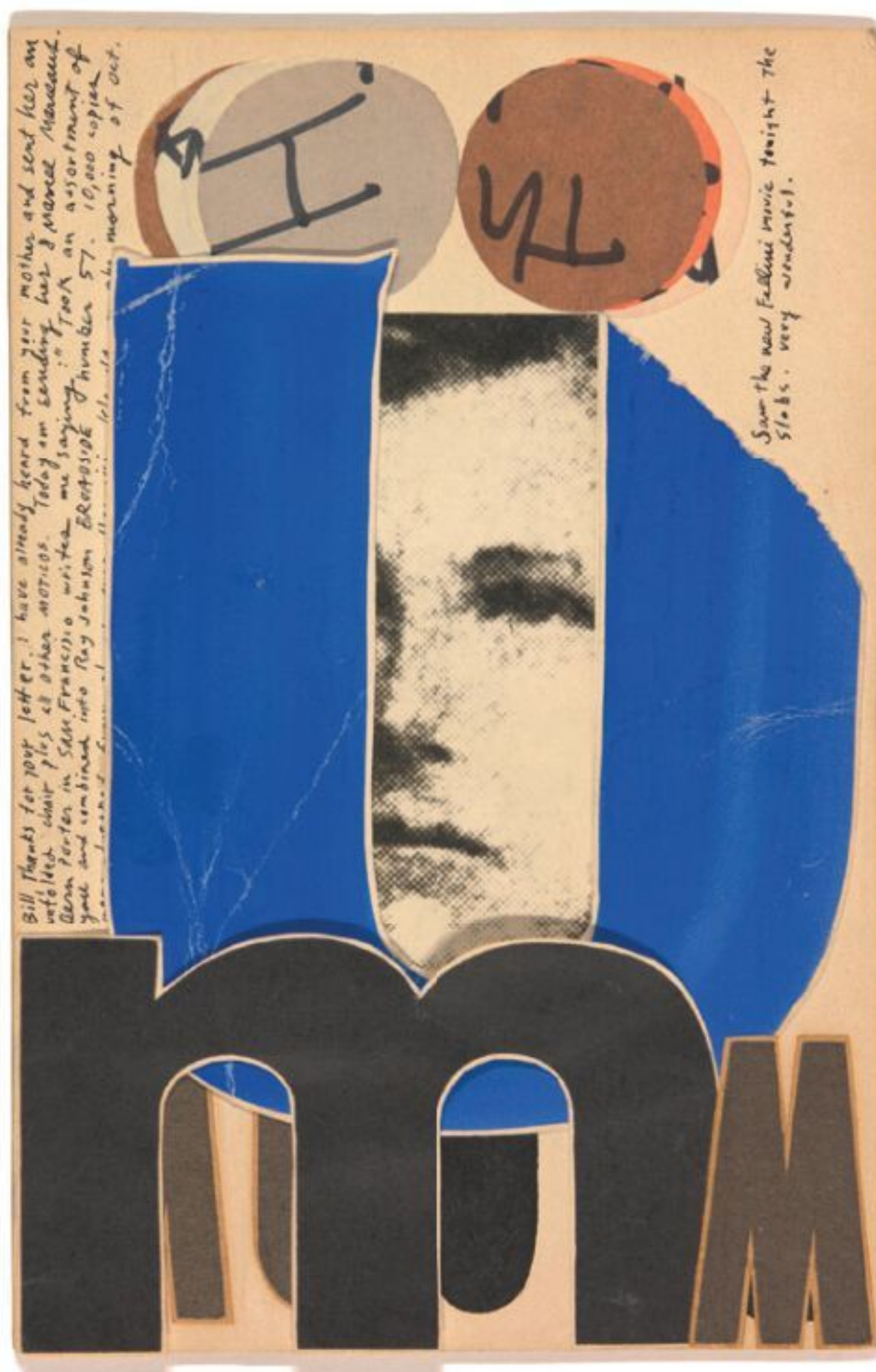




Lubaina Himid

Tate Modern, London
25 November–3 July 2022
www.tate.org.uk

Incorporating an impressive range of media, Lubaina Himid's work is driven by an impetus to uncover hidden histories – often with biting satire. This major retrospective extends from her role in the British Black arts movement of the 1980s to paintings created during lockdown.



Ray Johnson c/o

Art Institute of Chicago
26 November–21 March 2022
www.artic.edu

Once described as 'New York's most famous unknown artist', Ray Johnson left his mark on Pop, Neo-Dada and conceptual art, most particularly as the creator of 'mail art' in the 1940s. Contending that he was most inventive in collaboration, this show examines his work alongside that of his correspondents.



Dutch and Flemish Galleries

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
20 November
www.mfa.org

Coinciding with the launch of its Center for Netherlandish Art – the first research facility of its kind at a US museum – the MFA has renovated and rehung seven galleries to present a broad overview of art, commerce and science across Flanders and the Netherlands in the 17th century.

Jens Adolf Jerichau

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk
28 October–6 March 2022
www.louisiana.dk

Jens Adolf Jerichau died at the age of 25 in 1916, but his short career proved a major influence on later Danish painters such as Asger Jorn and Per Kirkeby. This show considers how he measured himself against the Old Masters, and his meetings in Paris with the likes of Picasso.



Should museums be dabbling in NFTs?

The British Museum is one of several leading museums selling non-fungible tokens (NFTs) of works in their collection. But what are the institutions really selling – and do they understand what serious buyers want?

Bernadine Bröcker Wieder

For those following some of the coverage of the digital art market and the boom in non-fungible tokens (NFTs), it's tempting to say that museums should have nothing to do with what seems like a fad or a bubble. This view ignores what NFTs really are and what they mean to serious collectors – and how much this has in common with the idea of the museum itself.

If you speak to the biggest crypto collectors about what they would like to do with their NFTs, the word they use – and they mean it as a verb – is 'hodl'. It derives from 'HODL', an acronym that stands for 'hold on for dear life'. Over the past five years, crypto investors have held on to their assets despite the volatility and speculation all around them. On forums such as Reddit or Twitter, they advise each other to keep calm and hodl. Of the Bitcoins available to buy today, 79 per cent are held by long-term investors who consider them 'digital gold', with only 21 per cent held and traded by speculators.

Since 2013 (but mainly over the past two years thanks to standardisation and technological advances) cryptocurrency hodlers have found an alternative focus for their long-term investment strategy: the digital creative economy. Their holdings (which have sometimes increased in value by 1,000 times when converted to fiat currencies) now make their way into supporting artists, creatives and metaverse real estate: the 'long term' that resonates with this culture.

Despite the existence of a generational divide and a lack of common language, 'hodling' has a lot in common with the traditional mindset of museums and collectors. Institutions preserve cultural assets through pandemics, art-market speculation, shady dealings, popular disinterest and even civic upheaval. And museums, on the whole, reject calls for deaccession even in the darkest moments, believing that the long-term value of their holdings for humanity supersedes any short-term gain.

When an NFT by Beeple that was stored on the Ethereum blockchain sold for \$69m at Christie's early in 2021, the wider world took notice. But when the buyer, Metakovan, talks about what he wants to do with *Everydays: The First 5000 Days*, rather than selling it for profit, he discusses collaborating with the artist to set up a virtual museum the public can access through virtual tickets. To Metakovan, these 13 years' worth of doodles are priceless – representing an era.

Like it or not, history is often shaped by the artefacts and opinions valued by the masses. The subject matter of Beeple's works may not resemble the offerings in a Post-War and Contemporary Art evening sale – calling to mind instead the populist, satirical, controversial commentary of, say, Jan Steen, Honoré Daumier or William Hogarth.

Museums will undoubtedly need to deal with NFTs in some capacity, even simply in the form of donations (as was the case of the ICA Miami and the gift of *CryptoPunk 5293* from one of its trustees). Some like to jump to the conclusion that museums are sitting

on a treasure trove of 'NFT-able' digital assets because of their large collections of art, culture, pop and design.

At Vastari [an online platform that connects private collectors with public museums], we have noticed that the institutions we work with are reconsidering decades of pumping content on to the internet for free. Monetisation using blockchains and NFTs, when done right, allows for the circulation of the asset while also generating income from it. Funds have already been raised for the Uffizi, the Hermitage, the Whitworth (a project Vastari was involved with) and the British Museum, with more projects undoubtedly coming forward soon.

But I would stress: if these museums do not clearly define their internal attitude towards digital assets, observers will easily jump to the conclusion that they are selling a high-priced equivalent of a low-value collectible souvenir, or even a fractional share in the original object. What, therefore, is the long-term benefit for hodlers of these tokens?

For museums looking to get involved in this technology, simply dabbling with the minting and selling of JPEGs is indeed not advisable. Instead, they would need to master an authentic voice and business model – and understand the skilful conjuring of transparency, timestamping, FOMO (fear of missing out), community and creativity that drives this new wave of technology.

Bernadine Bröcker Wieder is the founder and CEO of Vastari and Vastari Labs.

Douglas McCarthy

When the British Museum recently announced its intention to sell NFTs of prints by Hokusai, many seemed surprised, intrigued or somewhat bemused. ‘Museum Twitter’ lit up with passionate threads, heated discussion and sarcastic memes. The British Museum, however, is not the only venerable institution to enter this voguish domain. This year the State Hermitage Museum, the Uffizi Galleries and the Whitworth Art Gallery have also sold NFTs based on their collections.

In May, after the Uffizi sold an NFT of Michelangelo’s *Doni Tondo* for \$170,000, its director Eike Schmidt said, ‘It’s not a change of direction in terms of revenue, it is an additional revenue.’ In July, the Hermitage reportedly earned \$440,500 from auctioning NFTs of five masterpieces by Giorgione, Leonardo, Kandinsky, Monet and Van Gogh. The museum’s director, Mikhail Piotrovsky, said that the auction was ‘an important stage in the development of the relationship between person and money, person and thing’.

At first glance these ventures seem to encapsulate the ethical tension between museums on the one hand democratising access to their collections and, on the other, financialising them as assets in NFT marketplaces. Take a moment to reflect, however, and you might conclude that they are entirely in keeping with normal museum practice. To understand why,

we need to make a brief detour into copyright.

Like many museums around the world, the British Museum, to take just one example, uses copyright to restrict reuse of its digital collections. It claims new copyrights when it makes digital facsimiles of public-domain works in its collections – works in which copyright no longer exists, or never existed in the first place – just like the Hokusai prints from which the museum is now minting NFTs. Do these digital facsimiles actually qualify for copyright protection? The relevant law is complex and lacks international harmonisation.

Claiming copyright in these digital surrogates allows museums to erect a legal scaffold upon which restrictive reuse policies can be built. It enables their attempts (however vain they may be in practice) to monopolise the supply, publication and monetisation of digital collections. Image supply and reproduction fees can be ruinously expensive and the negative effects of such restrictive policies on authors and academics – especially those working in image-focused research fields such as art history – are well known.

According to the website of LaCollection, the British Museum’s commercial partner, ‘Each NFT is associated with a certificate of authenticity, signed by the art institution that owns the original artwork.’ This statement will raise the eyebrows of many art historians. *The Great Wave* was the first print from Hokusai’s series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* (*Fugaku sanjurokkei*), of which around 5,000 impressions were printed. It has since become one of the most reproduced and well known images

in the world. So the notion of buying a ‘super rare’ editioned token of the Hokusai print is rather odd.

To market limited-edition NFTs of public domain works is to confect scarcity where none exists. Prints of *The Great Wave* are held in museum collections all around the world and several of these institutions offer high-resolution digital files of *The Great Wave* freely available for download and unrestricted reuse by anyone, anywhere – no strings attached.

The massive energy consumption of Proof of Work (PoW) blockchains, currently used as the basis for cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin – and for the time being Ethereum, upon which most NFTs are based, deepens the ethical conundrum for museums, running counter to their stated intention of reducing their carbon footprint.

In 19th-century Japan, the right to manufacture and disseminate printed works was called *zohan* (possession of blocks). Museums selling NFTs of their collections today have unwittingly revived *zohan* on 21st-century blockchains. The price of a Hokusai print in 1842 was fixed at 16 *mon*, approximately the cost of two portions of noodles. At the time of writing, bidding on the British Museum’s first NFT of *The Great Wave* has surpassed £6,000. If Hokusai were alive today, he would surely be astonished.

Douglas McCarthy is co-editor of the Open GLAM Medium publication and collections engagement manager at Europeana.

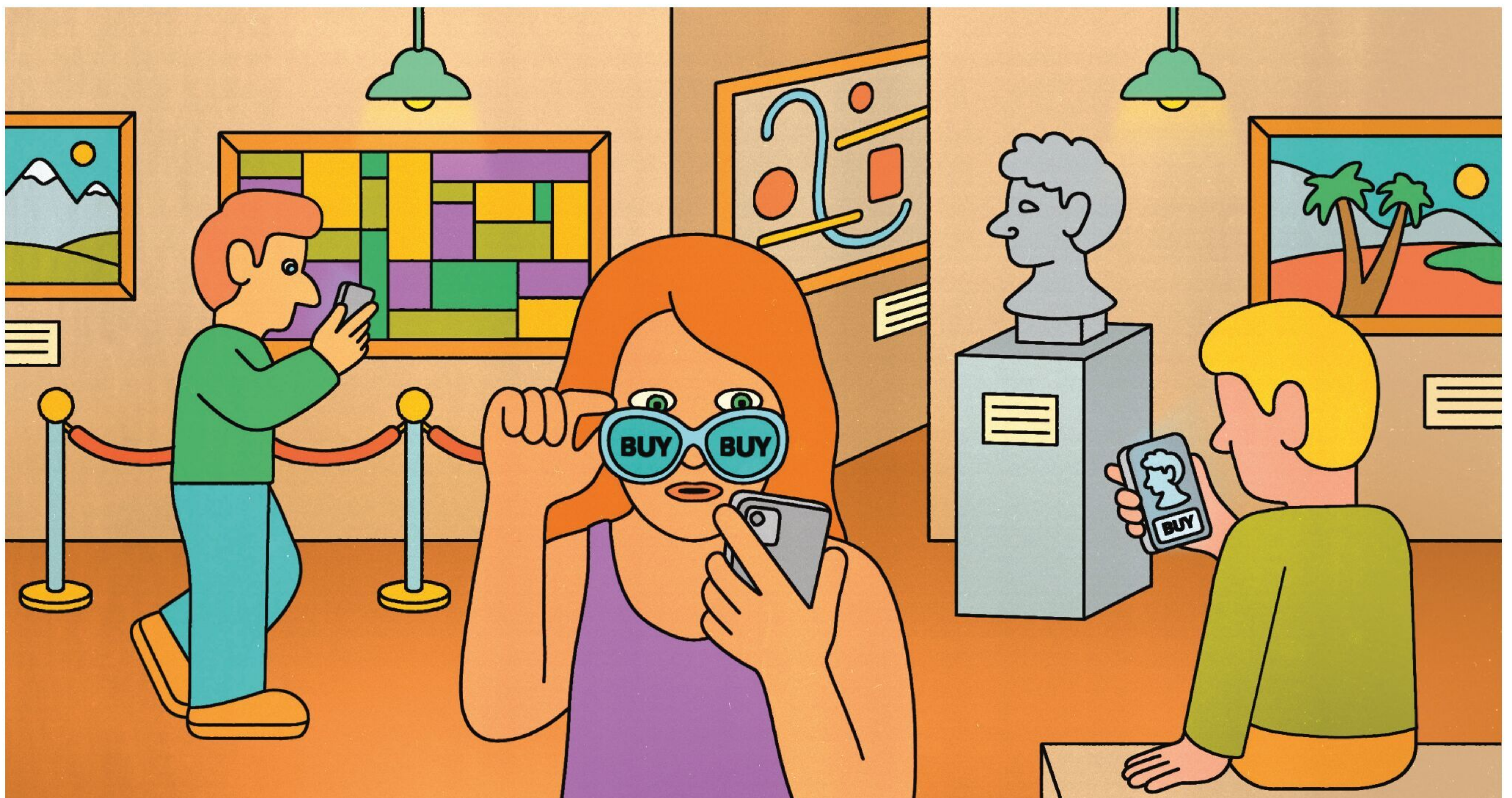


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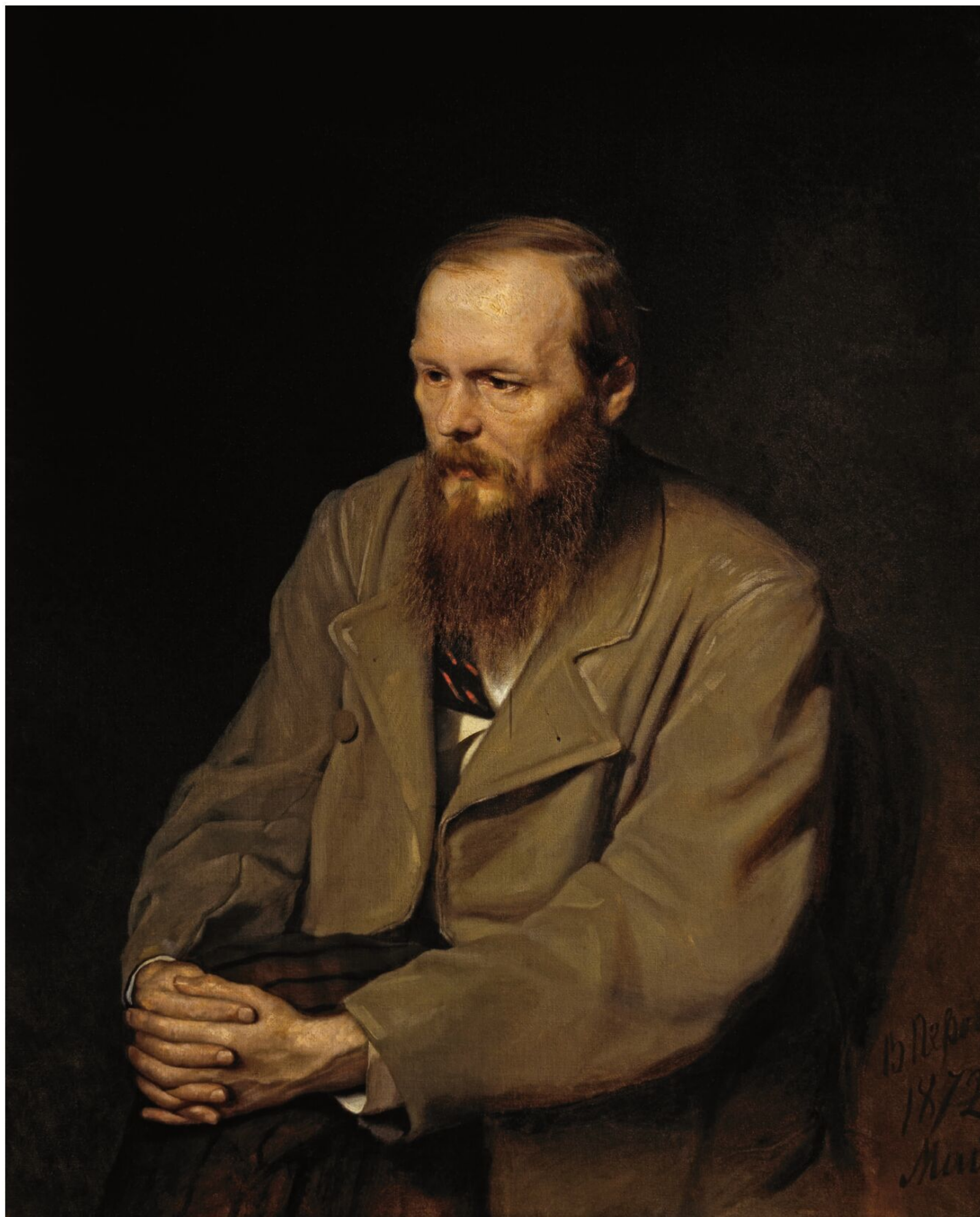
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'In Dresden, Dostoevsky stood on a chair to examine the Sistine Madonna's face'

Rosamund Bartlett on the novelist's museum-going

1. *Fyodor Dostoevsky*, 1872, Vasily Perov (1834–82), oil on canvas, 99 × 80.5cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Painting held a particular interest for Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–81), who was born 200 years ago this November. This was perhaps not all that strange in a culture where literature and art were deemed 'inseparable twins'. Gogol wrote a story that revolved around painting, 'The Portrait', in 1835, and his friend Alexander Ivanov depicted them both as prophets with a message for contemporary Russia in his epic canvas *The Appearance of Christ to the People* (1837–57). In *Anna Karenina* (1878), Tolstoy introduces the character of Mikhailov, an expatriate Russian artist painting a scene from Christ's Passion, and the author was painted by sympathetic contemporaries as a moral crusader in a peasant shirt or behind a plough. Dostoevsky shared the common preoccupation with Russia's destiny and Christian belief, but his engagement with art was of a different order. He forged no close friendships with painters, agreed to sit for his portrait only once (Fig. 1) and demonstrated only moderate critical acumen when reviewing two St Petersburg exhibitions. More importantly, he maintained a deep reverence throughout his life for Italian, French and German Old Masters, despite developing an increasingly xenophobic ideology after he was allowed to return from exile to St Petersburg in 1859. Particular masterpieces by his favourite painters, Raphael, Holbein and Claude Lorrain, occupy a vital position in the scaffolding he built to support the aesthetic and religious credo developed in his great novels, culminating in *The Brothers Karamazov*, completed a year before his death.

Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1512; Fig. 3) represented the supreme expression of Dostoevsky's spiritual and aesthetic ideal. By the time he saw it in the 1860s, the cult of the painting, long established in Russia, was already subject to attack by his ideological adversaries – radical utilitarians who saw greater value in a pair of shoes. When the newly married Dostoevsky fled Russia with his young stenographer wife in 1867, escaping creditors, the *Sistine Madonna* was the painting above all he wanted to show her. In Dresden, on their belated honeymoon, Dostoevsky would spend hours in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister gazing rapt at the picture. The suffering and tenderness in the Madonna's face which so moved him can be compared to its expression in Russia's most famous icon, the Vladimir Mother of God, and in the icon most venerated by the Dostoevsky family, The Joy of All Who Sorrow (Fig. 2). If the devout author did not view Russian icons through the same prism as he did Western religious painting, it was because their purpose was to aid prayer; only in the 20th century were they also regarded as 'works of art'.

References to Raphael abound in Dostoevsky's letters and manuscripts. Dostoevsky



2. An 18th-century icon depicting the Virgin as the Joy of All Who Sorrow. Andrei Rublev Museum of Ancient Russian Art, Moscow

may have lacked Lermontov's artistic talent, but as a graduate of the Imperial Engineering Academy he was a trained draughtsman, and he thought in visual images. In the preparatory drawings that filled his notebooks, along with elaborate calligraphy and Gothic arches, he sketched his fictional characters first as faces, including one which resembles the *Sistine Madonna*. Raphael's name also appears in Dostoevsky's novels, most noticeably in *Demons* (1872), in the liberal intellectual Stepan Verkhovensky's passionate defence of the eternal values represented by beauty and art. Dostoevsky first conceived this novel during a nine-month stay in Florence. He and his wife lodged opposite the Pitti Palace, a short walk from the Uffizi; he also greatly admired the Duomo, while Ghiberti's bronze doors for the Baptistery, especially the one depicting Paradise, reportedly sent him into ecstasies.

It was in Florence in 1868 that Dostoevsky completed his novel *The Idiot*, in which he set out to create an image of a 'positively good and beautiful man' in the character of Prince Myshkin. He had recently been shaken almost to the point of an epileptic fit by an encounter in Basel with Holbein's *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521) and the painting is discussed in *The Idiot* at two significant junctures. This masterpiece of the Northern Renaissance, in which the revolutionary, hyperrealistic

evocation of Christ's corpse appears to deny his divinity, can be construed as a kind of mirror opposite of the *Sistine Madonna*. In *The Idiot* the painting functions as a powerful emblem of Dostoevsky's central theme – modern society's loss of faith – yet like so much in his creative universe its meaning in the novel is ultimately ambiguous, as was Holbein's relationship to the nascent Reformation. Dostoevsky's characters look up to see a reproduction of Holbein's painting hung above a doorway, emulating the experience of visitors at the Kunstmuseum in Basel, to whom it appears that Christ's body is unequivocally succumbing to the all too human process of corruption. In Dresden, Dostoevsky had stood on a chair to examine the Madonna's face closely. In Basel he risked scandal to study Holbein's elongated canvas at eye level. Thus he could perceive signs of inner radiance and imminent resurrection which inescapably recall the epigraph from John 12:24 in *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' Dostoevsky's apparently simultaneous combination of traditional Western European perspective with the diametrically opposed 'reverse perspective' of Russian icon-painting contributes to the fundamentally modern polyphonic texture of his writing.

3. *Sistine Madonna*, 1512, Raphael (1483–1520), oil on canvas, 265 x 196cm. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden



For his birthday in 1879, Dostoevsky was overjoyed to be given a photographic reproduction of the *Sistine Madonna* (cropped to exclude saints and cherubs). His wife Anna Grigorievna hung it in a dark oak frame over the couch in his Petersburg study on which he died; during the last year of his life she would encounter him standing before it in a state of profound contemplation, as if it were an Orthodox icon.

A reproduction of the *Sistine Madonna* also hung in Tolstoy's study in his last years, the gift of a favourite cousin, although one disciple reported that mere mention of the painting was enough to bring on an 'attack of suffocating, blasphemous anger'. One wonders how both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky might have reacted to the circumstances in which the *Sistine Madonna* would one day be exhibited in Russia. At the end of the Second World War the Red Army took the painting to Moscow and, in 1955, at the height of the Thaw, tens of thousands of Soviet citizens queued to see it before it was returned to Dresden. **A**

Rosamund Bartlett, a biographer and translator of Chekhov and Tolstoy, wrote the introduction to *The Russian Soul: Selections from A Writer's Diary* by Fyodor Dostoevsky (Notting Hill Editions).



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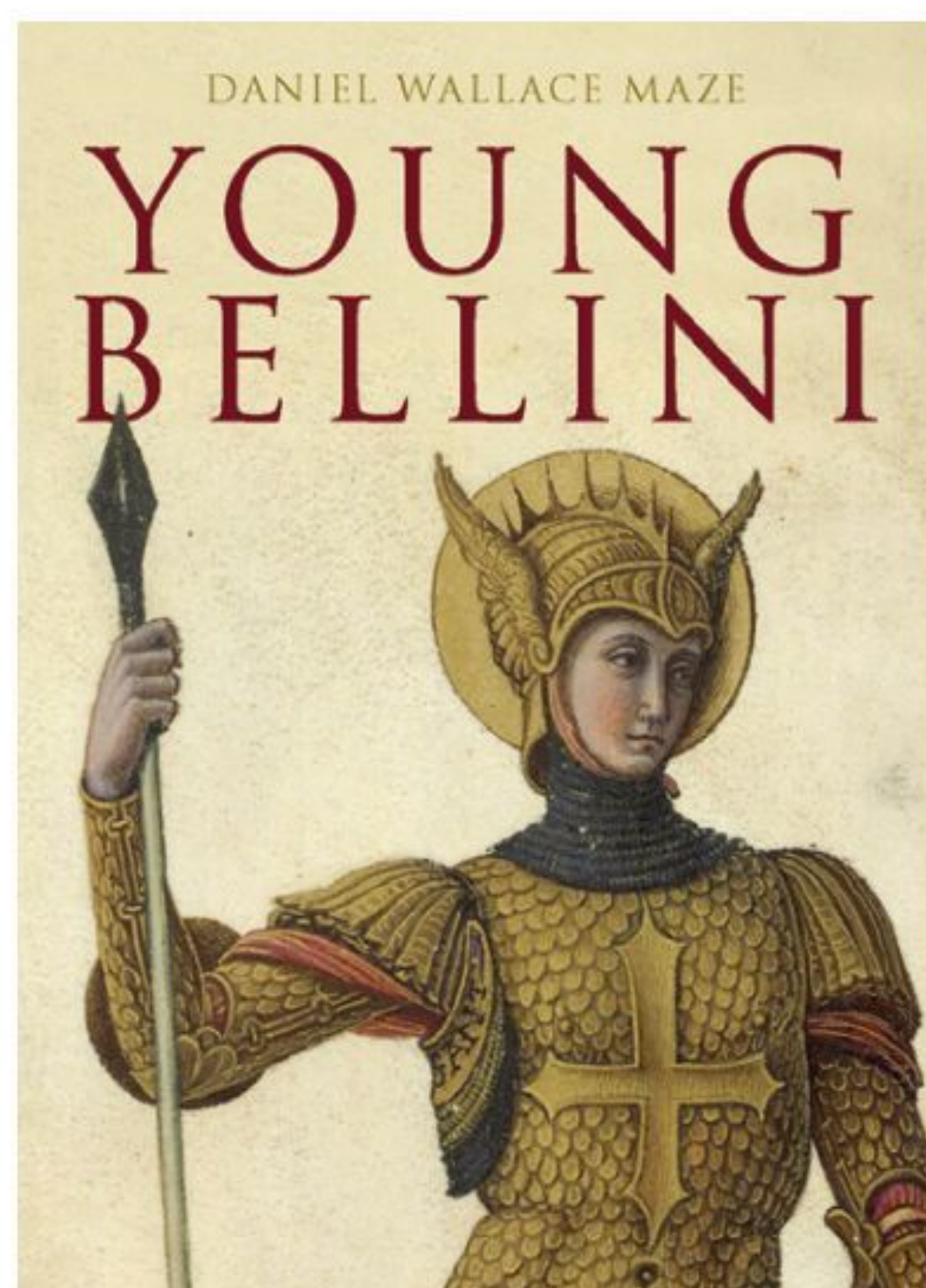
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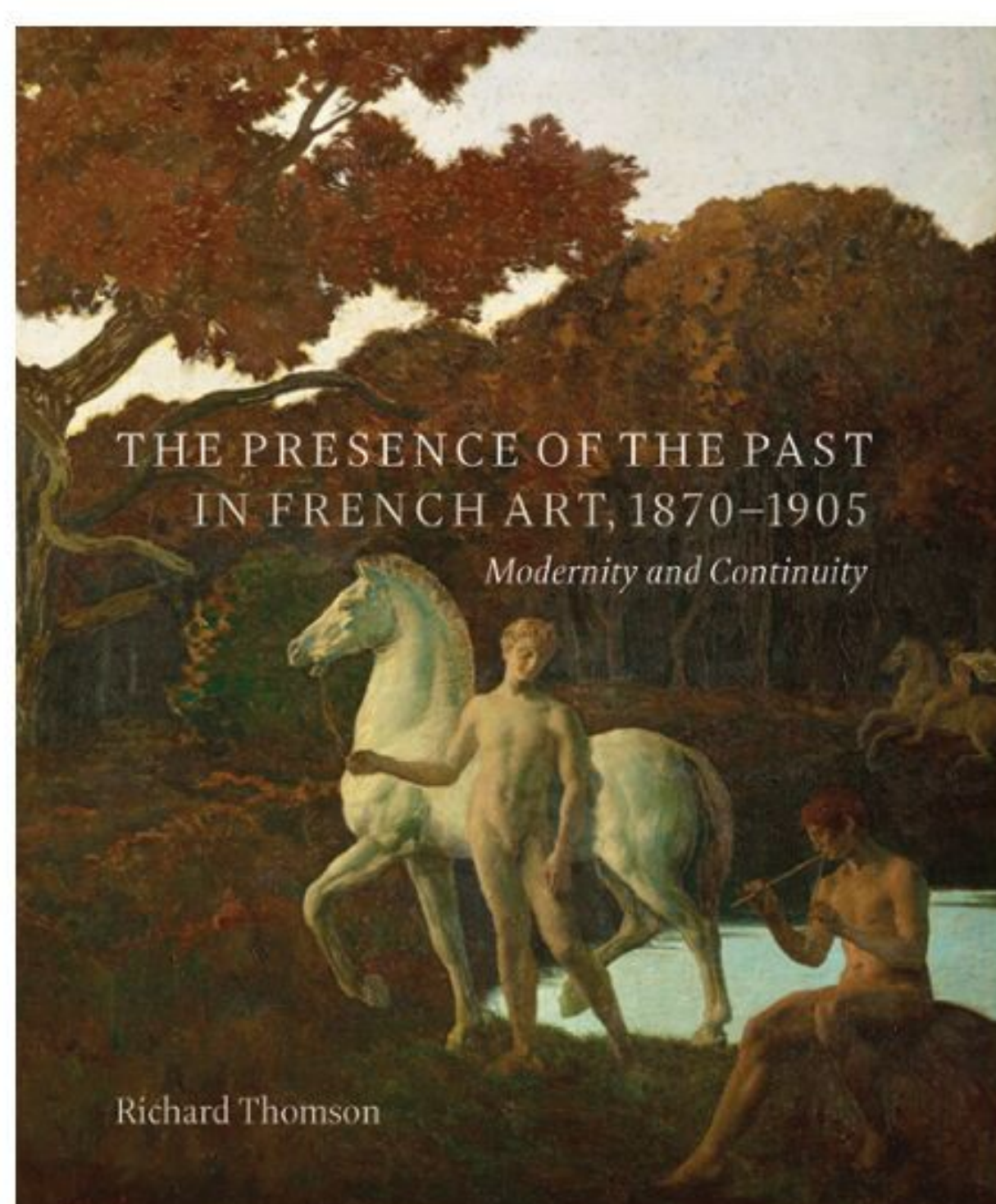


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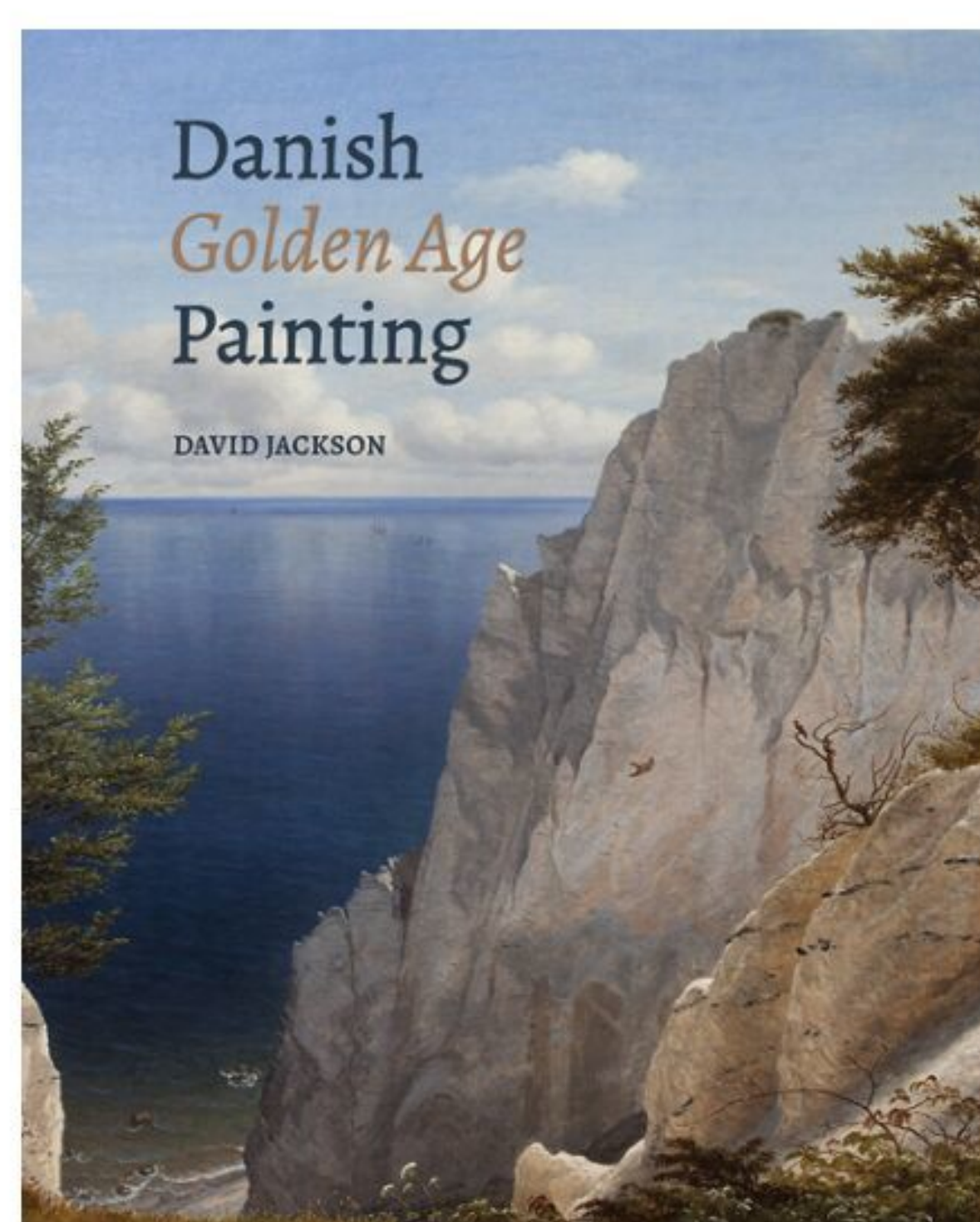
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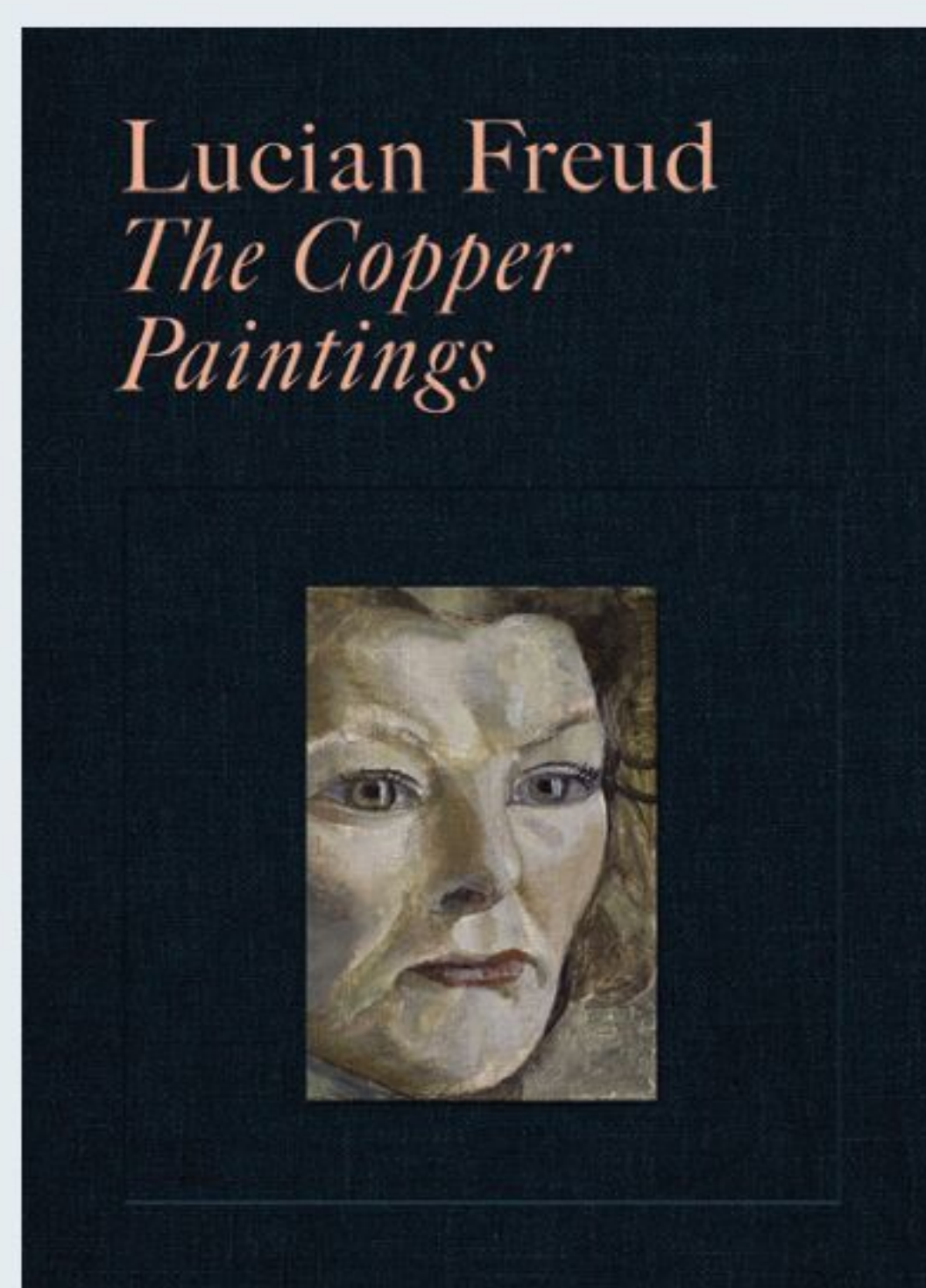
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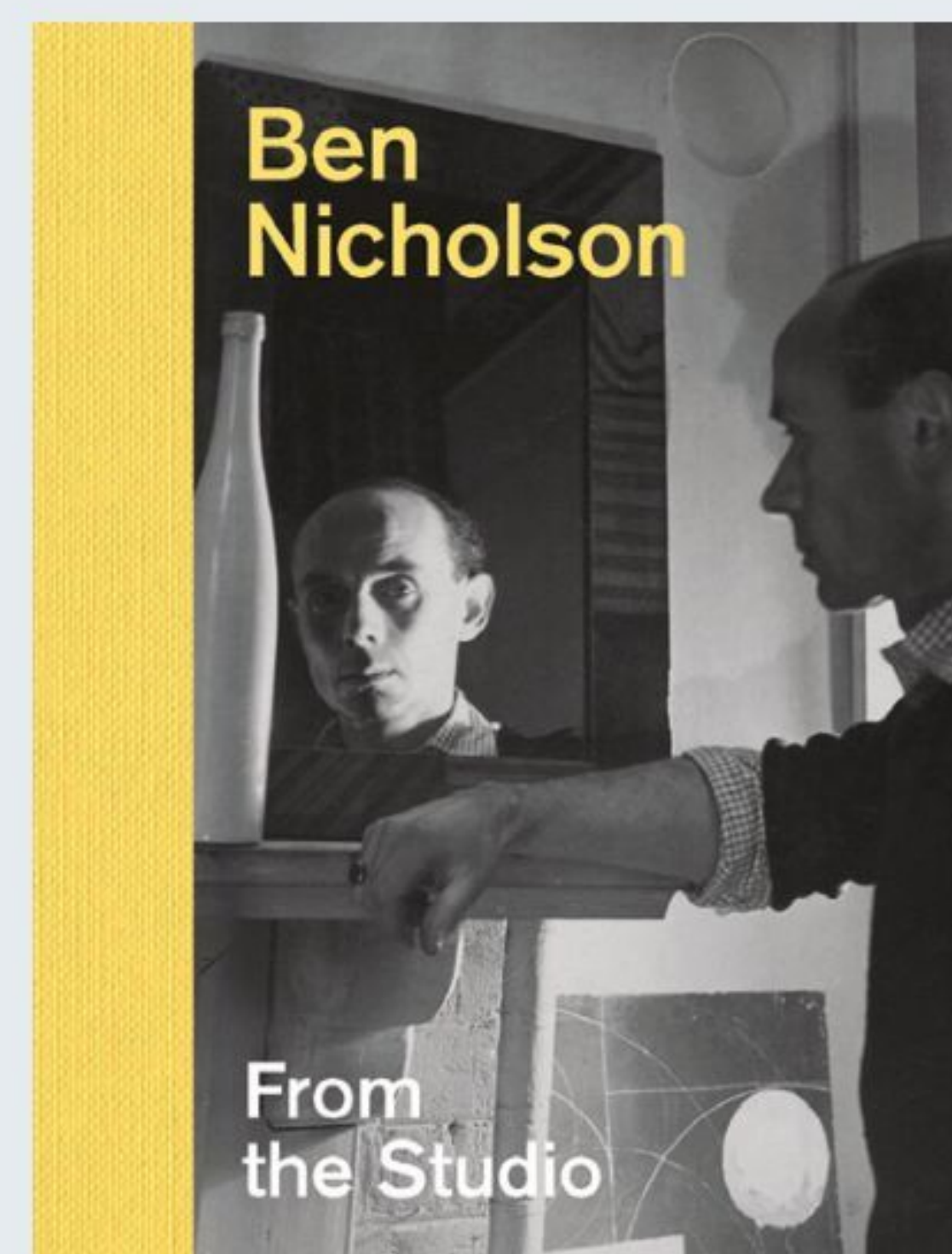
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'It's not easy to repackaging a museum devoted to a Victorian missionary for the present day'

Samuel Reilly at the birthplace of David Livingstone



1. The David Livingstone Birthplace Museum, Blantyre

Stepping off the train at Blantyre – a small satellite of Glasgow, eight miles or so south-east of the city – feels an awful lot like stepping into a shrine. Greeting you on the side of the platform are two iron figures wearing African-style face masks and bearing between them an empty hammock. Into the path that leads to town is set a series of stone plaques framed with Celtic designs; the first reads simply 'David Livingstone – Missionary – Doctor – Explorer – Man of Africa'.

Livingstone was born at Shuttle Row, a tenement block for the families of workers at

Blantyre Mills, in 1813. In 1929, half a century after he died with malaria and dysentery in what is now Zambia, the building reopened as the David Livingstone Centre. Its collection included objects owned by Livingstone, ranging from geographical and medical implements to African craft objects, as well as relics acquired by acolytes after his death, and the Blantyre Works Library, a collection of books that were provided for the education of families like Livingstone's. At the opening, the Church of Scotland led a service for a congregation of some 10,000, broadcast on BBC Radio; the

Duchess of York ceremonially unlocked the door to the Livingstones' family room, at which point the kirk's pastor James Macnair declared that 'The door just opened is narrow and the stair it leads to, stiff and difficult – fit symbol of the life of the great man born there.'

When I visit in late July, the building has just reopened (with considerably less fanfare), after being closed for a four-year renovation (Fig. 1). It has been renamed the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum, although at first glance, there's little to distinguish the place from the hagiography of old. Lowering down from the limewashed walls is a plaque of Livingstone in profile, all beetling brow and fierce moustache. In the grounds behind is a marble-and-bronze fountain depicting the globe, built by Charles d'Orville Pilkington Jackson and installed ahead of the opening in 1929; it's tilted so that Blantyre is at the top of the world.

The changes that have been made inside the new museum, though, do a fine job of bringing the place up to date. It's not easy to repackaging a museum devoted to a Victorian missionary for the present day – especially with a figure as complicated and contrary as Livingstone. He was instrumental in forcing the British government to intervene in the East African slave trade, yet his excursions into the interior of the continent – under his chosen banner of 'Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation' – inspired followers such as Henry Morton Stanley who were rather less interested in the well-being of the locals, and paved the way for the exploitation of Africa by the likes of Stanley's paymaster, Leopold II of Belgium. The curators have confronted these difficulties in a way that neither lionises nor damns, but looks at Livingstone's achievements – as well as his considerable failures – in light of the world he came from, the one he lived in, and the one he helped to shape.

The room of his birth is preserved, with its truckle beds, its pots and pans, and hanging from the ceiling the 'farlie' basket where food was kept out of the reach of rats. In the corridor outside is a spinning jenny; from the age of 10, Livingstone worked 12-hour days as a piecer, ducking under the frame to mend broken cotton threads. Livingstone, perhaps realising it was his best hope of a way out, would read late into the night; by day, the other kids made a game of chucking bobbins at the books he would balance on the cotton machine.

After he crossed the continent of Africa from East to West in the 1850s, finding the Zambezi (or 'Victoria') Falls en route, Livingstone became one of the most famous men in the British Empire. That he had risen to this position from such poverty formed a crucial part of the cult of personality that was built around him. The Victorians liked to think of his time in Africa in terms of continuity – his

character forged in hardship, he was primed to excel when confronted with the dangers and deprivations that lay ahead. In reality, Livingstone was tremendously ill-suited to the life he had taken on. He'd swallowed the propaganda of missionary pamphlets wholesale and was unprepared for the realisation that this was unglamorous, thankless work. His mentor Robert Moffat had spent two painstaking decades achieving perhaps 40 converts in Kuruman; Livingstone managed only one, Chief Sechele of the Kwenana tribe in Bechuanaland (now Botswana), in the course of his whole career.

The museum shifts gear when Livingstone gets to Africa. Sechele proved a far more successful evangelist for the gospel; the museum gives him his due, with photographs, personal effects (including gifts from Livingstone and his wife, Mary, of basins and trays), and wall texts making plain the political sacrifices Sechele had to make in agreeing to monogamy. It's part of a broader strategy in the redisplay of focusing on the individuals whose stories have previously been absorbed into Livingstone's – from Mary Livingstone, who was

Robert Moffat's daughter, to James Chuma and Abdullah Susi, who led the remarkable expedition to carry Livingstone's body more than 1,000 miles to the coast so that it could be returned to Britain and interred at Westminster Abbey. There are also more nefarious figures, represented here by displays of objects from a slaver's caravan – Conus shell currency, ivory loudspeakers, satchels. Livingstone once declared that his final expedition, to seek the source of the Nile, was a means of securing such renown that it would 'open my mouth with power among men' – men who had so far shown little interest in intervening in slavery – and 'remedy an enormous evil'. The museum shows that his rigid pursuit of this goal ironically led him to befriend his enemies.

The curator, Natalie Milor, hasn't shied away from spectacle – visitors can find here the red shirt which Livingstone was supposed to have been wearing on his meeting with Stanley in 1871 ('Dr Livingstone, I presume?'); a terrifically hammy sculpture of the lion that mauled his arm on his arrival in South Africa in 1844; and a cast of his badly reset humerus – one of many which circulated as relics after his death.

But these moments, placed for the first time in a broader context, add up to more than hero worship. Nowhere is this made clearer than in the museum's treatment of its series of eight painted plaster tableaux, commissioned from Pilkington Jackson in the 1920s (and newly conserved here). They depict scenes from Livingstone's life as allegories of Christian virtues: 'Courage', when greeting a group of Zulu warriors; 'Mercy', when confronting an Arab slave trader (Fig. 2); 'Endurance', as he battled the illnesses that would kill him. In the final room, the tableaux have been recreated as animations: a new commission, scripted by the Zimbabwean author (and Livingstone scholar) Petina Gappah, which imagines the stories of – and gives names to – the Africans who appear alongside him.

What visitors will make of all this is another question. At the exit, I overhear a mother scolding her young son, who is bent over the visitors' book. 'You're supposed to write what you *think*,' she says. He'd drawn a big picture of a lion. **A**

Samuel Reilly is editorial assistant at *Apollo*.

2. 'Mercy', 1929, from a series of eight polychromatic plaster tableaux depicting the life of Livingstone by Charles d'Orville Pilkington Jackson. David Livingstone Birthplace Museum, Blantyre



Photo: Kat Gollock

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'A photograph is not a building'

Will Wiles defends photographers from architectural critics

1. Gottfried Bohm, *Church of the Resurrection of Christ, Cologne, Germany*, 2020, Hélène Binet (b. 1959), digital black-and-white silver-gelatin print, 102 x 80cm



Photography began as architectural photography. In the earliest days of the art, long exposure times meant that water smoothed into poured concrete, trees became smoky and skies turned featureless. Humans rarely lingered long enough in the frame to register – the first person captured on film, by Louis Daguerre himself in c. 1838, is standing still to have his shoe shined, and even he has the indistinct outline of a phantom. But buildings stayed put. *View from a Window at Le Gras*, made by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in around 1827 and believed to be the earliest surviving photograph, is of towers and rooftops.

This history might help explain why architectural photography continues to have an ambiguous relationship with the human figure. We'll come back to that. What's possibly more surprising is its ambiguous relationship with architecture itself. Architectural photography shook off a servile attitude to its subjects and started to exert itself as a distinct art at about the time (not coincidentally) that the development of the halftone process made the reproduction of photographs in books and periodicals more practical. When modernist architecture appeared, the trademark view of its enthusiasts was the Dutch angle, the narrow frame, the from-beneath or below, as if the orthogonality of the subject made the tripod redundant.

Architectural photography seemed to picked up a more assertive spirit from the muscular engineering that was increasingly its interest. In 1919 Emil Otto Hoppé photographed the towers of Manhattan through the suspension cables of Brooklyn Bridge, so that neither towers nor bridge were really distinct, and the view is dominated by the diagonal grid of intersecting black lines. Everything else is in motion. László Moholy-Nagy photographed the Berlin Radio Tower from its upper level, looking straight down, turning it into a vast orbital megastructure viewed from a docking spacecraft. In 1929 Alexander Rodchenko photographed the Shukhov radio tower from beneath, making it a mandala of pure geometry.

'I've always tried to get to the essence of a space, partly as a reaction to the feeling in the architectural profession that photography should do more – wider angles, more colour, more technique, and these days, Photoshop,' says Hélène Binet, one of the greatest living architectural photographers, in an interview that accompanies 'Light Lines', a retrospective of her career at the Royal Academy (23 October–23 January 2022). 'Given the impossibility of representing architecture itself, the tendency can be to overdo it, whereas my strategy is to withdraw.'

The feeling that Binet alludes to extends beyond the architectural profession. Formalism cost Rodchenko dear when the glaciers

of socialist realism rolled in. And the same censorious attitude remains busy today. Why can't architectural photography simply represent its subject? Why can't it settle down and simply show us what a building looks like? It was something we would hear quite often working on architecture magazines, that we were prioritising photographs that looked good as *photographs* over photographs that were a dutiful document of buildings. This, it was sometimes argued, was a corrupting influence on architecture itself, as if the photographer's eye for artful abstraction was making buildings themselves more abstract.

These are questions that have become more pressing now that so many people are architectural photographers, even if they don't know it. The space around us is increasingly consumed through a lens, and this affects the eye. Even if we are not holding up our phone and capturing a striking building for Instagram, with or without ourselves in the foreground, we may be judging our surroundings by their suitability for that purpose. That suitability as backdrop may be bleeding into the way buildings are designed – it is certainly influencing the design of installations – but it's worth noting that people are abundant in this popular photography, while they remain elusive in architectural photography. This is

sometimes held up as evidence of some kind of flaw in the art, or in the architecture itself – that people would somehow spoil the effect, or give the game away.

Certainly people seldom appear in Binet's work (Fig. 1). Asked by exhibition curator Vicky Richardson why that might be, Binet answers: 'The reason is that I want you to go into the photograph. If I include a person you immediately start to reflect on the role of that person [...] In the industry there's an idea that if you photograph a building with people in it, then it's the proof of a better piece of architecture.'

The presence of people changes the meaning. A decade ago Iwan Baan – another architectural photographer with a claim on 'greatest living' – published *Living With Modernism*, a collection of photographs of the modernist capitals Chandigarh and Brasília. Every frame contains a person, or a sign of everyday life, and the volume manages to be both a sly comment on the messy intersection between utopian design and humdrum normality, and a gentle tribute to those extraordinary places and their ordinary inhabitants (Fig. 2).

Living With Modernism subverted the idea that modernist architecture is designed to look good in photos, not to be lived with, by making it look good with people living in it. But the people do have a tendency to make

themselves the subject. Attempting to square the circle of including people while still focusing on the architecture leads to the off-centre, faceless sylphs that flit through many architectural publicity images, making something out-of-focus in the kitchen, caught on their way out of frame, wearing something backless on a balcony.

These clichés are what make Binet's candid, even puckish, defence of uncompromising formalism so refreshing. It is unreasonable to make demands of architectural photography that we don't make of architecture itself. We very rarely approach a building like a 17th-century draughtsman striding towards the big house, front and centre, tailcoats flapping. We consume buildings in corners and fragments, not in single gulps of symmetry, and our eye is drawn to the diamond of light cast by a window across the wall. And, even more fundamentally, a photograph is not a building. 'There's no way you can describe everything that belongs to the experience of space,' Binet tells Richardson. 'It was clear to me that I was creating photographs that work because they contain their own world and don't try to capture the architecture in its totality.' ^A

Will Wiles's most recent novel is *Plume* (Fourth Estate).

2. View of the Palace of Assembly, Chandigarh, designed by Le Corbusier and photographed by Iwan Baan (b. 1975) for his publication *Brasília – Chandigarh: Living With Modernity* (Lars Müller, 2010)



Photo: Iwan Baan

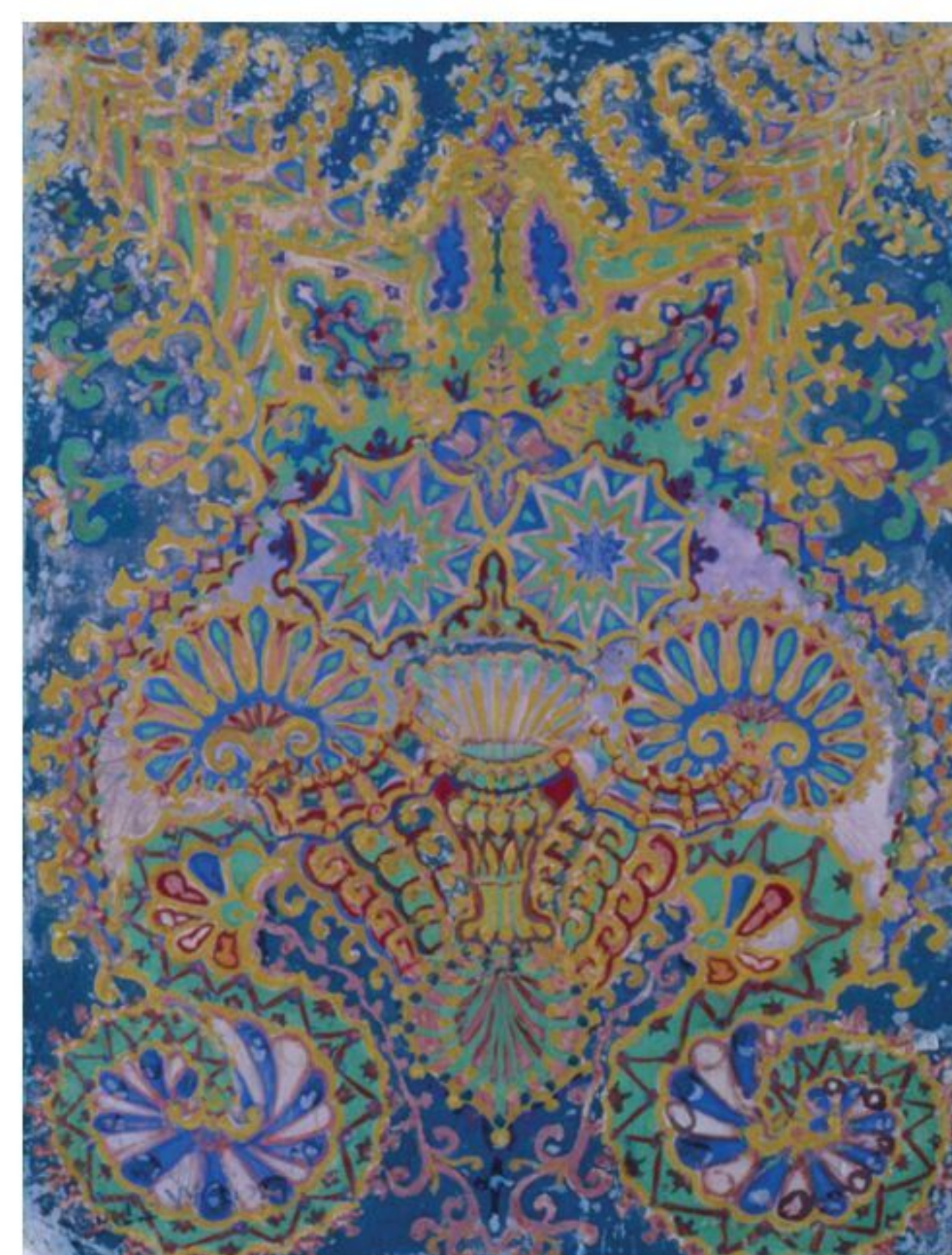
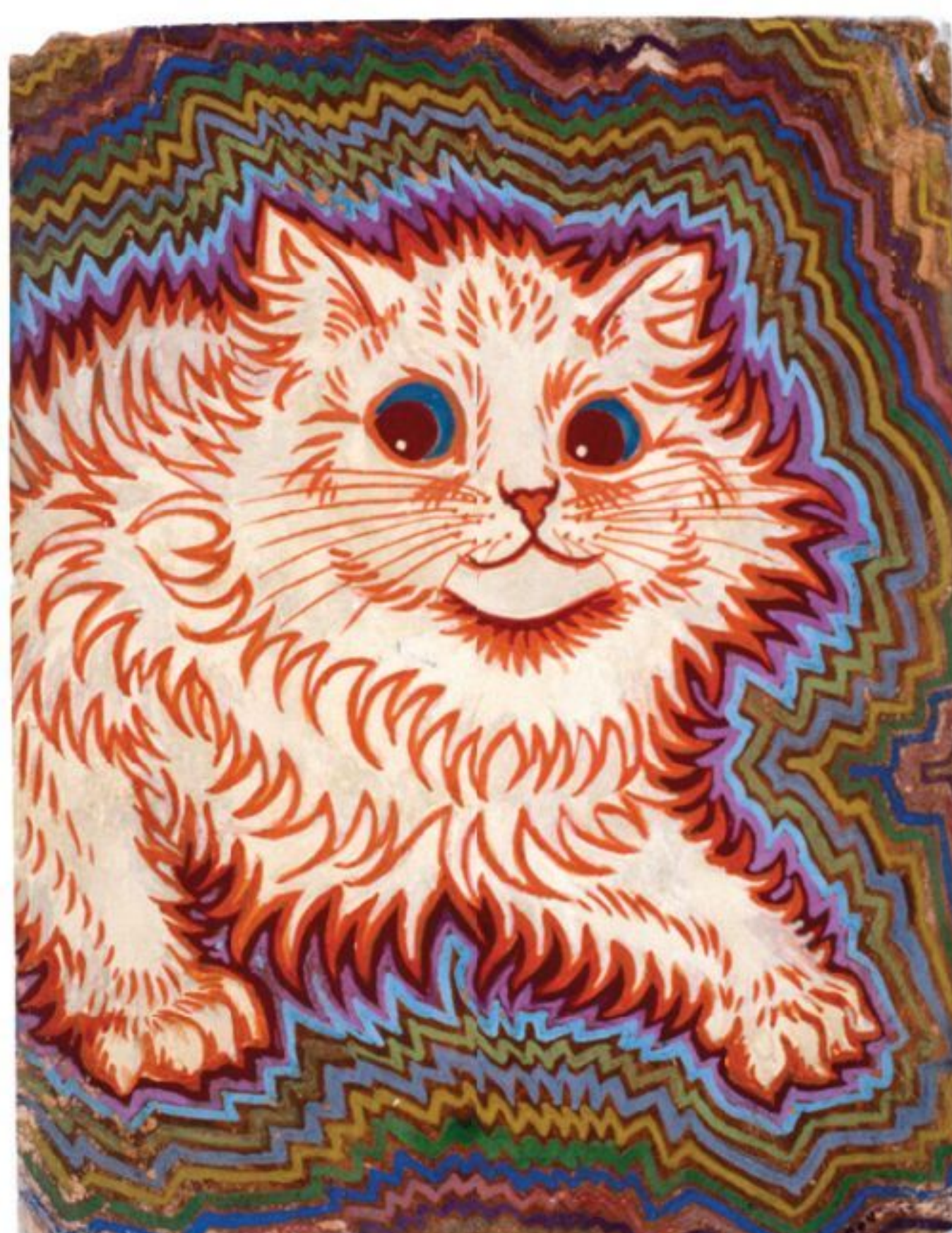
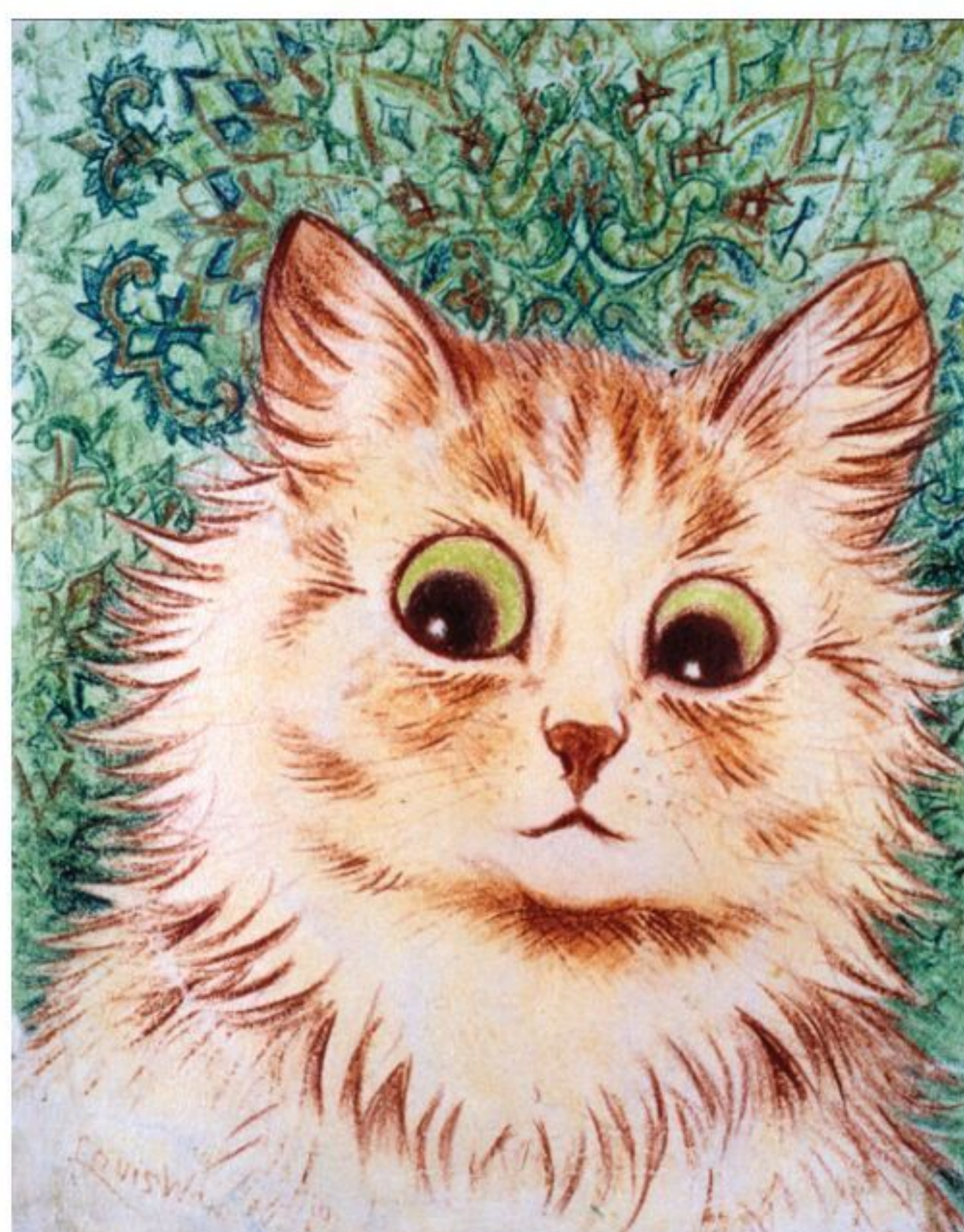
INQUIRY

The man who drew cats

Louis Wain's series of 'Kaleidoscope Cats' are often regarded as the acme of 'asylum art', but the tendency to pathologise his drawings may obscure what makes them so arresting and technically original

By Kirsten Tambling

1. *Kaleidoscope Cats I–VIII*, 1920s/30s, Louis Wain (1860–1939), gouache on paper, variable dimensions. Bethlem Museum of the Mind, London



In 1939, the psychiatrist Walter Maclay found eight coloured drawings in a Notting Hill junk shop. They all show cats. A sepia tabby presents its profile against a background of softly coloured leaves; another with long hair and saucer eyes is apparently suspicious of something just out of sight. The third, more firmly outlined, is on the prowl, against a jagged, electrical force field that seems to emanate directly from its dark orange fur. The remaining five, densely patterned, symmetrical, and coloured with the luminosity of stained glass, are virtually abstract – except that they all coalesce around a pair of pointed ears, a grinning mouth, and two twinkling eyes (Fig. 1).

Maclay quickly recognised these drawings as the work of Louis Wain (1860–1939), a popular but financially unsuccessful commercial illustrator, who had died in July of the same year. Wain is played by Benedict Cumberbatch in a biopic released in January 2022 in the UK, which explores his scandalous marriage to his sisters’ governess, her early death from cancer, his subsequent rise to fame as a ‘cat artist’, and the overwhelming and increasingly violent delusions that ultimately led to his admission to the pauper ward of Springfield mental hospital, Tooting, in 1924. The eight drawings found by Maclay, popularly dubbed the ‘Kaleidoscope Cats’, were probably produced after Wain was institutionalised. They are now in the collection of the Bethlem Museum of the Mind and remain, for many, emblematic of ‘asylum art’. At the end of the film, *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain*, they appear in a Hitchcockian dream sequence, melding and metamorphosing into one another, reflecting Cumberbatch’s own comment, in Chris Beetles’ new book on *Louis Wain’s Cats* (2021), that, with Wain’s story, ‘everything seems to blur in a kaleidoscopic mess of electricity, cats, love, loss of control and chaos’.

Wain was at his peak from the 1880s until the early 1900s. His anthropomorphic cats, often brightly coloured and usually engaged in fashionable contemporary activities – at the seaside, playing golf, going for a drive, taking tea (Fig. 2) – were widely circulated in annuals, illustrated newspapers, postcards and magazines. Their popularity coincided with the expansion of the commercial print market and development of colour reproduction, and it is estimated that during this period Louis Wain regularly painted some 600 cat pictures a year (along with occasional dogs and birds). Unfortunately, his father’s death in 1880 had left Wain the main breadwinner for his mother and five sisters – and he had neglected to copyright his images. As a result, the family remained in near penury even as *Louis Wain’s Annuals* were becoming ubiquitous in family homes. It was only after Wain was ‘discovered’ in the Springfield paupers’

ward in 1925 that a national campaign raised the money to transfer him to the more salubrious Bethlem Royal Hospital, then in Lambeth, south London, and finally in 1930 to Napsbury, near St Albans.

Even before his breakdown, Wain’s delusions and obsessive theories – including the belief that cats’ fur generated electricity, and that, like magnets, the creatures habitually faced north – marked him as an eccentric. In 1896, as part of a profile in *The Idler*, the journalist Roy Compton watched in amazement as Wain, ‘too true an artist to have professional affectations or conceits’, dashed off a cat with ‘marvellous [...] rapidity and ease’, all the time spouting the conviction that ‘our English cats are slowly but surely developing into stronger types [...] the face becom[ing] condensed, as it were, into a series of circles’. Compton’s piece was accompanied by a composite photograph showing Wain’s head, in profile, emerging out of a crescent moon. *The Idler* imagines him as a dreamer with his head in the clouds, but Compton’s description of Wain’s genial peculiarities also seems designed to echo the ancient idea that creativity is cousin to madness – Shakespeare’s characterisation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* of ‘the lunatic, the lover and the poet [...] of imagination all compact’.

In this vein, 19th-century readers might also have thought of the painter of fairies and fantasies Richard Dadd (1817–86). In 1843, this young artist of promise had precipitously disappeared from the art scene when, apparently in a fit of ‘monomania’, he had murdered his father whom he believed to be the devil in disguise. ‘No living artist possessed a more vivid or delicate imagination,’ the monthly journal *Art-Union* had pronounced, ‘and there is no doubt that the excess of this quality predisposes to the disease which has triumphed over him.’ Like Wain, Dadd was resident for a time at Bethlem Royal Hospital, though as a murderer he was confined to its wing for criminal lunatics. He continued to paint for the next 40 years: intricate oils and watercolours such as *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* (1854–58), an illustration to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Sketch of an Idea for Crazy Jane* (1855), in which a young woman driven mad by love (apparently modelled by a fellow inmate) stares intently at the viewer from beneath a birds’ nest crown of twigs, flowers, feathers and flyaway hair.

Over the course of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the concept of the artist-visionary was solidified and increasingly cultivated by artists themselves, both within and outside the mainstream. Many Romantic and post-Romantic artists such as Eugène Delacroix and Benjamin Robert Haydon, defining themselves in opposition to the rationality of the European Enlightenment, looked back

to the visionary William Blake. At the same time, the elevation of the artist outsider coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of possible places where outsiders might be confined. Between 1800 and 1900, some 120 asylums were founded or enlarged across England and Wales. This was accompanied by an expansion of the medical profession, which in turn triggered a proliferation of new illnesses and diagnostic categories. Both Bethlem and Napsbury exemplified what was known as the ‘moral treatment’ for insanity, predicated on rest, routine and light manual work (including some types of art-making). Napsbury in particular was imagined as a rural retreat, its extensively landscaped setting, which included a cricket ground and several small garden pergolas, allowing patients access to fresh air and exercise. By the final decades of the 19th century, though, a new ‘degenerationist’ theory of madness was in the ascendant. Insanity was increasingly understood not through ideas of inspiration or possession, but as a physical deterioration of the brain: as disease, no more, no less.

When Wain came to the attention of the medical establishment in the 1920s, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia. This condition had been discussed in medical circles since the 1890s, but acquired its name (which literally means ‘split mind’) only in 1908. Defined by the German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin, who was working at the Heidelberg asylum, schizophrenia involved the irreversible breakdown of a patient’s mental faculties. In this sense it was opposed to ‘manic depression’, whose effects were understood to be cyclical. As doctors sought to conceptualise it in subsequent decades, the ‘Kaleidoscope Cats’ became a useful reference point. They offered a window into the mind of the schizophrenic – despite being, at least in one sense, a psychiatrist’s creation. It was Maclay who first grouped them together and it was Maclay who organised them into a numbered, chronological series, writing to a friend that, though they had all been produced by the same hand, they ‘showed such contrasting styles that I feel that some were done before his illness and some afterwards’. In 1950, Francis Reitman, of the Netherne Hospital in Surrey, argued that the ‘Kaleidoscope Cats’ sequence demonstrated the loss of psychic ‘unity’ and organisation characteristic of schizophrenia. Describing how, in patients he had observed, ‘a conceptual deterioration takes place and the organisation of pattern disintegrates’, he contrasted the cats Maclay had put earlier in the sequence (‘well organised as a whole’) with the abstract ones at the end (‘lost in a maze of parts’).

Like Maclay, Reitman had spent time at the relentlessly experimental Maudsley Hospital, a psychiatric facility specifically

designed for teaching and research which had opened in 1923. The Maudsley actively sought new curative approaches, moving away from 'moral treatment' to explore shock therapy, leucotomy and chemical intervention. In the final decade of Wain's life, Maclay and a colleague, the German emigré Eric Guttman, were running a series of studies at the Maudsley using the hallucinogenic drug mescaline. It was widely believed that the temporary state of mind triggered by mescaline was comparable to psychosis, and so could allow doctors to experience schizophrenia for themselves – an 'empathetic' approach that apparently endured well into the mid century (Reitman recalled 'ask[ing] people irritably to leave me in peace, so that I could enjoy my hallucinations undisturbed'). However, Guttman and Maclay were particularly interested in the effects of schizophrenia – and therefore mescaline – on artists. When he found the 'Kaleidoscope Cats' Maclay was already seeking out examples of work by artists known or believed to have suffered from mental ill health. His collection included artists as disparate as the Royal Academician-turned-spiritualist Charles Sims and the dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, both of whom had breakdowns during the First World War.

For psychiatrists, the luminescent colours, geometric, fractal-like forms and jagged force fields in the 'final' images in the 'Kaleidoscope Cats' series corresponded, usefully, to the mescaline experience. They therefore confirmed schizophrenia as a state of altered consciousness, and the art produced under its influence as partly the result

of a broken and disorganised mind. (A more positive assessment of the 'trippy' quality of Wain's art would later assist his reclamation as a counter-cultural hero by artists and musicians in the second half of the 20th century.) At the same time, Guttman and Maclay's experiments coincided with other developments in painting generally, many of which were directly compared (for better or worse) with 'asylum art'. A selection of Wain's paintings was exhibited in 1925 in London at Twenty-One Gallery, Adelphi, which also championed the work of William Nicholson, Jacob Epstein and Graham Sutherland; in the following decades, the painter and sculptor Jean Dubuffet began assembling his collection of so-called Art Brut – work, as he put it, 'emanating from obscure personalities, maniacs [...] animated by fantasy, even delirium'. This positive strand of re-examination was in part a reaction to events elsewhere. In the 1930s, Nazi exhibitions of 'degenerate art' juxtaposed work by contemporary modernists with work from the art collection of the psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, primarily produced by patients at the Heidelberg asylum. The suggested equivalence between mental and artistic 'degeneration' turned on its head the celebratory concept of the artist-visionary. However, it also, conversely, suggested that in the works of some of these patients, there might be more to see.

Far from indicating a loss of his powers, Wain's 'Kaleidoscope Cats' are among his most seductive works. They are intricate, tightly controlled and almost perfectly symmetrical – his biographer, Rodney Dale, points out

that Wain was ambidextrous and suggests he may have worked on them with both hands simultaneously. The paintings he produced after 1924 are abstract and figurative in equal measure, neither mode predominating. In many of them, cats ramble in sweeping gardens, in front of fantastical buildings, half thatched and half Italianate, dimly reminiscent of the architecture of Napsbury. Though they do recall the intricate reflections of the kaleidoscope, his densely patterned pieces are also reminiscent of the kind of decorative work produced by his mother – Compton noted that she was responsible for the designs of 'the finest Turkey carpets' – or even his sisters, several of whom made ornamental paintings along the edges of book pages and on glass. This is indeed how his sisters seem to have understood them. They continued to visit every week, and to collect any artwork that could be sold, but (according to one of the nurses) they rejected 'that wallpaper rubbish', which could not. In the asylum, the unworldly Louis Wain seems to have found comparative freedom from such constraints – able, at last, to experiment and explore. **A**

Kirsten Tambling is Postdoctoral Research Associate on the AHRC-funded 'Shakespeare in the Royal Collections' at King's College London.

Louis Wain's Cats by Chris Beetles is published by Chris Beetles Ltd and Canongate Books; *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain* will be released in the UK in January 2022.

2. *The Bachelor Party*, n.d., Louis Wain, oil on canvas, 29.5 x 60cm. Private collection



Image courtesy Bonhams



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PREVIEW

Asian Art in London

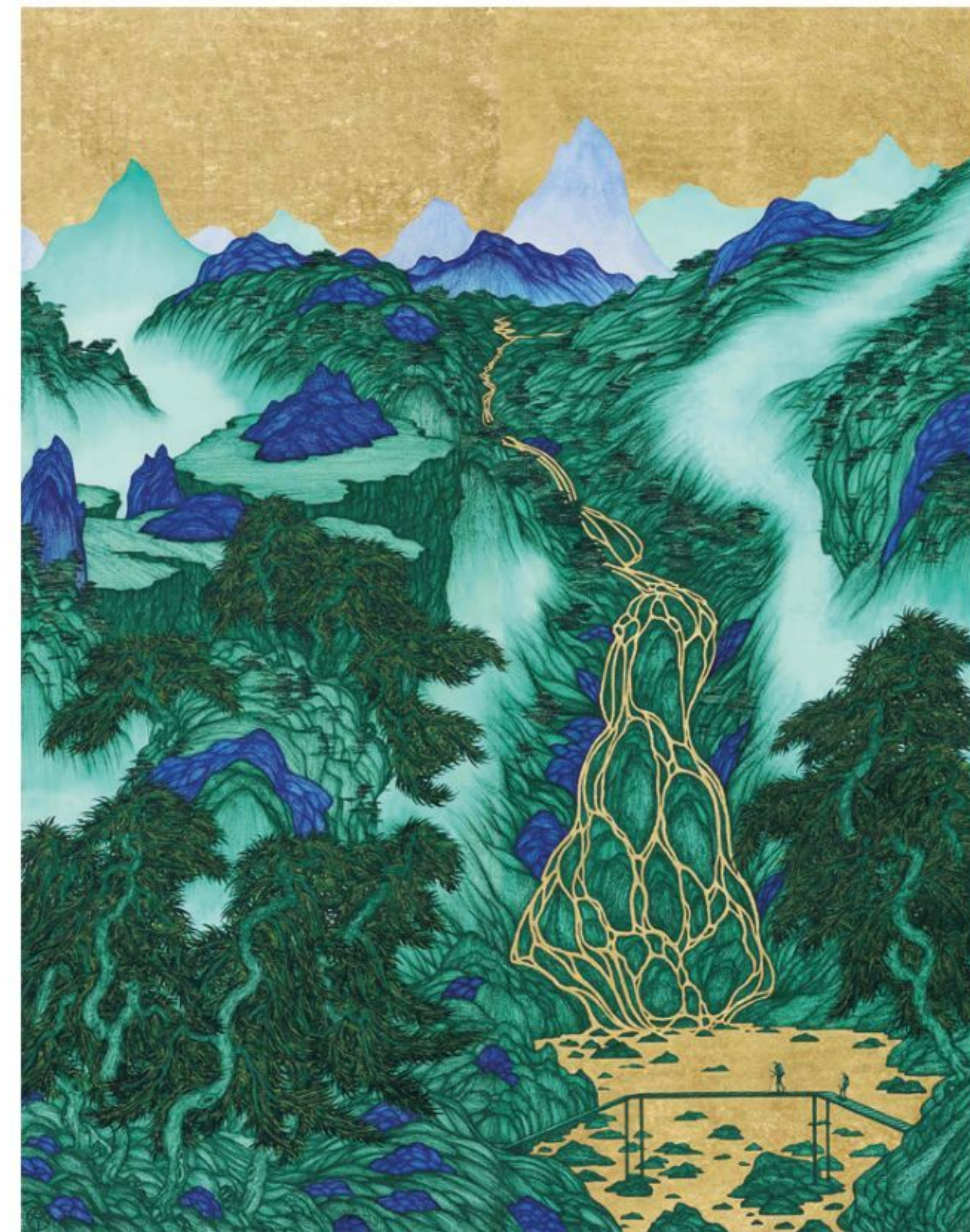
Emma Crichton-Miller selects her highlights of the event



1. Buckle ornament, Western Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 9), China, bronze, turquoise, agate, diam. 9.3cm. Lam & Co Antiquities (price on application)



2. Snuff bottle, 1780–1850, China, agate, ht 5.7cm (without stopper). Susan Page (price on application)



3. *Good Times: Lion Leopard Lake*, 2020, Yao Jui-chung (b. 1969), gold leaf and ink on paper, 198.5 × 154.3cm. Michael Goedhuis (price on application)

East Asia is the focus of the second week of Asian Art in London (AAL). Hailing from across the territories of China, Korea and Japan, the objects on view range in age from, for example, a bronze buckle ornament with turquoise and red agate inlay, made in the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 9; Fig. 1) and presented online by the Hong Kong dealership Lam & Co Antiquities, to contemporary Japanese lacquer, including *Heaven's Sculpture #1 Ten no Zo* (2021) by Azusa Irizawa, showing with Simon Pilling.

Reminding us that London has long been a centre for collecting and scholarship about East Asian ceramics, SOAS is running 'Collectors, Curators, Connoisseurs: 100 Years of The Oriental Ceramic Society' until 11 December. The curator is Sarah Wong, a director at Eskenazi, which is mounting its first exhibition dedicated to the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907) since 1987. Among examples of ceramics, metalwork, textiles and sculpture from this golden period are a fine *sancai*-glazed zodiac figure of a kneeling human with horse head, and an outstanding *sancai*-glazed earthenware ewer, one of only two known examples with a striking columnar mouth. Perhaps the rarest piece of all, however, is a dry lacquer head of a bodhisattva, one of a very small

group of surviving sculptures made through this labour-intensive process in the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

John Eskenazi, meanwhile, is showing a bold black-ground thangka depicting Panjarnata Mahakala (Lord of the Pavilion), surrounded by deities and lamas. Created with evangelical fervour by an artist in Tibet in the late 17th or early 18th century, it reveals, Eskenazi says, 'the influence of earlier Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan traditions', but combined 'with elements of Chinese style and technique' to create a beautiful image that is also deeply spiritual.

Priestley & Ferraro, on Bury Street, is running two parallel exhibitions, 'Sinews of Stone: Jade Carving in the Ming Dynasty' and 'Early Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art'. A star piece in the latter show is a rare imitation-stone door from the Tang dynasty, finely carved with dancing boys, mandarin ducks and flowers, a true gateway to paradise.

Meanwhile, Littleton & Hennessy, an art advisory group based on Duke Street and specialising in Asian works of art, has put together a show titled 'New Forms – Song/Yuan'. As consultant Mark Slaats explains: 'You see all these new shapes and experimental glazes coming through, which become

staples in later dynasties.' The highly varied selection of 35 pieces includes a rare Longquan Guan-type censer from the Southern Song or Yuan dynasty (13th–14th century) with a soft green glaze.

Susan Page specialises in Chinese snuff bottles, a high art form in the 18th and 19th centuries, in glass, porcelain and stone. This year her offerings include a snuff bottle carved from agate, revealing the silhouette of a scholar inscribing into rock, beside a tree (Fig. 2).

Bringing things up to the present day the Mayor Gallery, in its first outing at AAL, is showing a selection of works on paper and paintings by modern Chinese and Japanese artists of the 1950s and '60s. Michael Goedhuis will show contemporary Chinese ink paintings (Fig. 3), while Aktis Gallery is presenting 'China on the Global Art Scene', which features work by three of the most influential Chinese émigré artists of recent times: Zao Wou-Ki (1921–2013), Wang Keping (b. 1949) and Gao Xingjian (b.1940). **A**

The East Asian Art section of Asian Art in London is at various venues from 28 October–6 November. For more details, go to www.asianartinlondon.com.

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HAPPY MEDIUM

The British artist Tacita Dean has consistently used film as a means of saying something about painting. But part of her intention has been to elevate her chosen medium. As she tells *Apollo*, 'I have to fight for the corner of film'

By Robert Barry
Portrait by Jillian Edelstein



1. Tacita Dean (b. 1965), photographed in Frith Street Gallery's Golden Square space in London, in October 2021. Behind her is one of the works in the *Purgatory* (2021) series

The last time Tacita Dean saw Luchita Hurtado was 'a beautiful LA day', Dean tells me. 'January 3rd, 2020.' In the film Dean made that day at Hurtado's apartment in Santa Monica you can see the bright yellow sunshine streaming through the windows casting quivering little patches of luminescence upon the walls and ceiling, each one deftly picked out by Dean's roving 16mm camera. The film is called *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Painting* (2021; Fig.2), one of a number of new works by Dean (along with an assemblage of curios reproduced from the Getty Research Institute archives, from Mondrian's *carte de visite* to Rodin's studio key) currently at London's Frith Street Gallery, and it captures a long conversation between Hurtado, a painter whose work was heralded as a 'hot new discovery' when she was 96 years old, and the artist Julie Mehretu (Dean's long-time friend), about each other's work and life: childhood, loss, former marriages, giving up smoking. Hurtado was 99 at the time and Mehretu 49. A few months later they were due to reach their century and half-century (respectively) on the same day, 28 November.

'The title came before the film,' Dean admits. 'It was just irresistible. Had it been the day after or the day before, this film would never have happened. It's about the coincidence

of that day. I suddenly thought: one hundred and fifty years of painting! So I just did it, and it was a blessed day. Then we flew back to Berlin. Julie left to go back to New York. Everyone dispersed. Then by the beginning of March, we know what happened, and then of course Luchita didn't make it.' Hurtado died of natural causes on 13 August last year, 76 days short of her 100th birthday. Having walked out of her editing suite and closed the door at the start of the pandemic, only then, at the end of the summer, did Dean start to piece together the footage she had shot on that bright LA day at the start of the year.

Like Dean's three simultaneous shows at three grand old institutions in London in 2018 – 'STILL LIFE', 'LANDSCAPE', and 'PORTRAIT' – the title of her new film sounds like some big museum survey of oils on canvas. Dean calls it 'a patriarchal title', and here she adopts a gruff voice, like an elderly general in a *Carry On* film, 'One hundred and fifty years of painting – that can't have many women in it!'

'So I love that,' she continues, back in her own soft yet clipped English accent, 'that it's actually just about their lifespans.' Whether it's through her cinematic portraits of artists such as David Hockney or Mario Merz, or simply the fascination with the interaction between light and

2. Still from *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Painting*, 2021, Tacita Dean, 16mm colour film, optical sound, 50.5 minutes (continuous loop)



Courtesy the artist; Frith Street Gallery, London; and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris



3. Still from *Antigone*, 2018, Tacita Dean, two synchronised 35mm anamorphic colour films, optical sound, one hour (looped)

chemicals that her work on celluloid repeatedly betrays, Dean has consistently used film as a means of talking about painting. But she bristles when I ask her what film can say about painting that painting can't say about itself. 'I think painting can say it for itself very well, thank you very much!' she says. 'It's more that I have to fight for the corner of film.' By capturing something of the processes of painting and its subjects through the lens of a camera, she solicits for film something of the status of painting, too; renders it no longer a mere technology, but a medium – like gouache, oils, or tempera.

'It's always come from painting,' Dean insists, even if nothing in her extant catalogue would be described as such. When she became a Royal Academician in 2008, she was classed as a 'painter'. As an undergraduate at Falmouth College of Arts, she had been in the painting department. Even as a child, she recalls being 'the kid who had an easel', painting with Guita-brand watercolours from Japan 'when I was really young. It was encouraged,' she says, 'until it became dangerous. And then it was discouraged.' Painting was all well and good as a childish hobby, but to pursue a career as an artist was quite another thing.

At one point in *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Painting*, Mehretu remembers how she first realised her calling as an artist. 'How did it happen for you?' she then asks Hurtado. 'I think it was because I had a great sense of smell,' the older woman replies. 'I could smell a butterfly when it first left its cocoon. I caught it and pinned it to the wall because it was so beautiful. And this was the biggest sin I ever committed in my life. I did it to look at it.'

When I put the same question to Dean, she demurs. 'I don't have such a good answer,' she replies, before immediately adding, 'But I always knew. I just always wanted to be an artist. It's a gift, I think, in life, to know what you want to do.'

Dean was born in the Kent countryside in 1965, to Jenefer and Joseph Dean. Her father was a lawyer whose work frequently took him off to former British colonies in Africa and the West Indies. Writing his obituary for the *Guardian* in 2010, Tacita Dean said that he had 'wanted to be an architect' but was ultimately 'forced to study law'. More resolute than her father, Dean herself would study art against her parents' wishes. 'I didn't come from a family who thought it was a stable profession for a woman – wife would've been better,' she says now, sardonically. 'So then I had to fight for it, which of course makes things clearer.'

Dean doesn't recall her parents taking a lot of pictures when she was a kid, and she still hates being photographed herself ('Why can't everyone just share their photographs?' she complains when *Apollo's* photographer arrives at Frith Street Gallery's space on Golden Square, where we are meeting. 'It's such a bore!'). But her first film camera belonged to her father. She was 17 years old and she found an old wind-up Standard-8 camera in his study. Being clockwork, 'it didn't need a battery, so I put a film in that'. And away she went. She was still using the same camera when she did her postgraduate degree at the Slade. *Ztráta* (1991/2002), a black-and-white film made during a brief sojourn in Prague (the title is Czech for 'loss'), was the last work she shot with it, and many of its motifs continue to resonate throughout her work: the play of light on surfaces, chalk on blackboards, the themes of absence and presence and loss itself.

If Dean has been a film-maker since her teens, she became a film activist only in 2011. It was a change of gear precipitated by loss. Having flown in to London in February of that year to complete post-production on a new film for an exhibition at Mumok in Vienna, she was distraught to find that Soho Film Lab, where she had processed and printed dozens of her works, had been bought



4. Fumi Kaneko and Edward Watson performing in *The Dante Project (Inferno)* at the Music Center, Los Angeles, in 2019, with set designs by Tacita Dean

by the American multinational Deluxe Media Inc. and was shutting down its 16mm printing service and accepting no new orders. Almost exactly a year after the paper published her father's obituary, Dean found herself writing for the *Guardian* once more – this time with an impassioned call to 'save celluloid'. She described the loss of the lab as 'like having my bag stolen' and bemoaned the loss of the UK's last professional lab for the printing of 16mm film. 'It's so reductionist and stupid and short-sighted,' she says to me, 'but when the money people take control, that's what happens.' Her commission for the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall later that year became an elegy for the departing medium, complete with visible sprocket holes running down the sides of the frame and a whole battery of analogue-specific techniques, like hand-tinting, glass-matte painting and aperture gate masking. It became a portrait of the medium itself, a project 'about looking at early technologies and ways to manufacture images when it was an exciting new medium'.

Many of those same techniques are in evidence in Dean's newest major project: an adaptation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* for the Royal Ballet, with music by Thomas Adès and choreography by Wayne McGregor (14 October–30 October). 'Wayne wanted me – apparently,' Dean says. They had initially been in talks about working together on McGregor's *Wolf Works* ballet, which premiered in 2015. 'I can't remember what I was doing,' Dean says, 'but it was impossible.' That didn't work out, but a couple of years later he got back in touch. 'It's really, really an ambitious

production – even for the Royal Ballet. So he asked me, and I thought, well, I'll try anything once.' Some years later and now in the thick of rehearsals and technical preparations for the show, I'm starting to wonder if she's regretting it. Twice during our conversation she tells me how tired she is and as soon as we meet at the gallery, she slumps into the office sofa. Working on such a big production, with so many hands involved, and rehearsals just kicking into gear scarcely a fortnight before opening night certainly sounds exhausting. But she insists that she's 'loving the energy of the machine!'

What strikes me as Dean talks about her various ideas and inspirations for *The Dante Project* is that her starting point is never some overarching image or concept, but a quite specific technical intervention. As with much of her work – since *FILM* at the Turbine Hall, especially (Fig. 5) – the whole thing unfolds through a series of media-archaeological *Verfremdungseffekte* (distancing effects), in which techniques marshalled in pursuit of illusion during cinema's pioneering phase are here repurposed as a means of highlighting the fabricated nature of the scene. She speaks of anamorphic projection, colour negatives, the flipping and switching of photographic imagery, and it's clear that the matter at hand is less Dante's emotional journey through heaven and hell, and more what Dean calls a 'trajectory through mediums'. As the ballet progresses from Inferno, through Purgatory, to Paradise, the audience is borne from chalk drawing to photography to film, from black-and-white negative images to vivid



5. Installation view of *FILM*, 2011, Tacita Dean, at the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, London

full colour, from representation to abstraction. It is not so much the soul's journey towards God, as art's journey towards modernity. 'I am always fascinated by how that particular thing might have been manufactured,' she grants. 'But this I made very much about medium, which for me has become a very political subject.'

Dean's campaign to save celluloid did not end with the *Guardian* article of 2011. Three years later, a residency at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles provided the opportunity to take the fight to the very heart of the cinema industry. What she found there was a profession 'largely ignorant about [its] own medium'. Meeting with representatives from studios, archives and film schools, and engaging with discussions about the future of film, she found people 'especially on the technical side were embarrassed to be seen to be working with film because they were called anti-technology and luddites and so on.' What she came to realise was the importance of reframing that conversation away from talk of 'technology' – 'the fact that they were calling film a "technology",' she says, 'was really its death warrant' – and towards an appreciation of film as a 'medium'.

'It was never a technology,' Dean says. 'By naming film a medium you immediately remove it from that deterministic trajectory towards obsolescence and you put it into a category with oil paints and marble. As soon as you say, no, it's a medium and mediums don't go obsolete, you suddenly empower it in an incredible way. So medium has become very important to me – and, of course, medium

is very affiliated to the means by which you do it.' Since starting her campaign, Dean has pulled in the support of several high-profile names, including Christopher Nolan, Steven Spielberg, and Paul Thomas Anderson, not to mention major institutions such as the Toronto International Film Festival, the British Society of Cinematographers, and the Louvre. But being in Hollywood has also thrown up some surprising opportunities.

After graduating from the Slade in the early 1990s, Dean found herself lumped in with a new generation of so-called Young British Artists. Though her work was always quite far from the sensationalism of Damien Hirst or Tracey Emin, she was in the touring New Contemporaries show in 1992, and both the British contingent at Venice and the British Art Show in 1995. Several of her peers from that period have gone on to make major feature films, from the BAFTA-nominated Sam Taylor-Johnson (*Nowhere Boy*) to the Oscar-winning Steve McQueen (*12 Years a Slave*), and at one point it looked like there were further incursions into mainstream cinema on the way from Gillian Wearing and the Chapman brothers. Tacita Dean's first overture from Tinseltown actually came much earlier than that. In 1997, she took up a surprise invitation to the prestigious Screenwriter's Lab at the Sundance Institute. She arrived with a page-and-a-half-long treatment for a film called *Antigone* (Fig. 3), based on the interval between Sophocles' plays *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, and left with notebooks stuffed with advice and encouragement but nothing concrete on the table and no completed screenplay. The following year she was nominated for the Turner Prize, and for the best part of a decade thoughts of Hollywood were put aside. And then she moved to Los Angeles (she splits her time between there and Berlin).

As a result of her campaigning, Dean says, 'I was suddenly thrown into the industry and a lot of people said, what about making a feature film?' With characteristic pluck, she dusted off her Sophocles notes from Sundance and set to work. But the resulting picture was never going to be a box-office smash. Shot in both the US and the UK, with the participation of the actor Stephen Dillane and poet Anne Carson, *Antigone* finally emerged as two hour-long films screened side by side on twin projectors. A dream-like collage of a film, it involves some of Dean's most complex technical manipulations of the cinematic frame to date. Today, she calls it an act of 'sabotage'. 'Why couldn't I do it?' she asks. 'Why did I have to sabotage myself the whole time – which I did.' The work became 'an investigation into why I so struggle with linear narrative'.

'I realised,' she concludes, 'there's something that just bores me about narrative cinema. I don't know what it is. And that's when I really knew, I'm actually just an artist. That's it. That's what I am.' **A**

Robert Barry is a freelance composer and writer in London. His most recent book is *Compact Disc* (Bloomsbury).

'The Dante Project/One Hundred and Fifty Years of Painting' and 'Monet Hates Me/Pan Amicus' are at Frith Street Gallery (Golden Square; Soho Square) from 17 September–13 November (www.frithstreetgallery.com).



1. Palanquin of the king, Joseon dynasty (1392–1897), wood, silk, metal, palanquin: ht 260cm; poles: length 600cm (each). National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul

PALACE

INTRIGUE

The National Palace Museum in Seoul contains objects from a vanished world – that of the Joseon dynasty, who ruled Korea for more than 500 years – as well as reminders of the country's turbulent recent history

By Andrew Russeth



2. Vehicle belonging to Empress Consort Sunjeong (1894–1966), Daimler (1914[?] model), metal, glass, plate, various materials, length: 444.4cm. National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul

Start in the basement! That is the only advice I offer to those headed to the National Palace Museum of Korea, which is tucked in the south-west corner of Gyeongbokgung, the largest of Seoul's Five Grand Palaces, built in 1395. Two floors below ground, not far from artefact-filled galleries, there are twin models of the palace's surroundings sitting side by side, with countless buildings and trees meticulously rendered. Binoculars are provided to allow visitors to scrutinise their details.

These sprawling cityscapes tell remarkable stories. One shows Gyeongbokgung and the surrounding neighbourhood as they were around 1868, during the reign of the final king of the Joseon dynasty, Gojong. (He held that position from 1864 to 1897 and then declared himself emperor, serving for another decade.) The other depicts exactly the same slice of town after 1910, when Japan completed its annexation of Korea and began to tear down much of the palace, turning it into a park and erecting grand neoclassical buildings.

Intriguingly, the more recent map looks far more alien. After its independence at the end of the Second World War, South Korea went about erasing much of the Japanese construction around the country, and it has undertaken extensive efforts to restore its historical sites. Soaring walls, imposing gates, and intricate pavilions have gone back up. While not all of Gyeongbokgung has been rebuilt in its 19th-century glory (it once had more than

7,000 rooms), a stroll through its tranquil grounds now provides sights straight out of the Joseon era, not least because some young Koreans visit while clad in elegant *hanbok* – traditional Korean clothing – rented by the hour from nearby shops. (All five of the palaces, or *gung*, waive their modest admission fees for those in costume.)

The National Palace Museum of Korea is devoted to the study of that vanished world, via more than 40,000 objects from the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) and the Korean Empire (1897–1910), holdings which range from royal records to official portraits, scientific inventions to ancient weapons, and musical instruments to everyday tools. The dynasty is no more, but as the museum's director, Kim In Kyu, puts it, 'Much of today's Korean culture is connected to the Joseon era' – a period marked by hardships and accomplishment, guided by a Neo-Confucian ideology that still shapes contemporary society.

The tale of the museum's creation and evolution provides a superb lens for understanding South Korea's difficult history over the past century. Like so many cultural institutions in this museum-mad country, the National Palace Museum, in its current incarnation, was created fairly recently, though it traces its roots far back through complicated and turbulent times.

It was christened in 2005, when it moved into its Gyeongbokgung home, amid a continuing museum-building boom. (In 2019, the Ministry of Culture, Sports,



3. Blue-and-white jar with dragon design, late 18th century, porcelain, ht 57.5cm. National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul



4. Incense burner, Joseon dynasty (1392–1897), brass, 33.5cm. National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul



5. Nine imperial seals returned to South Korea in 2014

and Tourism announced a plan to build 186 museums and galleries by 2023, bringing the country's total number above 1,300.) However, the seed of the museum was actually planted at the very end of the Korean Empire, around 1909, when Emperor Sunjong established an imperial museum in Changgyeonggung (a palace a short walk to the east from Gyeongbokgung) to preserve material from the Joseon dynasty.

When the Japanese consolidated their political domination of the Korean peninsula in 1910, the Imperial Museum became the Yi Royal Household Museum – Yi being the dynasty's family name. The Japanese split off more than half of the museum's collection to create an art-focused museum at another nearby palace, Deoksugung. This eventually became the National Museum of Korea, with a purview that spans thousands of years.

In the 1990s, the objects that remained at Changgyeonggung made their way into a Royal Artefact Exhibition Hall at Deoksugung – and that became the Palace Museum in 2005, when it was joined with material from other royal palaces and tombs, and moved into its present location in Gyeongbokgung. Its home, expanded in 2007, is a discreet, low-slung building that matches the airy character of the pavilion-dotted palace grounds.

These administrative moves took place during years of political decay, a foreign occupation, a brutal civil war, the partitioning of the country, and a military dictatorship – daunting conditions for managing precious objects. Important, rare, and alluring objects nevertheless survived, and some of them bear traces of those traumas. Delicate paintings of Joseon court officials, for example, are singed by flames from a fire that broke out during the

war in the early 1950s, nearly consuming them.

High-level diplomacy has brought back into the fold other items scattered by war, such as a number of seals which President Barack Obama returned on a state visit to Seoul in 2014 (Fig. 5). Among those was the *hwangjejibo*, a jade seal topped with a fearsome dragon that was used by Emperor Gojong when appointing officials. Taken out of the country by a lieutenant in the US Marines, it is now designated by the government as a treasure, one of many that the Palace Museum safeguards. Such seals 'are meaningful in that they were taken out of Korea during difficult times, such as the Korean War, but later returned', Kim says. In 2011, Japan returned more than 1,000 ancient books that it had taken during the colonial period, including more than 100 volumes of *Uigwe*, which document protocol, rituals, and events in the royal court through writing and illustrations. (Such material has been vital for reconstructing lost architecture and re-enacting ceremonial occasions.)

The institution is smartly laid out to provide an expansive picture of the history of the Joseon dynasty and a vivid sense of its culture. It starts with a chronological introduction to the Joseon monarchs – there were 27 over more than 500 years, in a not-unimpressive show of individual endurance – and it then offers up exhibits devoted to discrete topics such as royal rituals and court life. That said, the collection is so wonderfully multifarious that the less linearly minded should feel free to treat it as a vast and idiosyncratic encyclopaedia of history, politics, and symbols (Figs. 3 & 4).

Visitors struck by the *hwangjejibo*'s jade dragon can seek out another dragon, serpentine and made from bronze, which was fished out of a pond near a pavilion



6. *Imaginary Painting of Chinese Palaces on Ten-panel Folding Screen*, late 19th/early 20th century, colours on silk, 98.1 x 408.8cm. National Palace Museum of Korea

in Gyeongbokgung, apparently having been placed there in the 1860s in the hope that the mythical creature's ability to control water might prevent fires at the wooden structure. (Regrettably, fires still broke out.) And a swirling blue dragon is emblazoned on a vibrant red flag that accompanied the king on his travels.

Another royal symbol is at the centre of a satisfying exhibition (until 31 October). Composed of the museum's own holdings as well as loans, 'Peonies: The Flowers of Peace and Prosperity' offers up a feast of items bearing that revered plant, including 19th-century inkwork by Heo Ryeon and a cushion cover from 1830 embroidered with a garden. 'Peony designs were used throughout the process of worshipping the deceased kings and queens as ancestral gods of the royal court to pray for the peace and prosperity of the royal family,' Kim says, explaining that the show has aimed 'to bring some comfort to visitors who might be having a difficult time due to the Covid-19 pandemic by offering them an opportunity to indulge in these peonies embodying wishes for peace and prosperity'.

The exhibition features artificial flowers, digital forest imagery, a mirrored hallway in the Yayoi Kusama mould and even floral scents – a fairly surreal atmosphere in all. One highlight is a flower-covered wedding robe made in 1830 for Princess Bokon, who died two years later, at the age of only 13. The museum purchased the majestic red garment, known as a *hwarot*, in 2020, and after analysis, it 'is presumed to have been produced by reusing embroidered fabric pieces from other *hwarot*', Kim says.

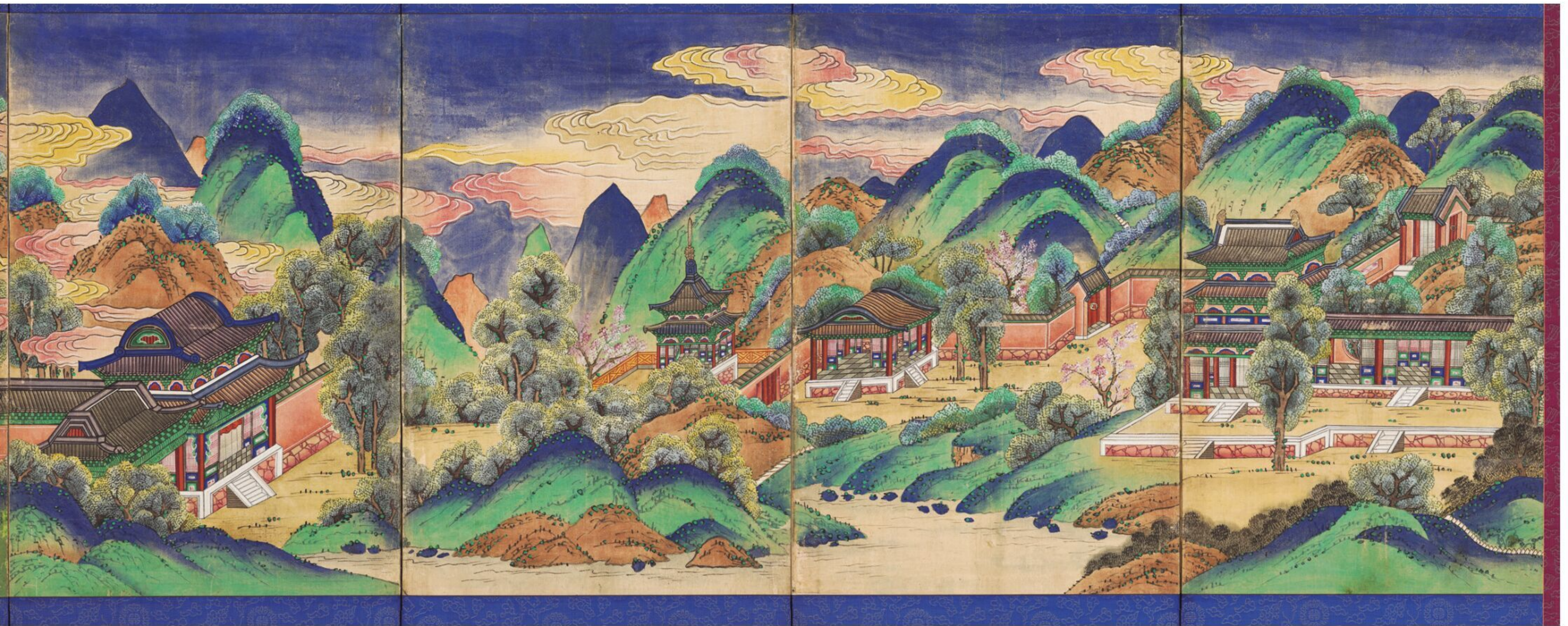
Other temporary exhibitions have allowed the museum to put such conservation work and scholarship front and centre. Late 2020 brought a stunner of a screen painting – more than 25 feet long – from the Dayton Art Institute in Ohio. The gold-leafed painting of longevity symbols (such as peaches and cranes) had been catalogued as Japanese, and then as Chinese, but an eagle-eyed researcher's questions led to its identification as a major late-Joseon piece that was likely associated with the court. With a grant

from the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation, which cares for Korean works outside of the country, the Palace Museum undertook extensive restoration work. (It has three labs, measuring more than 4,500 square feet). The painting was transferred from six panels to the 12 it had originally, and patches of the later paintwork were removed. Illuminated in a dark gallery at the Palace Museum after a thorough cleaning, the work was an impressive sight. It has since been sent back to Dayton.

The richness of the museum's eclectic displays also allows visitors to track specific aspects of court life through the ages as they wander – the transport of royal personages, for one. For centuries, they were carried in a palanquin; one on display here is painted a deep red and ornamented in gold with the unicorn-like *qilin* and other mythical animals (Fig. 1). In a handscroll and a folding screen (reproductions of key 18th-century artefacts held in other collections), palanquins appear in elaborate processions, accompanied by a well-ordered array of colourfully attired soldiers and advisers. A short stroll away, one can see what these sturdy, handheld carriages eventually gave way to: plush automobiles. A black and dark red 1918 Cadillac of lacquered wood ferried Emperor Sunjong (by then powerless under the Japanese annexation), while Empress Sunjeong went with a burgundy British Daimler, its doors and interior lining marked with plum blossoms (Fig. 2).

An intense level of intimacy is established with the Joseon rulers and their families. Beyond their vehicles, there is tableware, furniture, tools for ancestral rites, and clothing, like a small military outfit – red and blue, with golden tassels – that Imperial Prince Yeong (1897–1970) wore as a young child. There is also the radiant six-panel screen that sat behind the king's throne, showing the sun, the moon, and five towering mountain peaks (see cover).

The jars that held the *tae* – the placenta and umbilical cord – of royal babies were once buried at promising sites with the hope of promoting a successful life. A nested pair of smooth white porcelain jars date back to 1661, made for



the future King Sukjong, who reigned from 1674 to 1720. Two vessels of unglazed stoneware, somewhat rough-hewn but sturdy-looking, are older still, dating from the late Goryeo dynasty, which gave way to the Joseon in 1392 when Yi Seong-gye (King Taejo) seized power. The *tae* of his fifth son, King Taejong, Joseon's third ruler, was once held inside the inner pot.

But one great joy of the Palace Museum is that it does not focus exclusively on the high and mighty. There are artefacts from members of the 'different social strata who lived in the Joseon royal palaces, from the king to the lowliest servant,' Kim says. Glimpses of the lives of everyday people appear through less lavish (but often quite handsome) objects, such as branding irons used to imprint a seal on a *wijangpae*, a tag worn by a guard commander tasked with protecting a royal palace. A sizeable display devoted to the musical legacy of the Joseon dynasty includes a *pyeongyeong* (a set of 16 L-shaped jade chimes on a painted stand).

For those who do not go in for history lessons, or who are somehow left unenchanted by the many hypnotically detailed illustrations of ceremonies and architecture on hand, unexpected aesthetic pleasures still wait. Aficionados of contemporary art may even be startled by some parallels. Earthenware figurines that once adorned the hips of palace roofs, representing characters from the 16th-century classic *Journey to the West*, have the ramshackle charisma of Jörg Immendorff's sculpture. A folding screen painted to resemble book-lined shelves, from the turn of the 20th century, has both a dash of John F. Peto's *trompe-l'oeil* magic and a flat-planned language that invokes canonical minimalism. A black inkstone larger than a person's torso, shaped like a giant lotus leaf, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and set in a wooden lacquer case, might be the envy of any abstract sculptor of the past 100 years.

Even the scientific equipment dazzles. A cylindrical rain gauge stuck into the middle of a stone block may bring to mind certain Donald Judd works or even the

Robert Gober sculptures that feature penetrating pipes. The stone, which bears text that includes details about its making, dates to 1782 and is registered as a National Treasure.

Let's examine one last National Treasure: a tall stone monolith that charts constellations in the sky. Its pinprick stars and celestial markings are still faintly visible more than 600 years after its conception, during the kingship of Taejo, in 1395 – the same year in which Gyeongbokgung was built. In later times, printed copies were made from that weathered stone sentinel, and, in 1687, on the orders of King Sukjong, its contents were transcribed to another stone, which is also here. These two stones, separated by nearly three centuries but joined by a common purpose, are emblematic of the National Palace Museum of Korea's mission to carry its store of knowledge securely into the future.

In December, the Palace Museum will stage an exhibition to mark the 30th anniversary of the excavation and restoration of Gyeongbokgung, charting the work done so far and outlining future plans. Some efforts are already underway: in 2020 the process began of restoring – using traditional construction methods – an area used by the Joseon crown prince, which was destroyed during the Japanese occupation.

This latest work is another chapter in the long history of repair efforts at Gyeongbokgung. Badly damaged during a Japanese invasion in the 1590s, it was rebuilt again only in the 1860s. When restorations were being done in 2001, ceremonial documents were discovered that list some of the officials and workers involved in 19th-century rehabilitation, as well as a poetic dedication composed by a Jo Dusan. 'Hurray! We threw crossbeams downward,' it reads near its end, finally concluding, 'The king does not refrain from listening to his people / Who will be blessed with [this] spacious mansion.' ㉠

Andrew Russeth is a writer based in Seoul.

WHAT THE BUTLERS SAW



1. Wine or tea pot and cover in the form of bamboo, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662–1722), China, green-glazed biscuit porcelain, ht 13.4cm

Over the course of 50 years, the keen-eyed diplomat Michael Butler built up the largest collection of 17th-century Chinese porcelain in the world. Ahead of the publication of a catalogue which she co-authored, his daughter Katharine shows *Apollo* his ‘pots’

By Susan Moore
Portrait by Tom Mannion



2. Katharine Butler at home
in Dorset with her Black
Russian terrier, Boboshka

Katharine Butler seems surprisingly calm for someone with an imminent deadline for correcting a proof – in English and Mandarin – of a 576-page catalogue raisonné. *Leaping the Dragon Gate* celebrates the largest and most comprehensive collection of 17th-century Chinese porcelain in the world, amassed by her father, the distinguished British diplomat Michael Butler (1927–2013). Despite the myriad as yet unread pages, she has dropped everything on a damp October day to show me those parts of this remarkable collection that are displayed at her house in Dorset and at the private museum her father built in 2009 in the garden of his house in the country to accommodate what he always referred to as his ‘pots’. Following us like a shadow is her enormous Black Russian terrier, Boboshka.

The interview, like the catalogue and the sponsorship of an annual Sir Michael Butler Memorial Lecture presented by the Oriental Ceramic Society – which celebrates its centenary this year and of which her father was a stalwart – may be seen as an act of filial piety; as will the memorial stele in the complex form of an archaic Chinese ritual jade cong which is about to grace the hill above the house. Yet Katharine’s dedication to keeping the flame burning has had the unexpected effect of transforming her, temporarily at least, from businesswoman to researcher and advocate for this long-neglected and still somewhat

shadowy period of Chinese porcelain manufacture. In this sense, she is a chip off the old block. For her father, despite a succession of very senior and at times critically important day jobs, spent five decades not only engaged in identifying and dating the wares produced during the late Ming, High Transitional, Shunzhi and Kangxi periods but also arguing a case for the ingenuity and innovation of the potters and painters working at the Jingdezhen kilns after they were released from the constraints of imperial patronage. (Between the closing of the imperial kilns during the reign of the Ming Emperor Wanli in 1608 and their re-establishment by the Qing Emperor Kangxi in 1683 came a period of free enterprise: the parallel with Thatcherite policy was not lost on Butler, a key adviser to the prime minister in the 1980s.) Even so, this dutiful daughter also deeply regrets the splitting up of her father’s collection.

‘My father was not a vain man,’ she begins after first showing me his earliest acquisition – a small wine or tea pot in the form of bamboo (c. 1665–70; Fig. 1), bought in 1961 and apparently unique, for Butler could never find another. ‘He did not build the museum as a vanity project but really to present the pieces as best he could to the increasing numbers of people who wanted to see them. Pa had lived with his pots in his different houses, and as ambassador in Brussels had also been able to house them in his residence and his office. When my parents

3. A Kangxi jar dating to 1721 sits by a window in Katharine Butler’s house in Dorset, along with a Zhangzhou dish of c. 1600



Photo: Tom Mannion



4. Group of porcelains bearing the eight-character mark 'Kangxi renzi Zhonghe Tang zhi', made for the 'Hall of Central Harmony' and dated between 1671 and 1673. The two celadon bowls, decorated in underglaze blue and red, were found by Michael Butler in Paris, where they were being used as ashtrays

came back from Brussels in 1985, they realised they just did not have enough space at home – there must have been around 500 pieces at the time.' Butler's initial solution was to convert some apple sheds in the garden for the collection, but that proved inadequate after its highlights returned in glory from exhibition at the Shanghai Museum in 2005–06 – the first time the institution had staged a joint exhibition with a Western private collector. 'The exhibition put the collection on the map in China, and more and more people wanted to see it,' Katharine says. 'The pots had been shoved back into the apple sheds, but my father felt they would now be offended by such an environment. The creation of the museum and laying it out became his great project.'

'He never wanted the collection to be a millstone around our necks,' she continues. 'The formal Letter of Wishes to his trustees hoped that we would keep the collection together for at least 10 years after his death, but I don't think that he imagined he would die just four years after the museum opened.' By that time, 500 pieces of his ever-growing collection had already been given to his four children. 'The understanding of the Butler Family Collection was that if one person needed money, the others would attempt to buy them out or we would sell pieces to raise the requisite amount,' she explains. 'The idea that the collection would be broken up for non-financial reasons never really occurred to us.' Yet that was what happened, for the two elder siblings, Caroline and James, decided they wanted to live with their portions rather than keep the collection together; they took the case to court in 2016 and won. 'It was our biggest failure that we could not resolve this and ended up facing one another in court,' Katharine says. 'Our

father believed so passionately in compromise, in finding elegant solutions where nobody loses. He hated conflict.'

There was, however, a silver lining to the cloud of the court case. 'It made my brother Charles and me more committed to the collection than we might have been otherwise. We had to defend it, and over the two years that was extremely intense. We were living with the pots, and constantly showing people around the museum.' As for the future of the museum and collection, now depleted of 250 pieces: 'We didn't have a plan because we thought the collection would stay together.' The catalogue raisonné was, however, already in hand. 'It was something my father had always wanted to do. For three years from 2004, when I was living and working in Prague, I would come home for a month every summer and sit and catalogue each pot with him, which was such a privilege and an extraordinarily wonderful thing to do. We had photographs taken and made a digital database which included everything my father knew. The catalogue that [the independent scholar] Teresa Canepa and I have just produced would have been impossible without it, and it was the starting point for our further research.'

She and Charles had also begun, tentatively, even accidentally, to add to the collection. Katharine had often accompanied their father to auctions and dealers and would discuss pieces with him. 'He was increasingly convinced that most pieces were fakes.' Despite all those years sitting at his feet, as it were, and a degree in the history of art, she found dipping her own toe into the market in 2014 an altogether different and alarming experience. 'Having to back an intellectual decision with your own cash was an interesting experience.' She had found a small

saucer-dish belonging to a rare group all dated between 1671 and 1673 that her father had been particularly interested in, each bearing an eight-character mark including Kangxi and the name of the 'hall', or collection – Zhonghe Tang or 'Hall of Central Harmony' (Fig. 4). His first purchase of a piece from that group had inspired his quest for the exceedingly rare documentary pieces that provide benchmarks for a chronological framework of the period. Although the piece Katharine found was dated later than the reign of the emperor, it had been catalogued as Kangxi nonetheless. 'I got sucked in. It is irresistible if you find something that other people don't recognise.'

The two celadon bowls of 1672 – the only known celadons from the group – are testimony to Butler's keen eye and legendary good luck. He had spotted them while waiting for a meeting with the president of a French bank. They were evidently being used as ashtrays, and he asked if he might buy them; after an 'expert' deemed they were of little interest or value, Butler was given them, and wrapped them in his pyjamas to carry home. Katharine has also added to another distinct assemblage of heavily potted vessels painted with bold narrative scenes which her father termed 'the 1660s dishes'. 'Pa thought they might be the first pieces made for the new imperial court as some of them have the Kangxi mark on them.' The group of roughly potted wares made for the Japanese market has also expanded.

Since the court case, Katharine and Charles have not only been adding unusual pieces but also filling gaps in the collection. A large, late Kangxi jar from 1721 (Fig. 3), which alludes to the prose poem 'The Old Drunkard's Pavilion', for instance, is the sibling of one no longer in the museum. Nicknamed 'the tot pot' after Charles's son, who fitted perfectly inside as a baby, it sits in Katharine's hall under the stairs. Found in Paris, it was also something of a coup. Another acquisition – there have been around 50 – includes a pendant to a Wanli/Tianqi-reign figure of Chang-E, the moon goddess of immortality, which her father had bought in the 1970s. 'I remember when she was displayed in the museum that she looked a little out of place as the only figure.' When a dealer sent on approval a figure of one of the Eight Immortals of Daoism, Zhongli Quan, self-evidently a product of the same workshop, Katharine could not resist that either, although it was an accompanying green ewer, echoing her father's first purchase, that had more interested her. Like him, she has bought group lots in order to secure a single piece but has yet to learn his ruthlessness in weeding out and selling on unnecessary works, which was how Butler had astutely financed his entire collection.

Of course, there have been mistakes. On what could be called the chimney piece of humility, standing as companion to a replica vase her father had commissioned somewhat mischievously to test the experts, is a vase that looked perfectly right in the images. 'As soon as I unpacked it, I knew it was a fake,' she groans. 'Looking now at the auction and dealer's catalogues at the time my father was buying, I realise his frustration at not being able to buy things because he could not afford them. Nowadays the problem is mostly availability and the extent to which you mistrust what you find.' Butler had been 'putting things on and off the naughty step' his entire collecting career. Katharine, like him, has also begun narrowing down her



5. *Rolwagen*, Qing dynasty, Shunzhi reign (1644–61), China, Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province, porcelain, underglaze blue and overglaze enamels, ht 48cm

6. High Transitional jar with cover, Ming dynasty, Chongzhen reign (1628–44), China, Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province, porcelain, underglaze blue and overglaze enamels, ht 19cm



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focus, in her case to the late Ming, Shunzhi and the first, pre-imperial stage of Kangxi.

‘Collecting, for me, is finding the pieces that tell the story,’ she continues once we arrive at the museum, long-closed but due to reopen at the end of this month, by appointment, to small groups. She has evidently felt uneasy having part of her tranche of the collection at home – even temporarily – where it is no longer part of the narrative and thereby reduced to decorative objects, however beautiful they may be to contemplate. ‘They make less sense to me. The collection is like a library, which is what is so interesting about it. Some pieces are not important in their own right, and not everything needs to be of imperial quality, for one piece explains another,’ she says, walking over to a vitrine of both modest and significant pieces from the famous Hatcher cargo of some 25,000 porcelains shipwrecked around 1643, the date on two of the pieces. Their salvage in 1983 not only confirmed the dating of 17th-century Chinese ceramics but also demonstrated the variety and quality of porcelains made for the discerning domestic as well as export markets during this unsettled transitional period. Butler displayed them on a ‘seabed’ of sand and shells.

‘One of the great benefits of the museum is that you could look for a border, or any other piece of design iconography, and walk across the room and find other examples.’ Another is that nothing is behind glass and everything can be handled. ‘That was why our museum was so popular. When small groups of people came to the museum, my father or I would talk them through it. It was an extraordinary experience because they could learn and also pick things up. Porcelain needs to be handled.’

It is between these sage-green walls that Butler’s spirit is felt most keenly, and Katharine moves around its sections authoritatively talking about the pieces and handling them confidently, often fondly mimicking her father’s telling of favoured anecdotes, accentuating his plummy, period voice. (He can be heard in the engaging video she made of him in the museum in 2012, now on YouTube.) One of his favourite pieces was a large High Transitional brush pot decorated in underglaze blue with scenes from the historical drama of Lady Cai, the third-century Han poet who was abducted by nomadic troops and spent around 12 years among them before her release. Here we have her saying goodbye to the distraught two sons she was forced to leave behind. The pot’s *anhua*, or subtle incised decoration at top and bottom, is suggestive of the brocaded edge of a scroll, and the decoration of the pot itself makes it clear where the narrative should begin and end (Fig. 7).

As the photographs for this article are taken, Katharine wraps the six loans requested for the exhibition ‘Collectors, Curators, Connoisseurs: 100 Years of The Oriental Ceramic Society’ at the Brunei Gallery at SOAS in London until 11 December. Perhaps most spectacular – as well as exceptionally rare, if not unique – is the rounded jar and cover painted in polychrome overglaze enamels with scenes representing the legendary story of the sage Taigong Jiang, produced during the Chongzhen period, 1628–44 (Fig. 6). This is one of only a handful of pieces decorated in the High Transitional style in enamels only, and was included in almost all of Butler’s five exhibitions and numerous publications.

Another tour de force is an irresistible ‘sleeve’ vase or *rolwagen* of unrivalled quality, painted with peacocks and



7. High Transitional brush pot, Ming dynasty, Chongzhen reign (1628–44), China, Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province, porcelain and underglaze blue, ht 22.5cm

other birds amid flowering plants and rocks, remarkable for its *wucai* or five-colour palette and made during the Shunzhi reign (Fig. 5). It is one of a pair that Butler bought in 1976 and what he used to call, in reference to Winnie the Pooh’s Heffalump trap, a ‘Marchant trap’ – that is, an irresistible piece which he would buy from his favoured dealers, Marchant & Sons, despite its high price. He later defrayed the cost by selling one for even more.

The catalogue raisonné presents important and hitherto unpublished pieces, as well as new acquisitions to illustrate the stylistic and chronological development of porcelain production across the 17th century. Teresa Canepa and Katharine also decided to include a revised and expanded version of the list of all known dated pieces published in the 1990 catalogue that accompanied the American tour of the collection. That turned out to be another labour of love, taking three years even with the help of three Chinese graduate students. The authors hope to make it available as a digital database to which others can add.

It was, however, the intellectual rigour of the last section, devoted to the ‘conundra’ or puzzle pieces, that Katharine most relished writing. The catalogue’s title, *Leaping the Dragon Gate*, refers to the symbolic metamorphosis from a humble carp to a mighty dragon that a student would undergo on succeeding in the Chinese imperial civil service examinations, an undertaking requiring years of effort, and as such a fitting metaphor for Michael Butler’s scholarly achievement. It seems that Katharine too is slowly exchanging fins for fire-breathing jaws. **A**

Susan Moore is associate editor of Apollo.

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UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Few have known the artworks of Florence as intimately as the writer Vernon Lee. A denizen of the city from the 1870s to 1935, she obsessively noted their physical effects on the viewer – all in an attempt to answer the question, ‘What is a work of art?’

By Claudia Tobin



1. Vernon Lee, 1881, John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), oil on canvas, 53.7 x 43.2cm. Tate collection

The 19th century did much to mythologise Florence and its art. Conjure the spirit of Stendhal swooning in Santa Croce, submit to Ruskin organising your *Mornings in Florence*, or linger over Henry James's evocations of the 'Florentine character' in his *Italian Hours*. But perhaps a better guide might be a lesser-known female writer who knew the city's artworks more intimately than most of her contemporaries. Violet Paget lived in the city from the 1870s until her death in 1935 and was, in James's words, 'far-away the most able mind in Florence'. Known by her pen name Vernon Lee, which encouraged ambiguity about her gender, she wrote numerous studies on Renaissance art and culture, as well as supernatural tales and travel essays which vividly conjured the 'spirit of place' she detected in living landscapes.

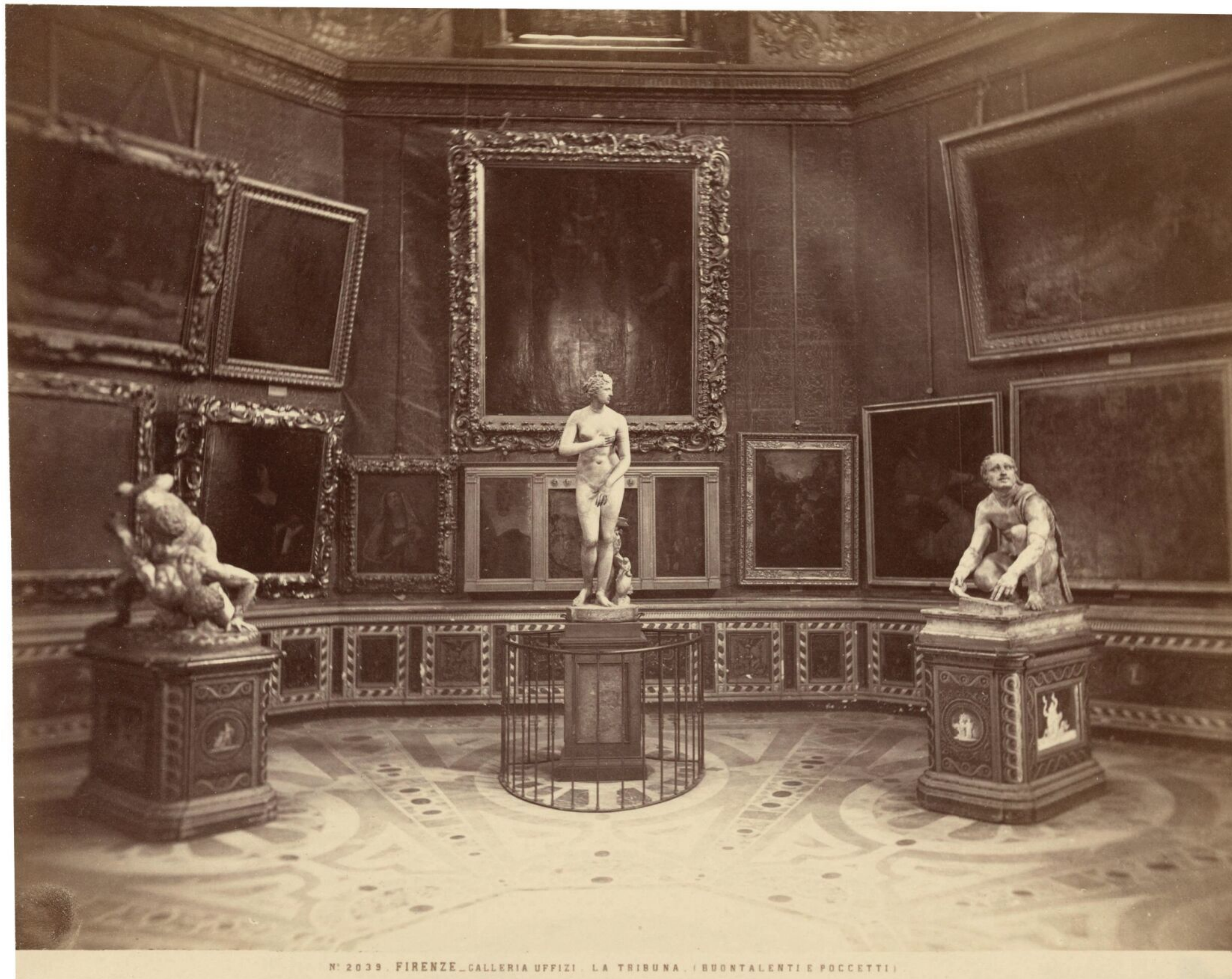
As a writer, she came of age as a disciple of Walter Pater, but she sought to extend the inquiries he had set out in his influential *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), which asserted the significance of the individual's subjective response to works of art. Lee would ask herself, 'What is a work of art? What does it do for us, or rather, do with us?' as she haunted the museums and galleries of Europe. In the late 1880s she began to develop innovative practices for investigating the psychological and physiological effects of art on the body. Lee worked in collaboration with her close companion, Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, who had trained as a painter and according to Lee displayed heightened physical receptivity to works of art. First-hand encounters in the museums, galleries and churches of

Florence were at the heart of the women's research as they recorded bodily changes such as quickening of breath or raised temperature in response to certain sculptures and paintings. As Lee affirmed in 1911, 'My aesthetics will always be those of the gallery and the studio, not of the laboratory.'

Lee was ahead of her time in anticipating modern museology and its emphasis on viewer response. In recent years museums and galleries have given increasing thought to visitor experience, redisplaying collections and inviting sensory engagement through sound, immersive experiences, and even taste. Lee understood the multisensory nature of viewing art, and sought to reconnect art, life and the body. Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have become more attuned to our bodies and yet more estranged from physical encounters with artworks, even as digital interventions provide a different mode of encounter. What does Lee's approach have to offer us today?

Few writers have charted the nature of their physical encounters with paintings and sculptures as intimately and precisely as Lee in her 'Gallery Diaries'. Written at the turn of the 20th century in a hybrid of autobiography, psychology and aesthetic commentary, they trace her shifting responses to form, line, rhythm and colour on her many visits to study works in the Uffizi (Fig. 2) or the Bargello, among other galleries. Sections of the diaries from the winter of 1903–04 in Florence chart her 'observations in the museums with especial reference to rhythmic obsessions, palpitations and aesthetic responsiveness'. Take one occasion, on a winter's day at the Uffizi, when she records a

2. The Tribuna at the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; photograph by Fratelli Alinari (founded 1852)





3. Vernon Lee (1856–1935) in her study at Villa Il Palmerino in Florence, photographed in 1902 by Ernestine Fabbri (1863–1941)

4. *Portrait of Vernon Lee*, 1889, John Singer Sargent, graphite on paper, 33.7 × 22.8cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



Fig. 3: akg-images/Rabatti & Domingie

synaesthetic journey taking in, first, Baldovinetti's *Madonna and Child with Saints* (Fig. 5):

Coming up the stairs (no palpitations) I discover a tune in my head and which I am actually singing or whistling [...] It is Allegro of a Mozart Sonata. [...] I walk quickly and stop at the Baldovinetti *Madonna and Saints*. I know I like the picture and immediately get into a superficial examination. Pleasure comes suddenly with perception of bearded saint's white gloves. I then begin to see the relief, go *into* the picture. Light bad; I can't see whole well. Left-hand corner; I take pleasure in bearded man and much bulk pleasure in Saint Lawrence and his very beautiful dress, and in his flat but solid existence. Am a little worried by his wrong spatial relation to bearded man. . . . Saint Anthony (though I *spotted* him at once, saying how like Baron A– F–) is difficult to look at, all because he is without solidity [...] A sort of raising of my hat and scalp and eyebrows seems necessary to see this picture; otherwise it is swimmy. By the way, the lilac and crimson give me a vivid cool pleasure, like *taste*.

And on to Cosimo Rosselli's *Magi*, where colour similarly attracts her; but by the time she reaches the Venetian Room she finds herself (and who hasn't felt this after hours in a museum) 'tired, bored, disinclined to look at anything', until, arriving in front of Veronese's *Sophonisba*, she is seized by a 'physical [pleasure], located almost in my mouth'. Melodies would often accompany these encounters – Lee was a passionate musicologist, and described 'secretly "sampling" statues and pictures with "tunes"'.

Lee's experiments in the galleries were not as eccentric as they might first seem. At the end of the 19th century, many artists and writers were shaping debates about the experience of art and its relationship to physical and moral health. They were confronting new theories of evolutionary science promoted by figures such as Grant Allen and Herbert Spencer who explained the experience of beauty and perception in evolutionary terms. In recent years, the work of pioneering contemporary visual neuroscientists, notably Semir Zeki, into the cerebral cortex's response to artworks, seems to confirm the links Lee was making between art and the brain as her physiological aesthetics broke down entrenched ideas of a split between mind and body. For Lee the experience of art was visceral, often violently registered in the body and translated into vivid metaphor. She studied and began to correspond with leading psychologists and philosophers, and her investigations drew on theories of the emotions developed by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), and on the work of German physiological psychologists Karl Groos and Theodor Lipps. She has been credited with introducing Lipps' concept of *Einfühlung* or 'empathy' into English in her 'Gallery Diaries'. An attempt at 'feeling into' an object or person was at the heart of her collaborative approach. As she summed up her own 'Aesthetics of Empathy': 'the work of art requires for its enjoyment to be met halfway by the active collaboration of the beholder, or, I may add, the listener and the reader'.

In their co-authored essay of 1897 'Beauty and Ugliness', Lee and Anstruther-Thomson had defined the distinguishing criteria for great works of art as prompting 'feelings of vivid fellowship' and making the spectator 'feel more keenly alive'. They suggested that great works of art have a

detectable atmosphere, or 'climate', which permeates the air around them, and which the viewer may enter or find 'encompassing' them. In one evocative reading of Catena's painting of Saint Jerome (now in the National Gallery in London) they identify the painting as giving 'to the air which we inhale a sort of exhilarating power; and the special colour quality of coolness' so that it 'awakens [...] a feeling of temperature similar to that of a spring day'. What variations in aesthetic weather might we experience as we walk through re-opened galleries at home and abroad, and what effect might they have on our own psychological climate?

In 1889, Lee and her family moved from the centre of Florence to Villa Il Palmerino – on the very edge of the city, with the Etruscan city of Fiesole and the woods of Vincigliata rising above it (Fig. 3). Like generations before her fleeing the plague, Lee had sought out a villa in the hills above Florence partly to escape an outbreak of cholera in the city's congested inner walls. Her travel writings, written around the same time as she was formulating her physiological aesthetics, offered another form for embodied response, evoking her deep sense of connection with the Tuscan landscape surrounding her home. As she urged in her book of essays on the spirit of place, *Genius Loci* (1899), we need to rethink our relations with places: certain localities 'can touch us like living creatures' and we can form with them 'friendship of the deepest and most satisfying sort'. If, as she believed, such relations to places could enrich one's connection to the world, then deeply sensory relationships – one could even say friendships – with artworks made familiar by frequent visits and intense physical response could do something similar. Travelling in Lee's footsteps through her writings around Florence we uncover a different character to the Renaissance city. Statues, paintings and architecture beckon the viewer to meet them in a mysterious overlapping of past and present, the 'vivid fellowship' that constitutes aesthetic experience.

At Il Palmerino – one of her most beloved of localities – Lee created a salon where artists and writers such as Henry James, John Singer Sargent and Edith Wharton could gather and share ideas. A friend to Lee from childhood, Sargent captured something of her alertness and readiness for conversation and debate in his oil of 1881 and a pencil sketch of 1889 (Figs. 1 & 4). Unlike many of her fellow expatriates, Lee spoke fluent Italian and formed strong bonds with Italian literary figures such as Carlo Placci and Tuscan artists such as the Macchiaioli painter Telemaco Signorini. The creative and cosmopolitan spirit that she fostered at Il Palmerino imbued her writing, from fiction to aesthetics to pacifist manifestos. The impulse of Boccaccio's storytellers from the *Decameron* who, five centuries previously, had escaped to the Florentine hills to seek refuge from the plague, must have felt as familiar to Lee as it does in our own time. As I experienced in living through last year's lockdown in Italy, the spirit of Lee's salon lives on: the current owners of Il Palmerino run their house as an artist's residency, with exhibitions where possible, and music and poetry in the garden.

By the end of the century, Lee had become increasingly dissatisfied with the mantra of 'art for art's sake' popularised by many of Pater's decadent followers as his defining message. In her book *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895) she pledged herself to 'art, not for art's sake, but art for the sake of life – art as one of the harmonious functions

of existence'. The first decades of the new century would in fact be characterised by disharmony: dominated by political upheaval, war in Europe and the Spanish Flu in its cruel aftermath. In these years Lee increasingly sought a socially productive and practical role for art. Nevertheless, she retained her belief in its power to enhance life and physically rejuvenate the body.

Lee knew what it meant to spend periods of time estranged from the city and the artworks she loved. Following a visit to England in 1914 she was prevented from returning to Florence due to the outbreak of the First World War and spent most of the war in London. She became an increasingly outspoken – and as a result ostracised – critic of the war, publishing her pacifist satire *The Ballet of the Nations* in 1915, which envisioned war as a diabolical dance. Her staunch pacifism partly explains why her popularity faded in the early 20th century.

What might we learn from Lee's sense of the profound relationship between art and the physical and spiritual health of the body? After more than a year warring against a virus and unable to walk freely into galleries, can we recover Lee's idea of 'art for life's sake'? As we slowly reacquaint ourselves with collections out of sight for too long, her faith in art's power to harmonise and rejuvenate seems all the more poignant.

But if the galleries close again, Lee reminds us not to despair. In her 'Tuscan Notes' on art and the country, she suggests that the best place to get to know the 'special artistic temperament' of a school of painting may in fact be 'in the fields'. She advises that we might learn more from an afternoon spent on the hillside, savouring its sensory and atmospheric conditions, 'its particular taste of air, its particular line of shelving rock and twisting road and accentuating reed or cypress in the delicate light', than from hours inside gazing at Signorelli and Lippi, or Angelico and Pollaiuolo, 'all telling one different things in different languages'. Her strong sense of the need to understand the landscape from which an artist has originated in order to truly gain insight into their work underpinned her essay on the 'Imaginative Art of the Renaissance'. She relates the experience of walking along the river near Careggi in Florence 'with its memories of Lorenzo dei Medici', where a strip of grass whitened with daises brings to mind 'the remembrance of certain early Renaissance pictures: the rusty, green, stenciled grass and flowers of Botticelli, the faded tapestry work of [Fra] Angelico'. Walking in their footsteps, she feels a kinship with these artists from four centuries ago and her visual memory of their paintings makes the present more vivid: 'the greenness greener, the freshness fresher, of that real grass and those real trees'.

Lee knew that the viewer could feel themselves permeated by – and connected to – works of art in ways that were hard to describe. She also knew that this experience could be sustaining in difficult times. As she wrote of the 'world of enchantment' created by Botticelli in the *Primavera*, 'I fancy one remains in it even when not looking.' Lee's sense of the merging of self and works of art in 'vivid fellowship' is more important than ever today. **A**

Claudia Tobin teaches English Literature and visual cultures at the University of Cambridge. She is the author of *Modernism and Still Life: Artists, Writers, Dancers* (2020).



5. *Madonna and Child with Saints*, c. 1454, Alessio Baldovinetti (c. 1425–99), tempera on wood, 176 × 166cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

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Arts & Business

Art Market

Susan Moore

Mark Rothko and Cy Twombly are among the big names appearing in a single-owner sale expected to exceed \$600m in New York this month. In September, decorative arts fared well in London and Paris thanks to tastemakers Jasper Conran and Hubert de Givenchy

Preview

A flush of high-profile sales this month suggests that the art trade, at least, believes something approaching normality has returned. None is more loudly trumpeted than that of the Macklowe Collection, probably the most hotly contested consignment in decades. Death, debt and divorce are the drivers of the art market, and here it is a particularly acrimonious case of the last. Sixty-five of the 165 works of art Harry and Linda Macklowe amassed over half a century have been consigned to Sotheby's New York, and they alone are expected to realise more than \$600m – the highest estimate ever placed on any collection at auction. To give the market time to absorb its hugely valuable individual lots, the sale is being offered in two parts, the second to follow in May 2022.

What makes this collection such a treasure trove is that it offers an almost textbook example of the kind of art that super-rich collectors most desire today: the 'right' names, represented by outstanding examples. In that sense, it resembles the celebrated Ganz Collection, in which outstanding Picassos mingled with the newest American contemporary art and which set a record for a single-owner auction at Christie's New York in 1997. The \$206.5m which those 58 lots totalled is dwarfed by the estimates here, although it evidently proved difficult to attach figures to some of these works.

One of those was Alberto Giacometti's *Le Nez*, since no other example of this bronze has ever come to auction – the majority of casts were promptly acquired by major museums. This version, conceived in 1949 and cast in around 1964, like its original 1947 manifestation appears strongly indebted to surrealist as well as ethnographic art and the ways it is displayed in museums. An irregularly modelled, decapitated head is suspended on rope in a metal case the imaginary walls of which are pierced by the long narwhal-horn of a nose.

1. *Jeune homme à sa fenêtre*, 1876, Gustave Caillebotte (1848–94), oil on canvas, 116.2×80.9cm. Christie's New York (estimate on request)



Sotheby's describes it as evoking 'the fragility, aggression and tension that lie at the heart of the existential experience so central to Giacometti's art', and expects it to fetch more than \$70m.

No one seems to mind very much that the piece is not unique – and nor is Andy Warhol's *Nine Marylins* of 1962, which comes with expectations of \$40m–\$60m. Cy Twombly's exuberant and spectacular *Untitled* of 2007 is also a serial work, one of a group of six monumental panel paintings known as *A Scattering of Blossoms*. Again, this will be the first one to be offered on the secondary market. The inspiration here came from the haiku of the 17th-century Japanese poets Basho and Kikaku – the concise writ large (\$40m–\$60m). Representing Mark Rothko is *No. 7*, a canvas of luminous pink, yellow and orange, with a date of 1951 anchoring it in the period in which the artist produced his first works in this signature style (Fig. 3). As with the Giacometti, the estimate for this lot is 'on request', but \$60m–\$80m is the hope, not least since the collection comes with a guarantee. This first offering on 15 November also includes works by Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke.

By contrast, 'The Cox Collection: The Story of Impressionism' at Christie's New York on 11 November, expected to make \$200m, looks positively old-fashioned. It does, however, include impressive and highly desirable works. Gustave Caillebotte (1848–94) was long the forgotten Impressionist, his critical reputation suffering from the fact that most of his work remained in the collections of family and friends – the artist was wealthy and did not need to sell. That wealth also allowed him to collect the work of his unsung colleagues and bequeath them to the state on his premature death at the age of 46. One of his most striking images, *Jeune homme à sa fenêtre* (1876; Fig. 1) presents his brother René as spectator, viewed from behind and gazing down at a diminutive female figure below; she is part of a modern urban scene quite distinct from the setting of Caspar David Friedrich's otherwise comparable *Traveller Looking Over the Sea of Fog*. It is expected to fetch more than \$50m.

Two other canvases stand out. In Cézanne's *L'Estaque aux toits rouges* of c. 1883–85, you can almost feel the Provençal heat rising from the russet-red roofs that form one band of this tightly framed view of village, sea and sky (estimate \$35m–\$55m). The motifs of Vincent van Gogh's expressively wrought *Cabanes de bois parmi les oliviers et cyprès* of 1889 are equally familiar and deemed no less appealing – around \$40m is anticipated. This overview of Impressionism in 25 works, gathered by a Texan in just a decade some 50 years ago, also embraces the American painter Childe Hassam.



2. 'Writhlington School' pot, 1972, Hans Coper (1920–81), stoneware, porcelain slip, manganese glaze, ht 77cm. Phillips, London (£80,000–£120,000)



3. *No. 7*, 1951, Mark Rothko (1903–70), oil on canvas, 240.7 × 138.7cm. Sotheby's New York (estimate on request)

It is the 'tremendous fluidity of approach' of present-day collectors that has prompted Sotheby's to reframe its marquee November and May sales in New York by introducing evening auctions categorised as 'Modern', 'Contemporary' and 'The Now'. The first offers one of Frida Kahlo's last and most haunting self-portraits, *Diego y yo* (Diego and I) from 1949, representing her husband Diego Rivera effectively seared into her mind. When this painting last sold at auction in 1990, it fetched a record \$1.4m. More than \$30m is expected on 16 November.

Another market darling, Cindy Sherman, takes centre stage in 'Image World: Property from a Private American Collection', offered across auctions at Christie's New York this month. Alongside three images from her celebrated *Centerfolds* series will be the photographer's uncomfortably ambiguous chromogenic print *Untitled* of 1981, in which she adopts the persona of a young teenage girl dressed in orange gingham lying on a laminate floor, flushed and clutching a torn page of classified ads (\$2m–\$3m).

Depicting 'what no one had ever talked about' is no contemporary phenomenon. These are the words used by the 19th-century French critic Théophile Gautier to praise Jean-Siméon Chardin's scene of below-stairs domesticity in which a servant draws water from a cistern, the painting's range of gleaming copper and pottery, worn wood and carcass of meat familiar motifs from his earlier still lifes. Chardin produced several versions of this Dutch-style genre scene, first painted in 1733. One, since 1848 in the collection of Camille Marcille, who did so much to rehabilitate the artist's reputation, is offered by Christie's Paris, in association with Tajan, on 22 November, alongside other works remaining in the family. *La fontaine* is estimated at €5m–€8m.

Not every notable collection in this month of blue-chip auctions comprises works valued in their millions. As part of Asia Week, 'Two Americans in Paris' at Sotheby's London on 4 November offers the collection of Sam and Myrna Myers, predominantly comprised of Chinese porcelain. Estimates range from £4,000–£500,000. On 10 November, Phillips in London, in association with Maak Contemporary Ceramics, offers the first tranche of international studio ceramics from the collection of the American John P. Driscoll, hailed as 'the most important single collection of contemporary ceramics ever to come to auction'. Driscoll liked to collect in depth, fully representing the careers of the artists he most admired. This 160-lot offering includes major pieces by the likes of Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie and Hans Coper, including the latter's monumental stoneware 'Writhlington School' pot (£80,000–£120,000; Fig. 2). **A**

Review

It is rare to see a 'white glove' auction – when every lot sells – and rarer still to find one devoted to 18th-century applied arts. Moreover, the 117 lots of Meissen porcelain offered at Sotheby's New York on 14 September soared way beyond expectations to realise seven times the pre-sale estimate. Of course, they came from one of the most celebrated porcelain collections of all time, that of Franz and Margarethe Oppenheimer of Berlin, and included many pieces that had belonged to the greatest Meissen porcelain collector of them all, Augustus the Strong (1670–1733). Like many of the stupendously good works of art offered at auction in recent decades, they came out of a museum collection after being restituted to the heirs of their original Jewish owners. This time the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam pulled out all of the stops to raise funds to acquire more than half of the pieces.

Among them was the sale's top lot, a rare mantel clock case dated 1727 that unites an earlier French timepiece, elaborate modelling and extravagant chinoiserie decoration, all topped by a figural group of Minerva and Arachne (Fig. 1). Having been estimated at \$200,000–\$400,000, it fetched \$1.6m. The museum also reclaimed another chinoiserie rarity, an armorial tea and coffee service made for the Morosini family of Venice. It sold 10 times over its low estimate for \$1.4m, one of four lots to top the million mark in this \$15m sale.

Furniture and applied arts also fared well the same day in 'Jasper Conran: The Collection Part I', where a mighty 92 per cent was sold by lot and 93 per cent by value at the £5.8m sale at Christie's London. A testament to the taste and reputation of the British designer, this stylish country-house fare, combining the antique and the comfortable contemporary, found £200,000 for a George II side table in the manner of William Kent, for example, richly carved with lion mask, pelt and paws (estimate £30,000–£50,000), and £550,000 for a pair of George III giltwood console tables of around 1760, after a design attributed to Thomas Chippendale (estimate £200,000–£300,000).

Inevitably, however, it was the paintings that made the highest prices. An anonymous full-length portrait of Anthony Maria Browne, 2nd Viscount Montagu (c. 1593), previously illustrated on these pages, sailed comfortably over estimate to change hands at £742,500, while a record £562,500 was found for Robert Peake (1551–1619). *Portrait of Cecilia Neville*, probably painted after the sitter's marriage in around 1617, shows this Jacobean beauty sumptuously dressed in daringly cut and embroidered cloth of silver, perhaps a costume for a court masque.

While the two Conran sales comfortably surpassed expectations, the sale of the Peter



1. Mantel clock case, 1727, Meissen manufactory, with movement signed Barrey à Paris, c. 1700, and gilt-bronze mounts, mid 18th-century, probably Germany; the case: porcelain, gilding, bronze, enamel, underglaze blue and other glazes, ht 44.1cm. Sotheby's New York, \$1.6m

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Rose and Albert Gallichan collection on 30 September doubled them at £2.1m, albeit with more uneven results. This offering of largely Aesthetic Movement applied arts found huge prices for the humorous, anthropomorphic stoneware groups of mice modelled by George Tinworth for Doulton Lambeth in the 1880s, and for the comparable stoneware animal groups and single figures produced by the Martin Brothers. The latter's spoon warmer of 1888, in the form of a grotesque, grimacing toad, realised £35,000 against an estimate of £3,000–£5,000. Strong prices were also found for the elegant metalwork of W.A.S. Benson, with a brass-and-copper five-light chandelier with glass shades fetching £23,750.

Across the channel at Christie's Paris on 14 September, the contents of 'A Parisian pied-à-terre curated by Hubert de Givenchy' were well received, realising €12.8m. The highest prices – inevitably – were reserved not for the 18th century but for the contemporary designs by Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne. A unique chandelier of 2003, a 'Structure Végétale' with butterflies by Claude, estimated at €800,000–€1.2m, fetched €3.7m.

Jehangir Sabavala's *The Embarkation* of 1965 (Fig. 2), offered at 'South Asian Modern + Contemporary' at Christie's New York on 22 September, found inspiration in the works of the German-American Expressionist Lyonel Feininger. The Mumbai-born painter wrote: 'Through Feininger's pure, precise and yet very delicate and very personal renderings of

cloud and boat and sea, I discovered the joys of extending form into the beauty and clarity of light.' There is also an echo of Watteau and Turner in this spectre of embarkation; but here wraith-like figures are bound for a long passage more spiritual than corporeal. This painting was an inspired purchase by an India-based American librarian, Dorothy L. Clark; here the painting tripled its high estimate to sell for a record \$1.6m. It was the top lot of the \$7.8m live auction.

Asia Week in New York presented a mix of live and online sales. It was, once again, not the finest iteration of the annual series, but there were high points of interest and strong sell-through rates. 'Important Japanese Art' at Christie's on 21 September featured *jizai okimono* – articulated iron animal figures produced by makers of samurai armour in times of peace in the Edo period. The star turn represented a mythical beast – Shachi – with tiger head and fish body constructed out of numerous jointed hammered plates, signed by Toto Ju Myochin Shikibu, one of a distinguished family of armourers. Deaccessioned by the Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum in Kyoto, it was estimated at \$120,000–\$170,000 but fetched \$625,000. An iron snake signed by Myochin Saku doubled expectations to sell for \$100,000. The \$8.5m auction was 85 per cent sold by lot.

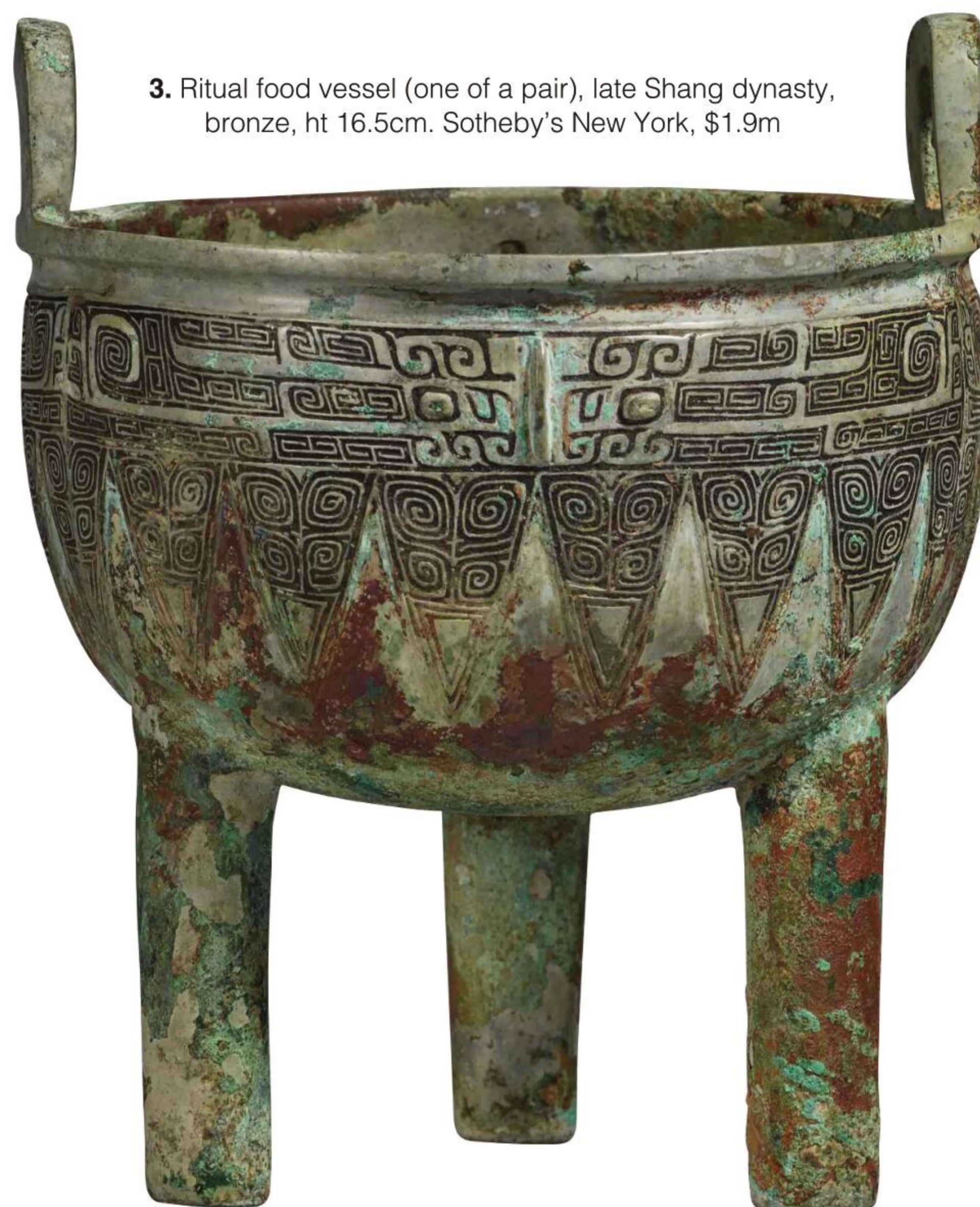
There was a similar sell-through rate for the \$24.6m 'Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art' sale on 23–24 September,

where an exceptional parcel-gilt Tang Dynasty dish decorated with a rhinoceros was, however, hammered down to below the lower end of its estimate to change hands at just over \$1m. Here, monochrome porcelains consistently found extremely high prices, with several examples fetching 10 times their pre-sale estimates. A 2.3m-long *huanghuali* trestle-leg table fetched the same multiple, changing hands for \$1.1m. Sotheby's \$24m sale of 'Important Chinese Art' on 21 September found the unexpected top lot of the week: a pair of archaic bronze ritual food vessels – *ding* – of the Late Shang dynasty, which greatly surpassed expectations by selling for \$1.9m (Fig. 3).

With its first offering of NFTs in Hong Kong – an online sale that closed on 28 September – Christie's sales of this purely digital art have now surpassed \$100m, quite an achievement in just six months. 'I'm equal parts humbled, astonished and euphoric about this milestone,' said Noah David, head of digital art. Here, competition for the top lot, *CryptoPunk* 9997, pushed the price from around HK\$5m to HK\$33.9m (£3.2m). Minted in 2017 by Larva Labs, it is one of 10,000 unique collectible punk characters with proof of ownership stored on the Ethereum blockchain, clearly a particularly appealing example from the project that had effectively launched the CryptoArt movement. Just days before, the British Museum announced it was entering this market by offering 'digital postcards'. **A**

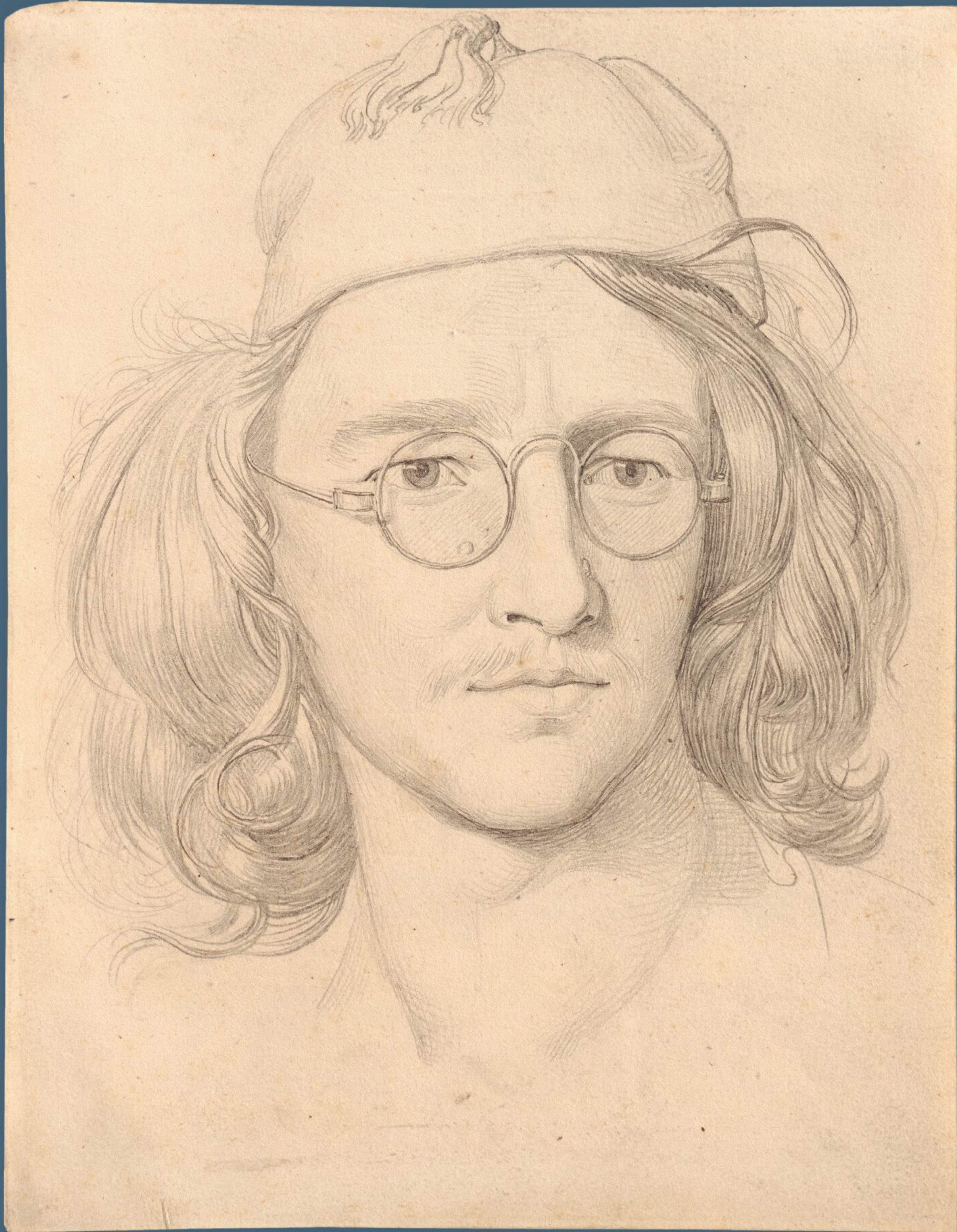


2. *The Embarkation*, 1965, Jehangir Sabavala (1922–2011), oil on canvas, 107.3×81.9cm. Christie's New York, \$1.6m



3. Ritual food vessel (one of a pair), late Shang dynasty, bronze, ht 16.5cm. Sotheby's New York, \$1.9m

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Joseph von Führich (1800–1876). *Self Portrait*. Pencil on wove paper. 1829.

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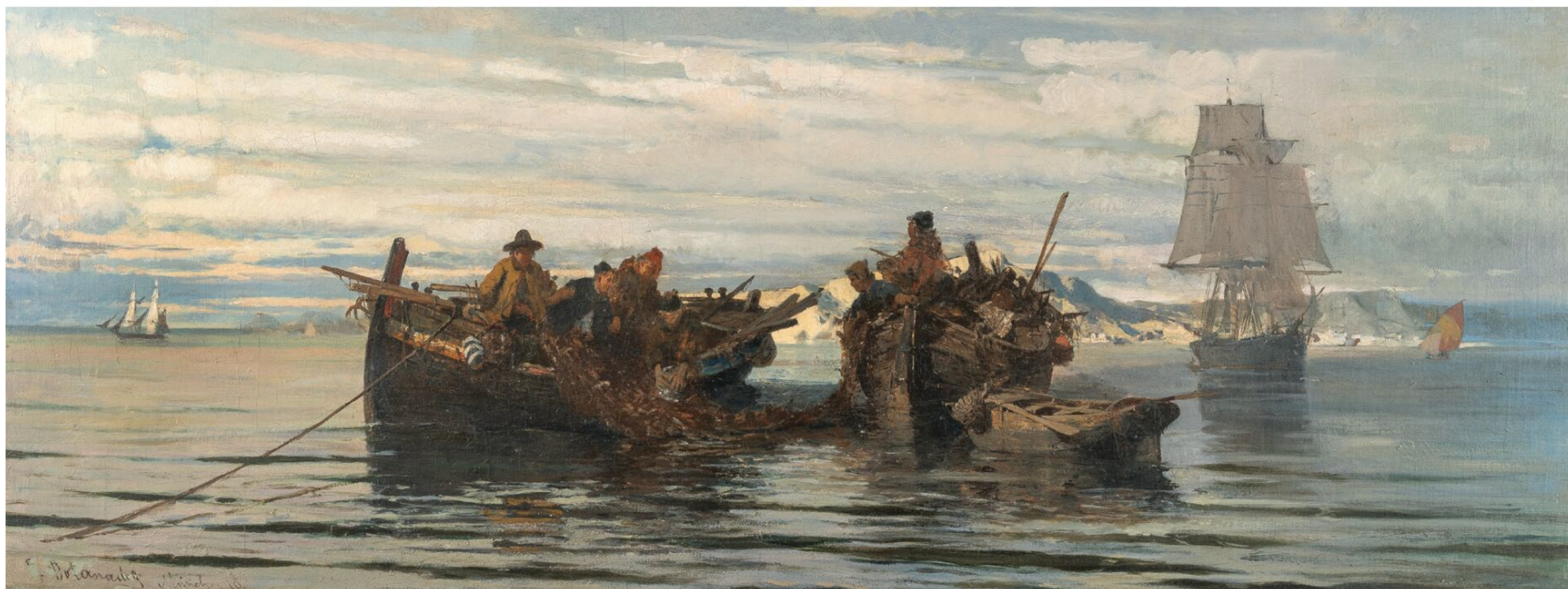
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FREEMAN'S

Collectors' Focus

Tibetan paintings

Emma Crichton-Miller

Tibet's fortunes may have fluctuated over the centuries, but its tradition of Buddhist art has always been valued. Today, both wall paintings and thangka scrolls are highly prized by collectors

1. *Manjushri with attendant*, 18th century, eastern Tibet, distemper on cloth, 74 × 43cm. Rossi & Rossi (around \$40,000)



Buddhism came late to Tibet. Though the religion was widespread on the Indian subcontinent by the third century BC, it was only in the seventh century AD that Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts from India were first translated into Tibetan; a century later, King Trisong Detsen (r. 755–97) made Buddhism the official state religion and invited Indian Buddhist scholars to his court, laying the foundations for Tibetan Buddhism. After a period of political fragmentation, Tibetan Buddhism was revived in the 10th and 11th centuries by refugees from northern India after the collapse there of monastic Buddhism. Through the following centuries, while Tibet's fortunes fluctuated, with periods of Mongolian and Chinese rule, Tibetan Buddhism grew in influence.

Painting and sculpture are central to Tibetan Buddhist practice. The painting traditions encompass wall paintings and the portable, scrolled thangka ('thing that one unrolls' in classical Tibetan) – paintings of ground mineral pigment on cotton or silk, used for teaching and meditation. Their antecedents included large-scale murals at ancient Buddhist sites in India and China and Buddhist manuscript paintings (executed in miniature on palm leaves), brought into the Himalayas from eastern India during the 10th century. In the 13th century, Yuan rulers lured to Tibet the revered Newari artist Aniko (1245–1306) – from the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal – establishing a tradition of Newari artists working on commissions in Tibet and China. From the 16th century, distinctive Tibetan traditions emerged in different monastic centres, with the influence of Chinese landscape painting evident in a new sense of depth, and had a large effect on the Buddhist art of imperial China. Thangkas were valued primarily as instruments for the transmission of religious teaching and secondarily as diplomatic gifts. Carlton Rochell, a New York-based dealer in art from the Indian subcontinent, notes that, having been stored when not in use, 'Some retain exceptional, near pristine, condition.'

Subject matter ranges from two-dimensional mandalas representing, as if from above, architectural structures populated by deities, to depictions of significant lamas and paintings of sometimes terrifying wrathful deities, who – counterintuitively – are there to aid the faithful by driving out inner obstructive impulses. Western interest began with the Italian scholar Giuseppe Tucci, who made eight expeditions to Tibet and six to Nepal between 1928 and 1954, bringing back many thangkas now preserved in the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome. The flow of Tibetan refugees into Europe after the 'Seventeen Point Agreement' with China of 1951 brought more thangkas to the West; in particular, Switzerland, which

offered unconditional refuge to Tibetans, is home to a number of collectors. According to Anuradha Ghosh-Mazumdar, head of Sotheby's Indian and south-east Asian art department in New York, serious scholarship and exhibitions got underway in the 1970s. 'Since around 2004,' she says, 'collecting has been dominated by China. Everything has been going back to Asia' – though 'Thangkas have also been highly appreciated in Japan.'

In 1998, an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 'Sacred Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet', epitomised the taste of Western collectors for what Rochell refers to as 'classical Tibetan painting' from Nepal and central and western Tibet, from the 12th to the 15th century. He will mount a show of around 18 paintings from this period next year. In the last decade, however, Chinese collectors have shown a strong interest in more baroque, gilded work from the 18th and 19th centuries. Artists are almost never named: 'This material is made for a higher purpose – the conveyance of the divine,' Rochell says. But clues enable specialists to identify where and when things were painted: inscriptions within paintings, comparison with in-situ murals, images at the top or bottom of early thangkas that define the lineage of lamas associated with a particular tradition of teaching, analysis of costumes, face types, palette, architectural elements and so on. Edward Wilkinson, head of Indian, Himalayan and south-east Asian art at Bonhams, comments, 'This is a very rich and diverse

tradition with a huge amount of complexity.' Collectors too reflect diverse approaches, some interested in specific lineages, others focused on black-ground or gold-ground paintings or mandalas, or an association with an imperial Chinese household. Wilkinson says: 'The only thing that really matters is quality, rarity and then condition – with some collectors insisting on an untouched surface, while others tolerate filling in.'

Having said that, as Ghosh-Mazumdar notes, 'Among the thangkas fetching high prices in the last eight to 10 years, many are from the Ngor monastery, headquarters from 1429 of the Sakya tradition.' She cites the intricate, immaculate thangka depicting a mandala of the deity Hevajra, dated c. 1370–80, a very early example in the Newari style, which broke the world auction record for any Tibetan painting in March 2019 when it sold at Sotheby's New York for \$2.4m (estimate \$800,000–\$1.2m; Fig. 2). Wilkinson might add the 32-deity Guhyasamaja mandala from Ngor monastery, c. 1520–33, which sold for \$929,000 at Bonhams New York in March 2014. More recently, in March 2021, a 33-deity Ushnishavijaya mandala, from the same monastery, dated c. 1500–50, sold at Bonhams New York for \$200,312. Bonhams is currently touring highlights from a series of sales from the Claude de Marteau Collection, scheduled for next spring, including a Mahamaya mandala, possibly Ngor monastery, late 15th-century, estimate \$100,000–\$150,000.

Tristan Bruck, specialist and head of sale at Christie's New York, reports that the top-selling painting in this September's sale was an early 15th-century rare Lamdre lineage painting of two Sakya masters, from the renowned Pan Asian Collection of Christian Humann (\$350,000, on an estimate of \$250,000–\$350,000; Fig. 3); the second top-selling lot was a similarly estimated rare black-ground painting of Chaturbhuja Mahakala, 18th-/early 19th-century, 'with a psychedelic colour pattern and depicting a ferocious and terrifying deity – a very interesting style'. And in March 2021 a rare painting of the patron Hwashang, from Tibet of China, dated 17th/18th century, fetched \$750,000, more than twice the top estimate of \$300,000, reflecting shifting tastes. Fabio Rossi of Rossi & Rossi, based in London and Hong Kong, comments that 'unusual subject matter and composition can also make a difference' to the price. At Fine Art Asia in Hong Kong in October, the gallery showed a richly coloured 14th-century portrayal of Amitayus from central Tibet, possibly related to Shalu monastery, alongside two 18th-century examples from eastern Tibet (Fig. 1). Kapoor Galleries, meanwhile, offers in its latest catalogue, 'Incarnations of Devotion', a group of related 18th-century thangkas, which depict important Buddhist teachers. Sanjay Kapoor says, 'Indian and Himalayan artworks are commanding greater respect for their unique attention to detail, stunning imagery, and symbolic meanings.' **A**

2. Thangka depicting a Hevajra mandala, c. 1370–80, Tibet, distemper on cloth, 83.8 × 75cm. Sotheby's New York, \$2.4m



3. Lamdre lineage painting of two Sakya masters, first half 15th century, central Tibet, pigment on textile, 69.8 × 60.3cm. Christie's New York, \$350,000

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Around the Galleries

Samuel Reilly

The Louvre Pyramid is given a (temporary) makeover as some 55 dealers set up for Fine Arts Paris this month, while Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne also see fairs return

Making their way past I.M. Pei's Inverted Pyramid in the Carrousel du Louvre, visitors to Fine Arts Paris this year will find themselves confronted with something altogether different to that structure's usual cool modernism. Taking his cues from the city walls built in the reign of Charles V in the 14th century – a section of which was uncovered while the Carrousel was being built – the interior designer Jacques Garcia has produced an elegant series of *mises en scène*, billed as gateways to a 'strangely oneiric world'. 'We wanted something more... intimate,' says Louis de Bayser, the fair's director. 'Less like an airport.'

Intimacy has always been an important word for this young fair, which began life as a boutique offering of 34 exhibitors at the Palais Brongniart in 2017. It has since grown; after the magazine *Connaissance des Arts* acquired a 48-per-cent stake in 2019, plans to scale up last year were shelved as the fair was forced to move online only at the eleventh hour, but this year the fifth edition sees some 55 dealers packing into the Carrousel – including, for the first time, specialists in jewellery, Asian art, ethnographical material and rare books. 'The aim is to continue to grow,' De Bayser says. 'We want to build an international fair here.' All the same, he doesn't want it to become 'too big'. The main virtue of the fair has always been its selective nature, with the focus still squarely on museum-quality works of painting, drawing and sculpture.

Among a strong group of Old Master paintings on show is Frans Francken the Younger's *Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite* – a favourite subject of the Dutch artist, with similar works in the collections of the Palatine Gallery in Florence and the Konstmuseum in Gothenburg. This version, in which the mythical couple are surrounded by a troupe of satyrs and horses with the tails of sea serpents, once formed a part of the prestigious De Sangro collection in Naples; it appears on the market for the first time here, courtesy of first-time exhibitor De Jonckheere. Elsewhere, Talabardon & Gautier brings an intimate interior scene by Paul-Claude-Michel Carpentier (Fig. 1); dating from 1825, it gives a fly-on-the-wall view of a young woman's painting lesson inside an artist's studio – almost certainly Carpentier's own, on the rue de Lancry. De Bayser's



1. *A painter in his studio giving advice to his young pupil*, 1825, Paul-Claude-Michel Carpentier (1787–1877), oil on canvas, 73.1 × 60.5cm. Talabardon & Gautier at Fine Arts Paris

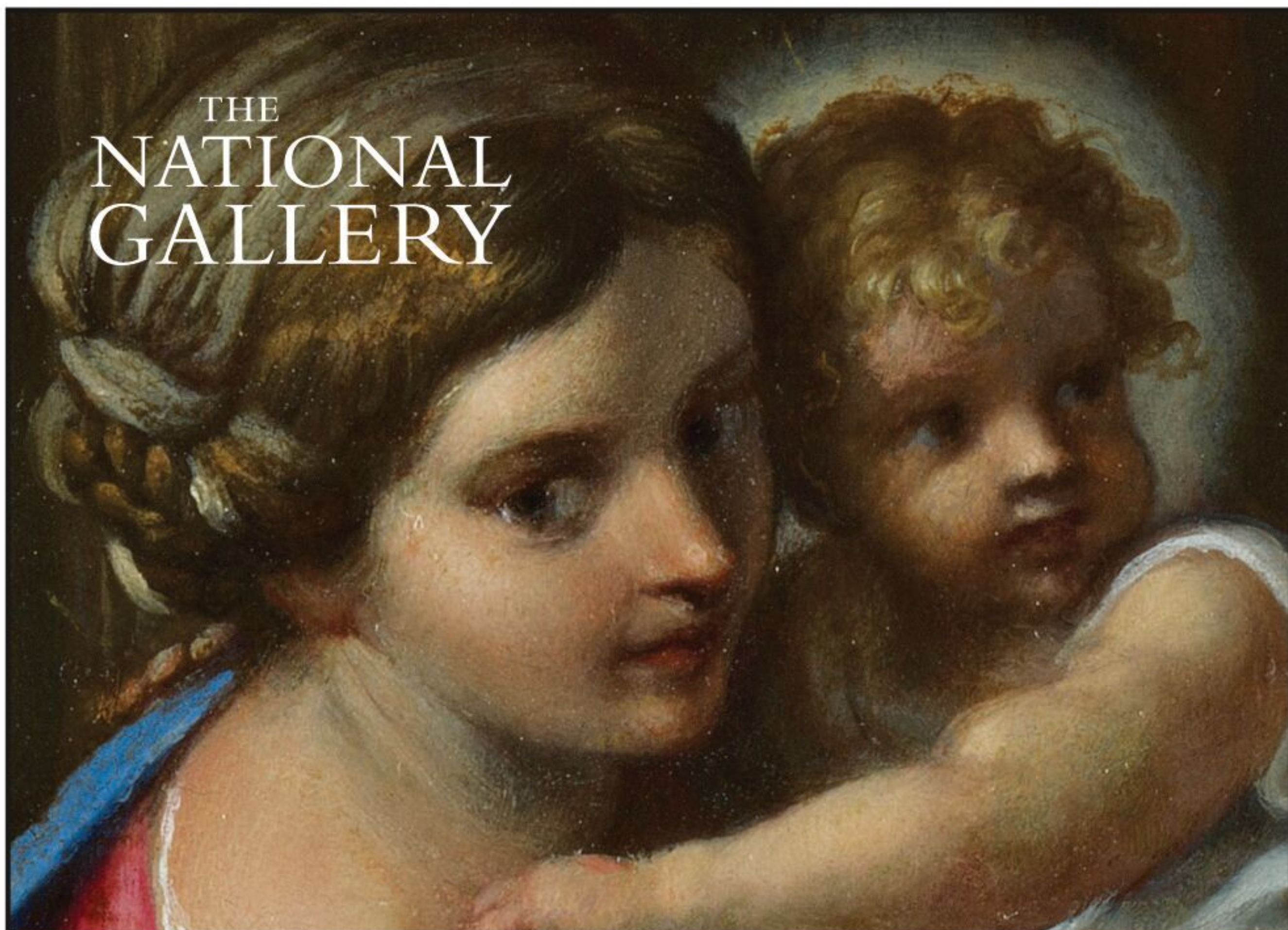
own gallery offers a fine portrait of a horse by Jean-Léon Gérôme.

This year's sculptural offerings include an exhibition on Aristide Maillol by Galerie Malaquais, ahead of a major survey of Maillol's work at the Musée d'Orsay next year. Close partnerships with museums remain an important part of the fair's identity – this year, it is hosting two symposia at the Petit Palais, including a celebration of Antoine Watteau to mark the tercentenary of his death, as well as its annual series of private

visits to some 20 partner museums in and around Paris.

'It's still complicated to put a fair together,' De Bayser says; vaccine passes, travel restrictions and online programming serve as reminders that the pandemic is still with us. But these are worries that visitors can leave on the other side of Garcia's ghostly city walls. **A**

Fine Arts Paris takes place at the Carrousel du Louvre from 6–11 November. For more details go to finearts-paris.com.



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Annibale Carracci, *The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist* ('The Montalto Madonna') (detail), about 1600 bought with the support of a number of gifts in wills and donations, 2004 @ The National Gallery, London

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Gallery highlights

Tastes of the Ancient Eras

Until 15 November
W. Shanshan, London

Beijing-born antiques collector Shanshan Wang opens her first gallery in London, dedicated to Asian pottery and sculpture, with this exhibition spanning nearly 7,000 years. The nine objects on view range from a Neolithic amphora to an 18th- or 19th-century white-glazed Korean jar. A particular highlight is a small marble figurine, dating to the Tang dynasty (618–907) and depicting a guardian derived from the Indian Buddhist deity Vajrapani.

Renaissance

5 November–February 2022
Colnaghi, New York

Quality not quantity is the word at Colnaghi; five sculptures and a single canvas comprise this display in New York, but none would look out of place in a museum. The stand-out is Donatello's life-size terracotta bust of San Lorenzo (c. 1440; Fig. 2); carved for the Pieve di San Lorenzo outside Florence, it was owned in the 19th century by Prince Johann II of Liechtenstein. There are also new attributions to Tintoretto and Benedetto da Rovezzano.



2. *San Lorenzo*, c. 1440, Donatello (1386–1466), terracotta, ht 74.5cm. Colnaghi

Tunji Adeniyi-Jones:

That Which Binds Us

19 November–9 January 2022
White Cube Bermondsey, London

In a lush palette spanning indigos and oranges, and with rhythmic, flowing lines, the UK-born, US-based painter Tunji Adeniyi-Jones conjures twisting spirits from landscapes of dense forest – a nod, he says, to the ancient myths of West Africa and his own Yoruba heritage. This is his first solo show at White Cube, and coincides with his first museum display in the UK – at Charleston in Sussex.

Julião Sarmiento: Arena

28 October–3 December
Pilar Corrias, London

These paintings by the Portuguese artist Julião Sarmiento (1948–2021) were inspired by Goya's drawings, after a visit by Sarmiento to the Prado in 2019. *Arena*, the title of the series, is also the Spanish word for 'sand' – 'the floor is always sandy' in Goya, Sarmiento said. These late works are an attempt to get across 'the overpowering heat' of the Iberian peninsula; and in their mixing of mediums and influences, they also evoke the arena as a site of conflict.

Fairs in focus

Antica Namur

13–21 November
Namur Expo

Belgium's premier art and antiques fair returns for its 44th edition, with the usual eclectic range of fine and decorative arts. Highlights include a wintry boating scene by Léon Spilliaert (NF Art Gallery), and a work of c. 1930 by Jacques Nam – known as a painter of cats, but here turning a fine hand to a polar bear (Dille).

Cologne Fine Art & Design

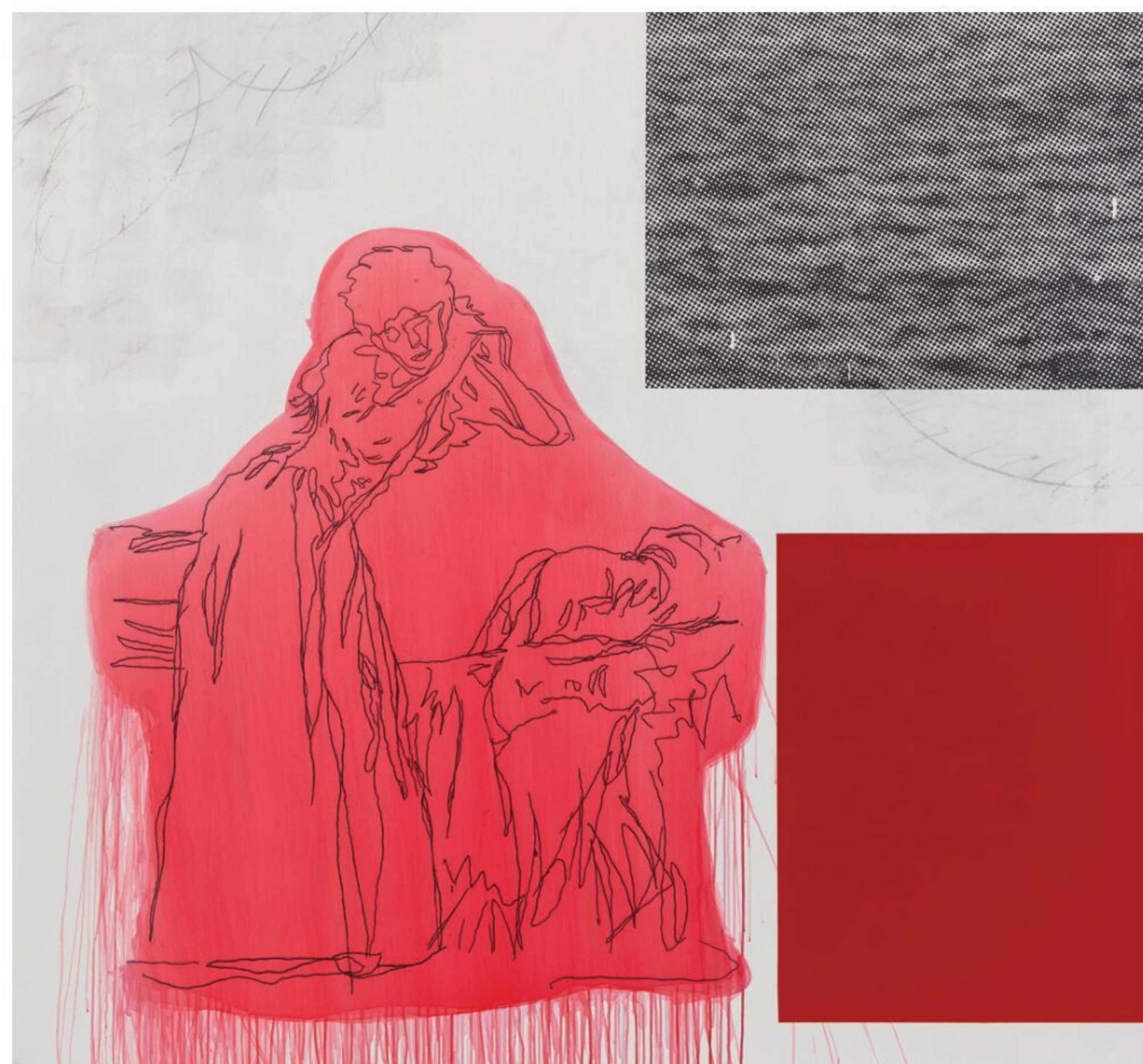
17–21 November
Koelnmesse

After its cancellation last year, Cologne's flagship fair returns with everything from contemporary art to antiques – and its usual strong focus on modernist art and design.

PAN Amsterdam

14–21 November
Rai Amsterdam

For the 34th edition of the fair, more than 110 exhibitors will congregate in the Dutch capital, covering between them 5,000 years of history, from fine art to jewellery and furniture.



3. *Joven en pie, mesándose los cabellos (Red)*, 2020, Julião Sarmiento (1948–2021), acrylic gesso, graphite, marker, silkscreen and enamel on canvas, 165 × 141cm. Pilar Corrias, London

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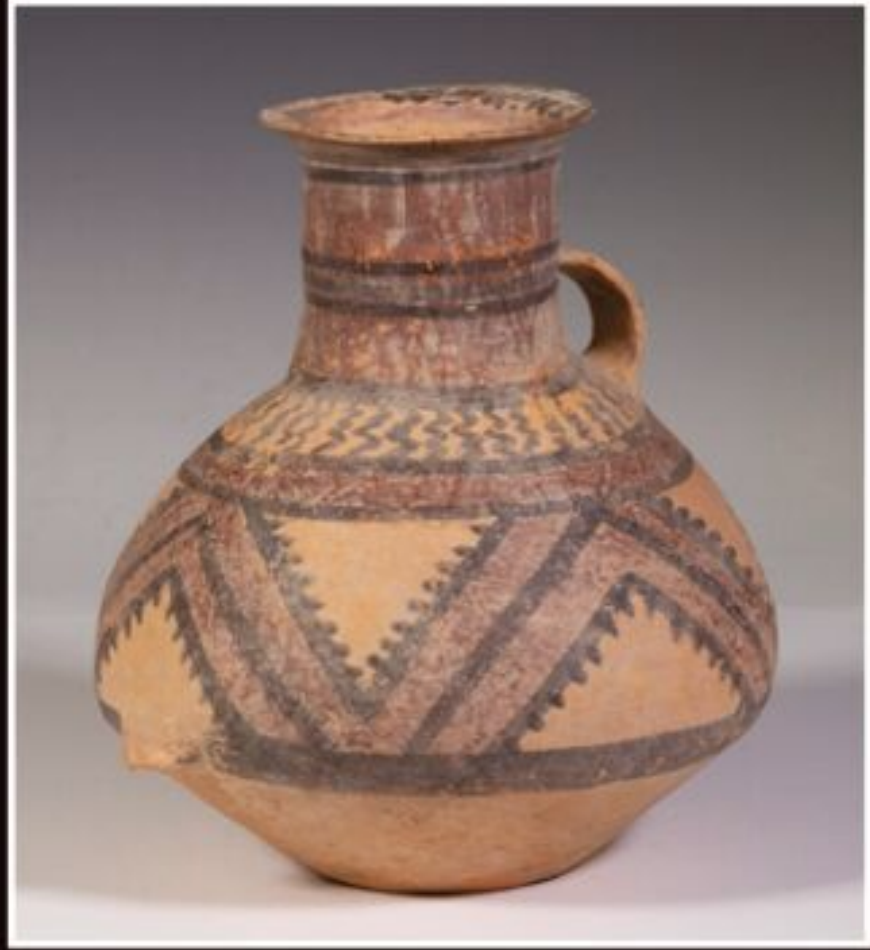


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Left: Winslow Homer, "Coming Through the Rye", Paris, 1867; Center, top: Tiffany Studios Table Lamp with Dragonfly Shade; Center, bottom: Narcisse-Virgilio Diaz De La Pena; Right, top: 19th c. Sang de Boeuf Covered Jars; Right, bottom: Sleeping Chair, ca. 1680

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Lot 1 Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-95),
a female nude

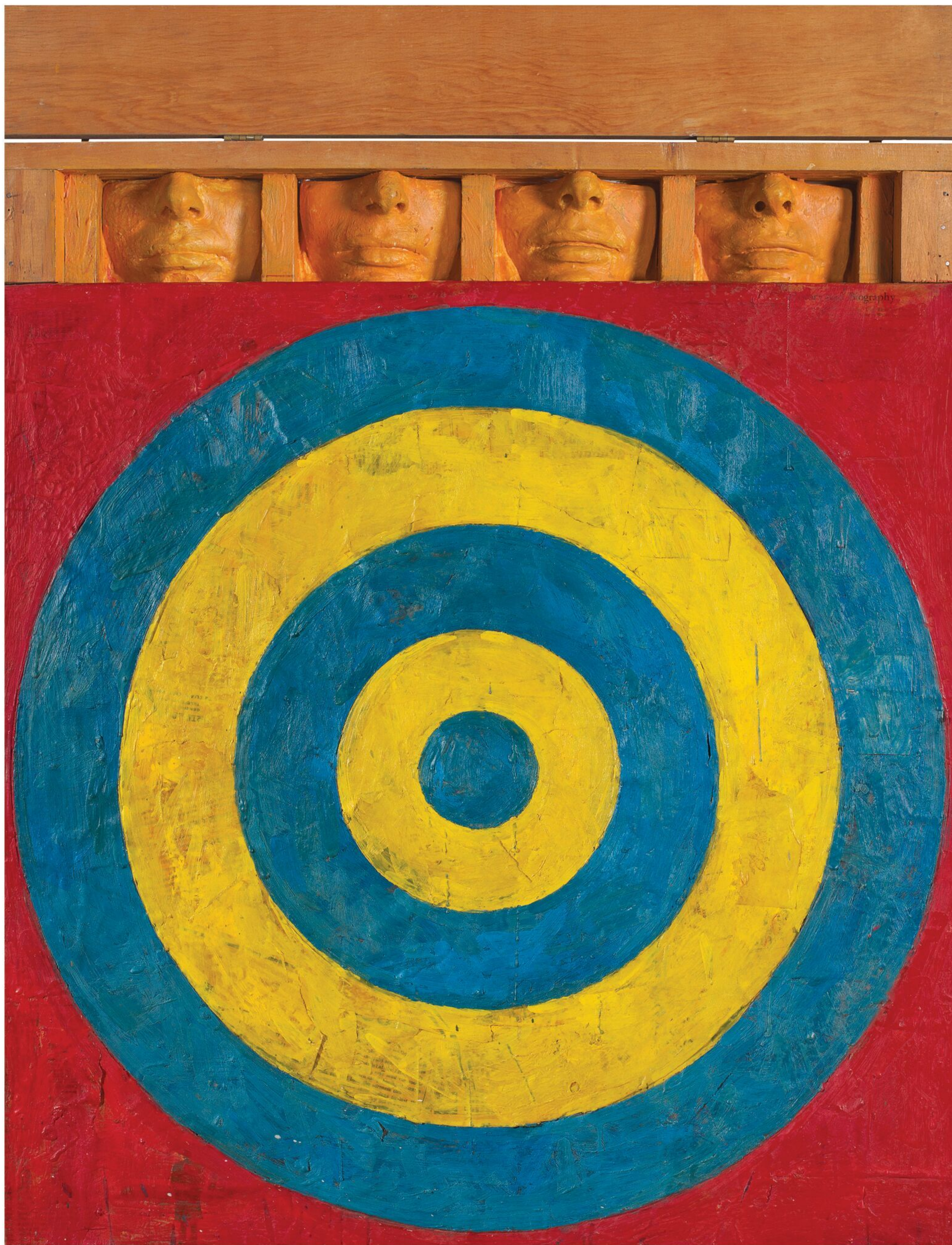


Lot 564 A copper red glazed vase
with Qianlong mark



Lot 771 A Greek archaic funerary stele of
a warrior, 1st half - mid-6th century B.C.

Reviews



EXHIBITIONS *Jasper Johns in New York and Philadelphia, Frans Hals's male portraits, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp at Tate Modern*
BOOKS *The sculptures of Luisa Roldán, a lost Maya masterpiece, and manuscripts with a colourful past* **FOOD** *Cooking in real time*

Target with Four Faces, 1955, Jasper Johns (b. 1930), encaustic on newspaper and cloth over canvas surmounted by four tinted-plaster faces in wood box with hinged front, 75.6 × 66cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York

American dreamer

This grand two-part survey presents Jasper Johns following his own path, writes Nancy Princenthal

Jasper Johns: Mind/Mirror

29 September–13 February 2022

Philadelphia Museum of Art and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Catalogue by Carlos Basualdo and Scott Rothkopf (eds.)

ISBN 9780300254259 (hardback), \$60 (Philadelphia Museum of Art/Whitney Museum of American Art)

Despite the trip back in time promised by this massive survey of Jasper Johns's work now on view at two venues at the same time, 'Jasper Johns: Mind/Mirror' instead repositions the painter as a poet laureate of our altogether less confident present. The brash American *Flag* of 1954–55 that announced – with almost comic heraldry – Johns's arrival on a scene still dominated by Abstract Expressionism, and which introduces the Philadelphia portion of the survey, is here a bait promptly switched. Not that Johns abjured further flags. Nor have the exhibition's two curators, Carlos Basualdo at the PMA and Scott Rothkopf at the Whitney,

but they do show Johns, now 91, to be most comfortable in shadowy zones where 'things the mind already knows' – his famous term for ordinary objects and images – cleave and multiply, circle back on themselves, put their faces to the wall, and are turned upside down and inside out.

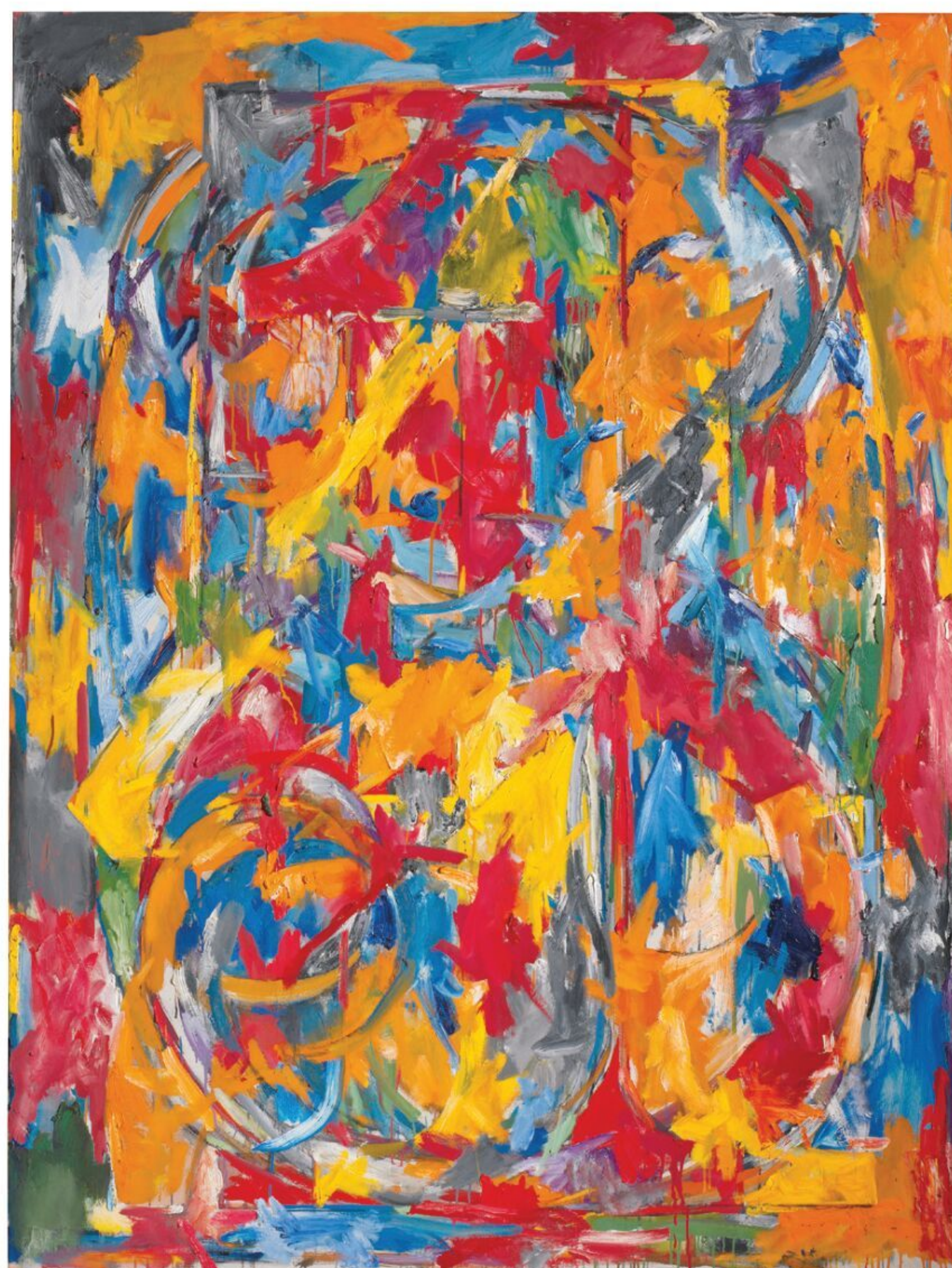
Johns began, Wittgenstein-style, with visual signs defined by their use, specifically those that carve up the physical world: maps, targets (see p. 89), numbers, letters, but also thermometers, flashlights, cutlery. *Field Painting* (1963–64) has a switch on its surface for turning on the neon R of Red; the three-dimensional letters of the other primary colours, named below it, are magnets to which studio objects are interchangeably attached (a knife, a coffee can, a brush with a metal band).

But it is not Johns the semiotician who now beckons. Hindsight allows us to see more clearly the context in which his work was formed, when Cold War surveillance coincided with relentless attacks on gay men for whom concealing and detecting coded behaviours became imperative. Writing at

unwonted length about *Watchman* (1964), a grimly compelling painting with an inverted chair at the top that tips out a sallow bare leg, Johns once explained that the titular figure falls into a 'trap of looking' and 'takes away no information', while a spy 'must remember', and is at pains to make himself obscure. As so often with Johns, the formulation describes a confoundingly unmatched pair.

Dream logic is a continuous thread. Choices made to enhance facticity – the use of encaustic, which solidifies each brush stroke, and of casts that objectify body parts – are combined with a sense of reverie that this survey emphasises. Johns's association with Duchamp is standard critical fare; less so, the kinship of his early assemblages with the work of Joseph Cornell (Fig. 2). The many paintings of numbers on view in Philadelphia, some overlaid to the point of illegibility, others sorted into grids, or framed one by one, are often cloudy grey or ghostly white, though some spin deliriously through the spectrum (Fig. 1). One tiny example of gridded digits daubed in warm colours (it is in the artist's collection) could have been painted by Vuillard.

1. *0 through 9*, 1960, Jasper Johns (b. 1930), oil on canvas, 184.2 × 137.2cm. Private collection



2. *Souvenir 2*, 1964, Jasper Johns, oil, charcoal and collage on canvas with objects, 73 × 53.3cm. Collection of Barbara and Richard S. Lane

The first *Flag* appeared to Johns literally in a dream. The white, red and black flagstones that became a recurring motif were spotted on the facade of a store in Harlem. He glimpsed the crosshatch pattern on the side of a car, while he was driving. Flags, maps, targets, letters and numbers are irredeemably drift; lacking the fixed scale of physical objects, they are familiar to the point of invisibility. Colour-reversed American flags invite the long stare that restores the flag's true colours as afterimages. If Johns at first favoured the kinds of indexical procedures that produce body casts and even bite marks, he came to prefer photographs and shadows.

Melancholy abounds. The first gallery in the Whitney show, titled 'Disappearance and Negation', presents the harrowing, thunderous charcoal and pastel *Diver* (1962–63), which pictures one pair of hands raised in alarm and another pair plunging down, sweeping a futilely graceful semicircle on the way. On the other hand, the *Corpse and Mirror* series – its title nods to Exquisite Corpse, the Surrealist game of random composition – is among Johns's most vibrant and playful, featuring big crosshatch patterns in bright primary colours that mirror each other kaleidoscopically, sometimes aligning at the painting's edges as if reaching around its nether parts (Fig. 3).

Between the mid 1960s and early '70s Johns made several grand, encyclopaedic paintings laying out his visual propositions about perception and representation; like

other epic conceptual (and minimalist) exercises of the time, they turned out to be neither exhaustive nor conclusive. In the 1980s, he turned towards autobiography and a paradoxical hermeticism. *The Seasons* (1985–86), his most sentimental paintings, are also his most airless – jigsaw puzzles of variably decipherable images, including the outlined shadow of a boy, photos of the gallerist Leo Castelli and the *Mona Lisa*, and a few optical tricks reshuffled from one work to the next.

Better by far are the *Catenaries* that began in the late 1990s. Among Johns's most abstract works, they involve lengths of ordinary string slung from inclined wooden slats, like cables from the piers of very fragile bridges. Most are grey, although there is a whitish one that suggests, rather hauntingly, laundry on the line.

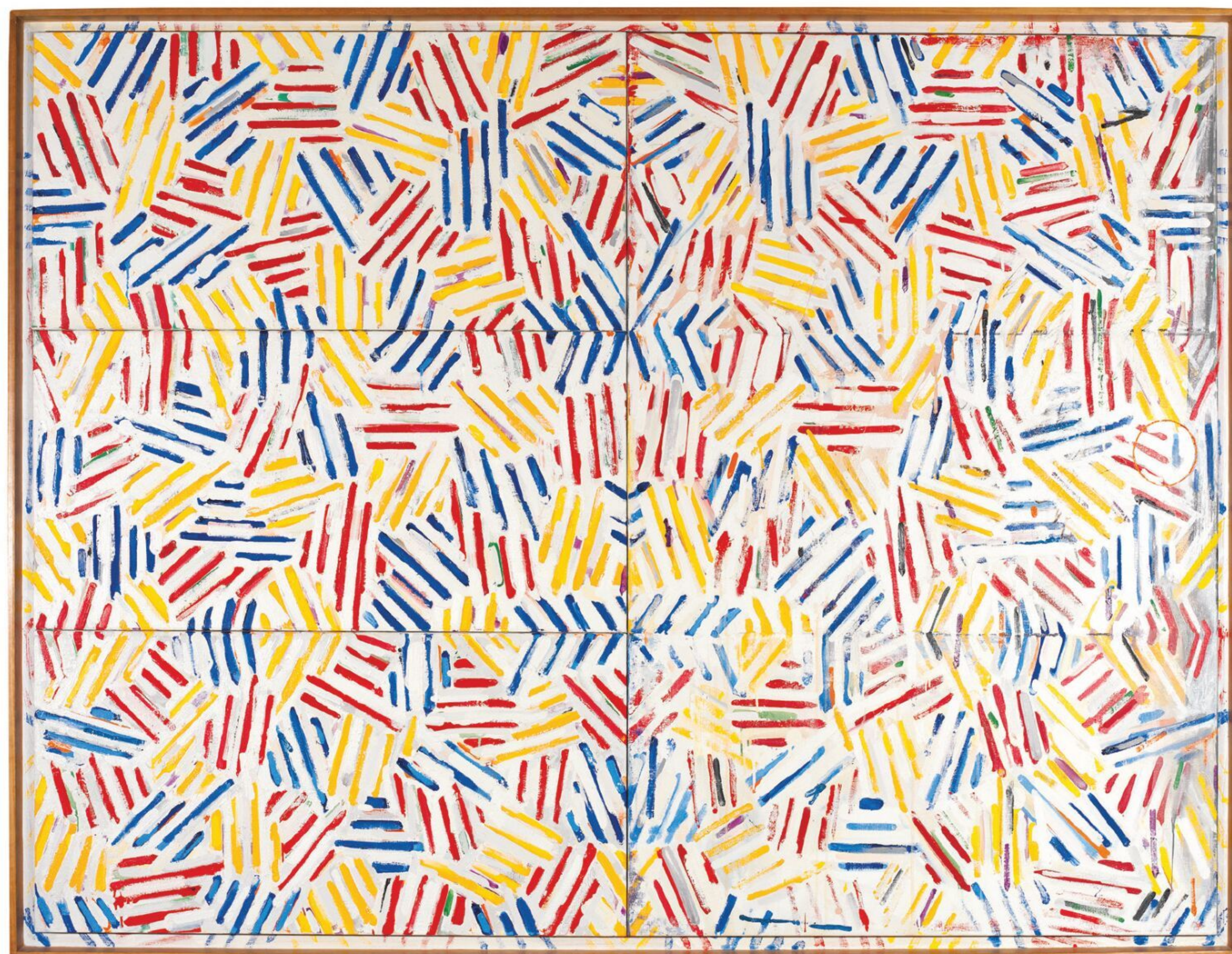
Quiet nostalgia will not be Johns's final mood. His most recent works, some in ink and others in Sculp-metal, depict jaunty little skeletons grinning maniacally. Many sport a tiny fedora, several a walking stick. A few skip rope, transforming the catenary curve into an accessory for a quick jig with death. In the ink drawing *Six Artists at Work* (2020), stick figures busy themselves along the bottom, a skeleton sits above on a giant skull, and – the central image – a big, delicately rendered cock, dripping ejaculate, aims at a ripe orifice. Who would have thought? Looking mortality in the face, Johns seems to be having a very good time.

The catalogue, like the exhibition, is loosely chronological and otherwise organised by

oddly assorted categories. Contributing writers range from the novelist Colm Tóibín to painters Carroll Dunham and R. H. Quaytman, and from curator Drew Sawyer (on 'Queer Art Histories') to artist, choreographer and writer Ralph Lemon (on the Jim Crow-era South Carolina in which Lemon's mother, like Johns, was raised, and on the racism to which Lemon says Johns paid 'emphatic cultural inattention'). There have been reports of the two host institutions jockeying for important works, but both book and exhibition suggest a deep and thoughtful curatorial exchange.

Delayed for a year by Covid, 'Mind/Mirror' should have followed, in New York, the career survey at the Met Breuer in 2020 of Gerhard Richter, two years younger than Johns and his main rival for obstinate silences, for making figuration a conceptual project, and for the enduring nature of his influence. Other artists with whom Johns invites comparison include Roni Horn, for her serial presentations of not-quite-identical photographs or sculptural objects; Jean-Michel Basquiat (were he and Johns looking at each other's renderings of skulls in the 1980s?); and Bruce Nauman, whose work in nearly every mode seems more indebted to Johns than ever. In their work as in his own, Johns lives on, surely a painter for our time.

Nancy Princenthal's most recent book is *Unspeakable Acts: Women, Art and Sexual Violence in the 1970s* (Thames & Hudson).



3. *Corpse and Mirror II*, 1974–75, Jasper Johns, oil and sand on canvas (four panels), 146.4 × 191.1 cm (overall). Collection of the artist

Conversation pieces

Frans Hals's male portraits crackle with life and communication, writes Michael Prodger

Frans Hals: The Male Portrait

22 September–30 January 2022

Wallace Collection, London

Catalogue by Lelia Packer, Ashok Roy (eds.)
ISBN 9781781301104 (paperback), £20
(Philip Wilson Publishers)

Kenneth Clark once dismissed the works of Frans Hals as 'revoltingly cheerful and horribly skilful' but then admitted that he had nevertheless come to love 'their unthinking conviviality'. Perhaps what Clark really objected to before his somewhat *de haut en bas* conversion was not Hals's facility but that he breached protocol: he was the first artist to blur the distinction between the genre scene and the portrait. His sitters often seem as if they have stepped out of the tavern or a lively domestic or civic gathering and

have forgotten to assume due solemnity when they sit alone in front of the painter – they merely continue the dropped conversation, this time with Hals.

A baker's dozen of these conversations are currently in progress in the Wallace Collection's exceptional exhibition, 'Frans Hals: The Male Portrait'. The show, beautifully lit and hung and giving each of the 13 portraits space to breathe, is further proof of the transformation being wrought in Manchester Square by Xavier Bray, director since 2016. The portraits, which span Hals's career from the 1610s to his death in 1666, show the breadth of both his compositions – from the casual to the stately – and also of his styles. Seen together in the same room, they resemble one of his celebrated group portraits of guildsmen or militia officers that fill the Hals Museum in Haarlem, but here disassembled into their constituent parts.

At the centre of the exhibition is the Wallace's own *Laughing Cavalier* (1624), the painting that spurred the revival of the painter's reputation in the late 19th century when it was sold in Paris in 1865 to the 4th Marquess of Hertford for 51,000 francs, six times its estimate. The painting was given its title only in 1888 and little about it is certain except that it shows an unknown, wealthy young man dressed in the latest sumptuous French fashions – the antithesis of the blacks favoured by the Spanish Habsburgs. What is clear is that the sitter is neither a cavalier nor is he laughing; indeed, as he looks back at you – and at the other portraits – from the gallery's end wall, that non-laugh is a mark of condescension bordering on the supercilious.

This is the first time the portrait has been hung alongside its peers and there is little sign in the picture of Clark's 'unthinking conviviality' – quite the opposite. It is painted with



1. *Portrait of François Wouters*, 1645, Frans Hals (c.1582/3–1666), oil on canvas, 115 × 86.1cm. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh

2. *Isaac Abrahamsz Massa*, 1626, Frans Hals, oil on canvas, 79.7 × 65.1cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto



extreme care and without the bravura rapidity some of the other pictures display. There is nothing in the man's expression to invite closer acquaintance. Clark was perhaps influenced by Hals's reputation as a sot, the legacy of Arnold Houbraken's biography of 1718, which noted that 'It was Frans' custom to fill himself to the gills each evening.' Hals had died more than half a century earlier and Houbraken's claim was based on imaginative interpretation rather than fact, but it stuck nevertheless.

In some of the portraits it is easy to see the appeal of the story. If Hals were a toper that might help explain the unprecedented vivacity of portraits such as those of Isaac Massa (1626; Fig. 2) and Pieter van den Broecke (c. 1633). Massa, a merchant and diplomat who spent several years in Russia and published the first Western account of Siberia, turns in his chair with his arm resting on its back as if speaking to someone in the room standing to the painter's left. Van den Broecke, a merchant, admiral in the Dutch East India Company and possibly the first Dutchman to taste coffee, looks directly at the painter, his hair unbrushed and his hand resting on his admiral's baton. The ease and informality of both portraits, which brilliantly capture a fleeting instant, was not the result of drink,

however, but of friendship – both men were witnesses at the baptisms of Hals's daughters.

The portraits are also a reflection of Hals's place in Haarlem society. His parents moved to the city in around 1586 after the fall of Antwerp to Spanish forces, when Hals was about three years old, and he lived for the rest of his life, apart from a trip back to Antwerp, where he probably saw paintings by Rubens, whose influence can be felt in some of his portraits, not least *The Laughing Cavalier*. Because Hals refused to travel to paint his sitters, they came to him, and were therefore largely fellow citizens, mostly of the bourgeois merchant class. Hals knew the majority of his sitters, and it shows.

Not that he was incapable of objectivity. There is poignancy in the eyes of the brewer and civic dignitary François Wouters (1645; Fig. 1), gravitas in the *Portrait of a Man* (early 1650s) from the Met in New York, while a slight apprehension of the painter – might he be poking fun? – undercuts the solemnity of the full-figured Nicolaes Pietersz Duyst van Voorhout (c. 1636–38), who takes the same pose as the *Laughing Cavalier* but with more bombast than real assurance and wears a tunic of straining grey satin, magnificently brushed in, cloaking his brewer's paunch (Fig. 4).

The portraits also show the development of Hals's technique, which loosened as he got older. The limited palette remained largely unchanged (Van Gogh identified 27 different blacks in Hals's pictures) but the smoothness evident in the flesh tones of the *Cavalier* becomes more rapid and less blended in the face of Tieleman Roosterman (1634; Fig. 3), while the sleeve of the dapper Jasper Schade (1645) is an abstract flurry of grey on black slashes. Cornelis de Bie described the effect neatly in 1661, in his compendium of art theory and artist biographies *Het Gulden Cabinet*, noting that Hals's portraits 'appear very rough and bold, nimbly touched and well composed, pleasing and ingenious, and when seen from a distance seem to lack nothing but life itself'.

What the dabs and flicks of paint impart is that for Hals, portraiture was about communication. His sitters strike a pose but it is less to fix them for all time – in the manner, say, of his contemporary Van Dyck – than to still them momentarily. These virtuoso portraits are records of encounters as much as of men.

Michael Prodger is a senior research fellow at the University of Buckingham and art critic for the *New Statesman*.



3. *Portrait of Tieleman Roosterman*, 1634, Frans Hals, oil on canvas, 117 × 87cm. Cleveland Museum of Art

4. *Portrait of a Man*, Possibly Nicolaes Pietersz Duyst van Voorhout, c. 1636–38, Frans Hals, oil on canvas, 80.6 × 66cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



True to form

Sophie Taeuber-Arp seemed determined to test herself in every medium, writes Douglas Murphy

Sophie Taeuber-Arp

15 July–17 October
Tate Modern, London

Catalogue by Medea Hoch, Bettina Kaufmann; Natalia Sidlina (ed.)
ISBN 9781849767514 (paperback), £14.99
(Tate Publishing)

One thing that seems particularly alien about the early days of abstract art is the faith in geometry. From the suprematists and constructivists of the Soviet avant-garde, to De Stijl, or the Purists in Paris, to the craft experiments of the Bauhaus, artists displayed an enthusiasm that was often moral in tone; a belief that instead of figuration and human proportions, the relationships of simple forms to each other would provide the basis for the

new art of an industrial society. The idea now seems quite touching.

To come upon graphic works by Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943) with names such as *Elementary Forms in Vertical-Horizontal Composition* (1917), *Geometric Construction* (1942), or the delightfully Ritter-Sport-esque *Vertical, Horizontal, Square, Rectangular* (1917), is to encounter their semiotic confidence, their sense of systematic investigation, not to mention the sheer skill of composition.

Born in Switzerland in 1889, Taeuber-Arp was part of a generation that contained many of the greatest modernists, although her career was relatively short, ending in 1943 with her death from accidental carbon-monoxide poisoning. But throughout her life she innovated across a startling array of arts, industries, materials and media. The career-spanning show at Tate Modern (previously at the Kunstmuseum

Basel and on its way to MoMA) contains graphic works, painting, textiles, accessories, costumes, scenography, dance, furniture, interiors, and buildings, essentially offering a near-complete sweep of the arts.

Taeuber-Arp was educated in schools of applied arts in Switzerland and Germany, with time spent in France and, like many modernists, Arts and Crafts principles of artistic unity shaped her conception. Moving back to Zurich after the First World War began, she conducted early experiments that ruthlessly test the possibilities of geometric form, colour and proportion, with works on paper that would sometimes become paintings, or just as likely textile works, such as the aforementioned *Elementary Forms in Vertical-Horizontal Composition*, which is shown in the exhibition both as its gouache study and as a woollen textile piece, consisting of a series



1. *Elementary Forms in Vertical-Horizontal Composition*, 1917, Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943), gouache and graphite on paper, 32.1 × 24.8cm. Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin

2. *Elementary Forms in Vertical-Horizontal Composition*, 1917, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, wool on canvas, 38.5 × 38cm. Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin



Photo: Alex Delfanne / Courtesy Umberto Romito, Ivan Suta, Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Decorative Arts Collection, ZHdK

of coloured rectangles, pulled out of equilibrium by tensely wobbling curves (Figs. 1 & 2).

During this early creative period Taeuber-Arp established herself as a teacher, as a member of the Schweizerischer Werkbund, and met Jean (Hans) Arp, whom she would marry in 1922. She too was involved with Dada at this time, showing a much more light-hearted side to her work than the constructivist experiments, with turned-wood 'portraits' of her friends and, as is customary from the period, a selection of bizarre party costumes left to us only as photographs. The marionettes and sets for *King Stag* (1918; Fig. 3) are great fun, featuring characters with names such as 'Freudanalyticus The Magician', or 'The Guards', a multi-limbed character whose forms are reminiscent of an electricity substation.

In the 1920s she found commercial success for her designs and textiles and widened her repertoire. For the Aubette bar in Strasbourg, Taeuber-Arp provided a dazzling, if somewhat overwhelming set of interior designs, expanding her geometric transformations into three dimensions. These are easily as adventurous as the work of her collaborator on the project, Theo van Doesburg, again pointing to her position at the cutting edge of various fields, although her

domestic furniture from this period is some way off the quality of the work coming out of the Bauhaus at Dessau. Later, in 1929, she designed a house and studio for herself and Arp in the Clamart suburb of Paris, a boxy concrete volume with irregular windows, but faced with a rough limestone that sets it apart from almost anything in modernism of the time – possibly predating Le Corbusier's own notable return to masonry in the early 1930s.

In the lead-up to the Second World War, her work continued to develop. She made further inroads into the potential of pure abstraction in painting, at times looking forward to Op art, post-war developments in relief painting and abstract sculpture (Fig. 4). Indeed, in all the inventiveness you can find prefigurations of Matisse cut-outs and hints of Abstract Expressionism, before a return in her final works to a stark, almost Soviet graphic formalism. It is as though Taeuber-Arp briefly picked up directions and approaches that would sustain other careers for a lifetime, which is both a blessing and a limitation; there is rarely the sense of there being enough at stake, and one could wish for more development of the various themes.

Tate Modern's exhibition takes its place among a number of shows about figures who

for a variety of prejudices haven't had the attention they deserve. The recent Charlotte Perriand show at the Design Museum has attempted to bring her out of the shadow of Le Corbusier, in whose atelier she had worked for years, and there's a similarity in the breadth of work here, although Taeuber-Arp's adaptability and precociousness is more remarkable. Similarly, the story of misogyny at the Bauhaus, despite its message of uniting arts and crafts and its overwhelmingly female student intake, has in recent years become part of the narrative about the institution. In Taeuber-Arp's case she undoubtedly suffered a lack of attention as the wife of a more famous artist, but she was highly successful in her lifetime – as a textile designer, as a pedagogue – and later as a painter in her own right. The show suggests that this sheer versatility – with some of her specialisms being considered so feminine as to be incompatible with her painting and Dadaist work – led to her full achievements going uncelebrated for some time, and it goes a good way to giving a full picture of her restless geometric spirit.

Douglas Murphy's most recent book is *Nincompopolis: The Follies of Boris Johnson* (Repeater Books).



3. *Stag* (marionette for *King Stag*), 1918, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, oil on wood, brass sheet, metallic paint on metallic paper, metal hardware, ht 50cm. Museum für Gestaltung, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, Zurich



4. *Flight: Round Relief in Three Heights*, 1937, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, oil on plywood, diam. 60cm. Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin

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Mous Lamrabat. Sugar, Water, Purple, 2019. Courtesy of Loft Art Gallery

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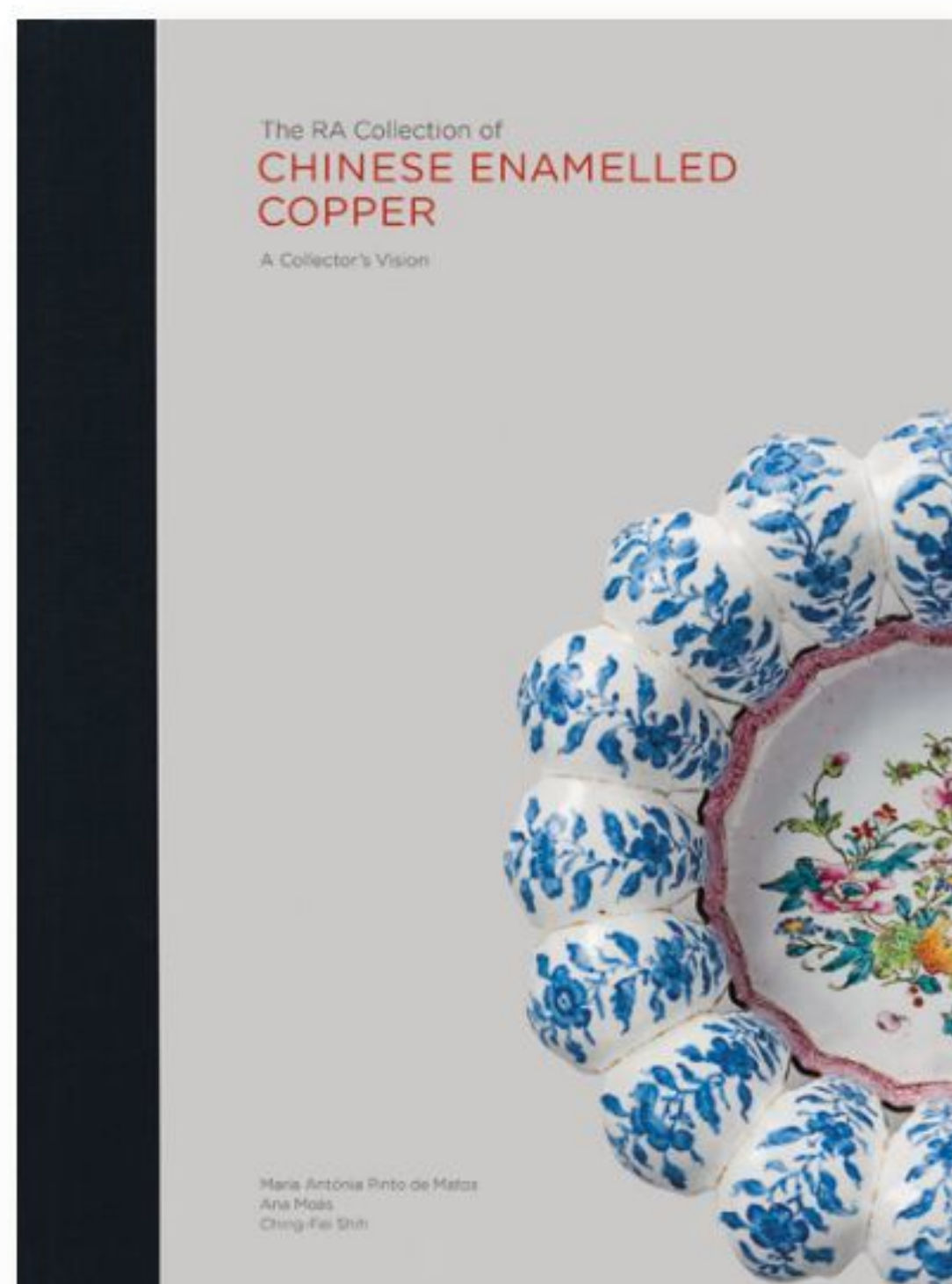
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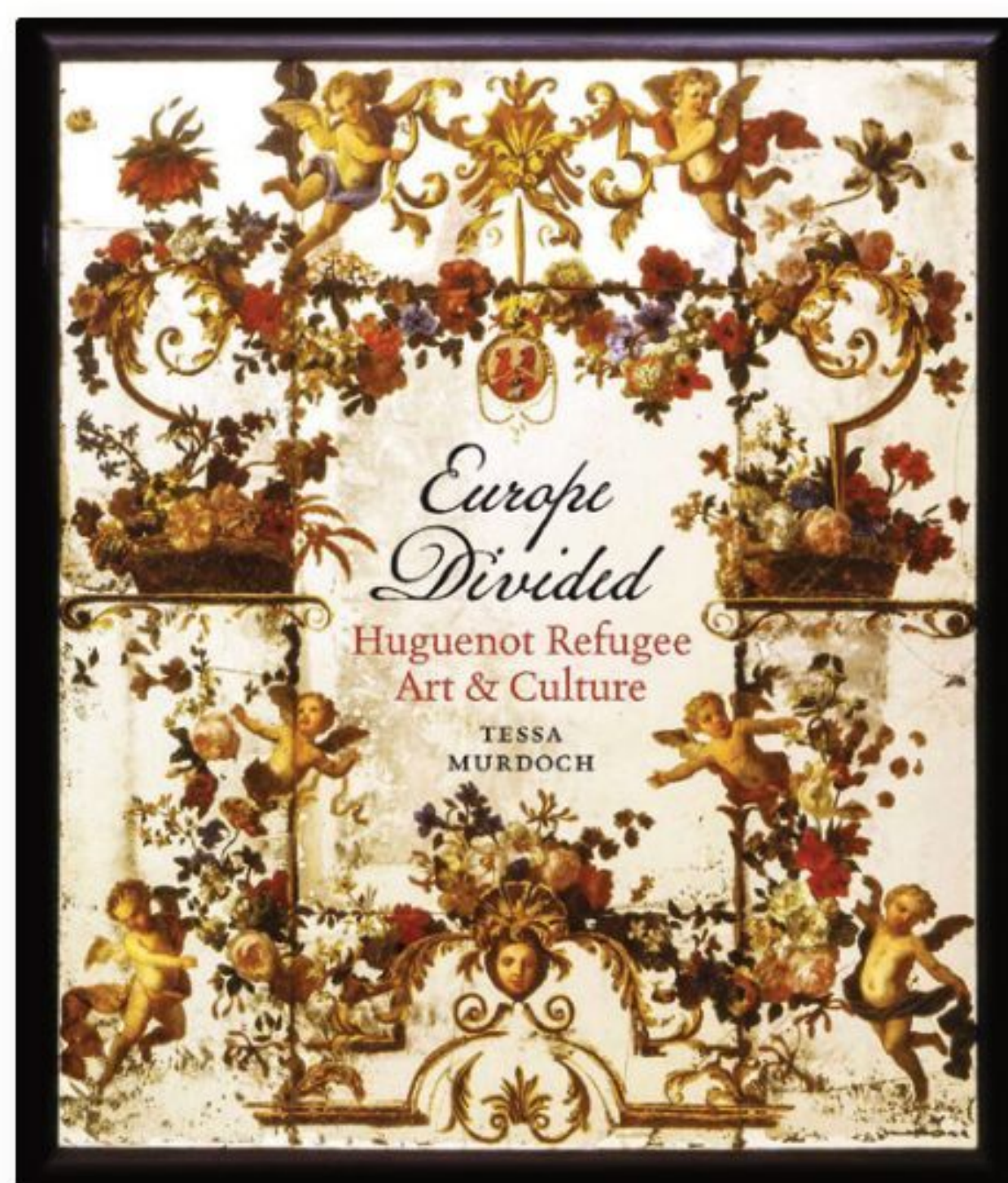
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V&A Books, £40
ISBN 9781838510121

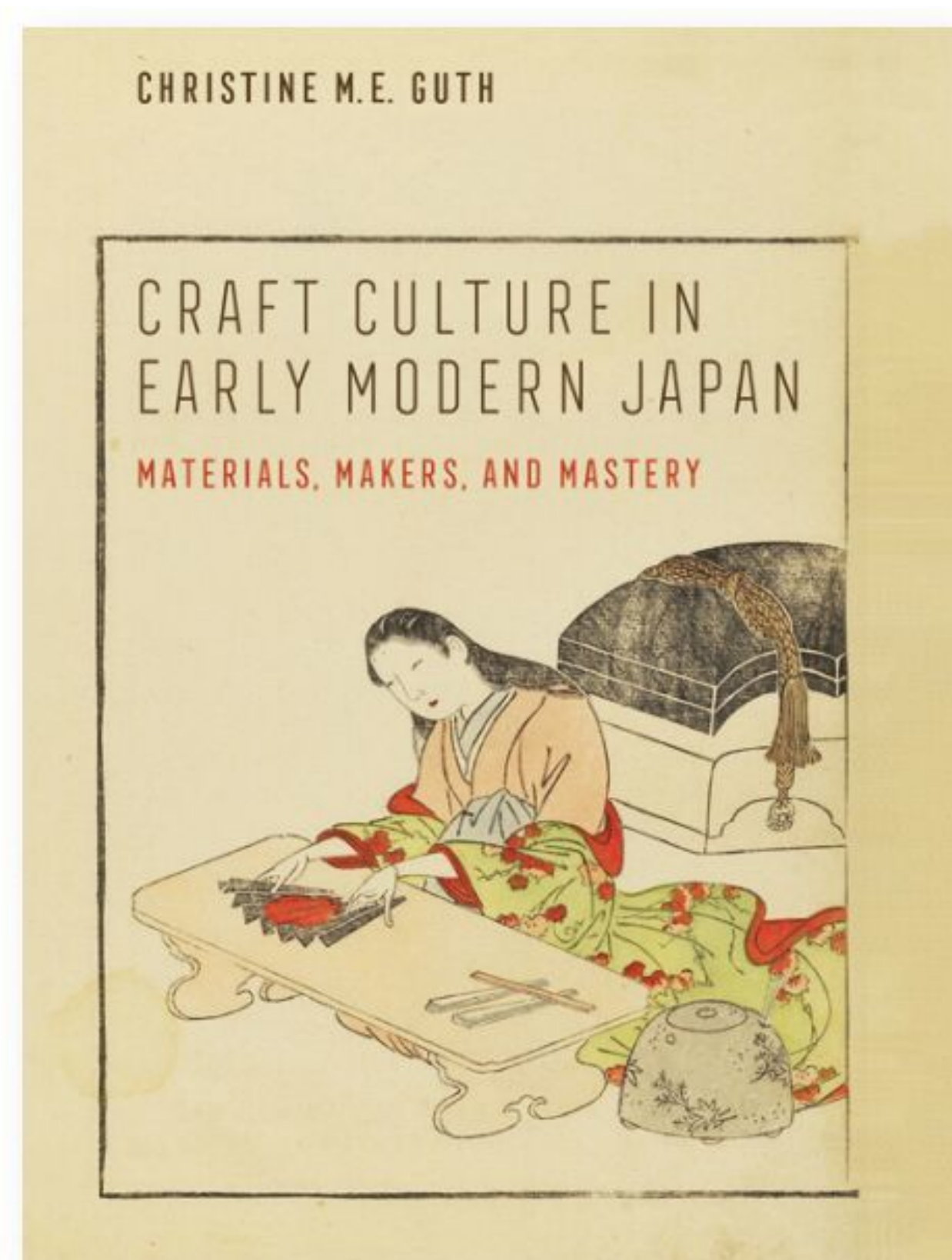
Some 200,000 Huguenot refugees fled France in the late 17th century – among them many skilled artists and designers. This book explores the networks they established and assesses their influence on architecture and craft across Europe.



National Treasures: Saving the Nation's Art in World War II

Caroline Shenton
John Murray, £16.99
ISBN 9781529387438

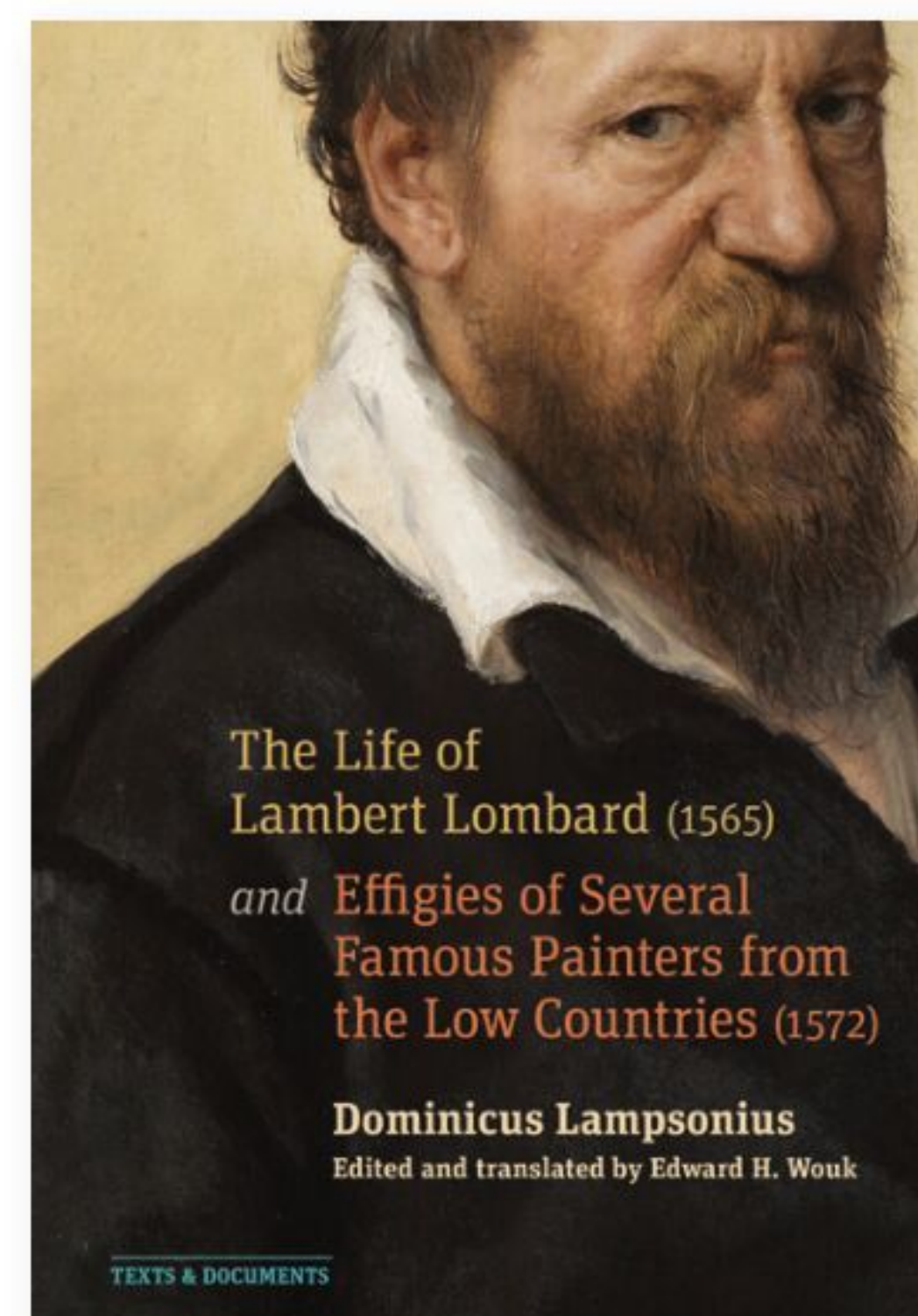
Combining her archivist's eye for detail with lively story-telling, Shenton introduces the colourful cast of civil servants, aristocrats and aesthetes who joined forces as Britain's 'heritage front', concealing the nation's prized artworks from the Nazis.



Craft Culture in Early Modern Japan: Materials, Makers, and Mastery

Christine M.E. Guth
University of California Press, £39
ISBN 9780520379817

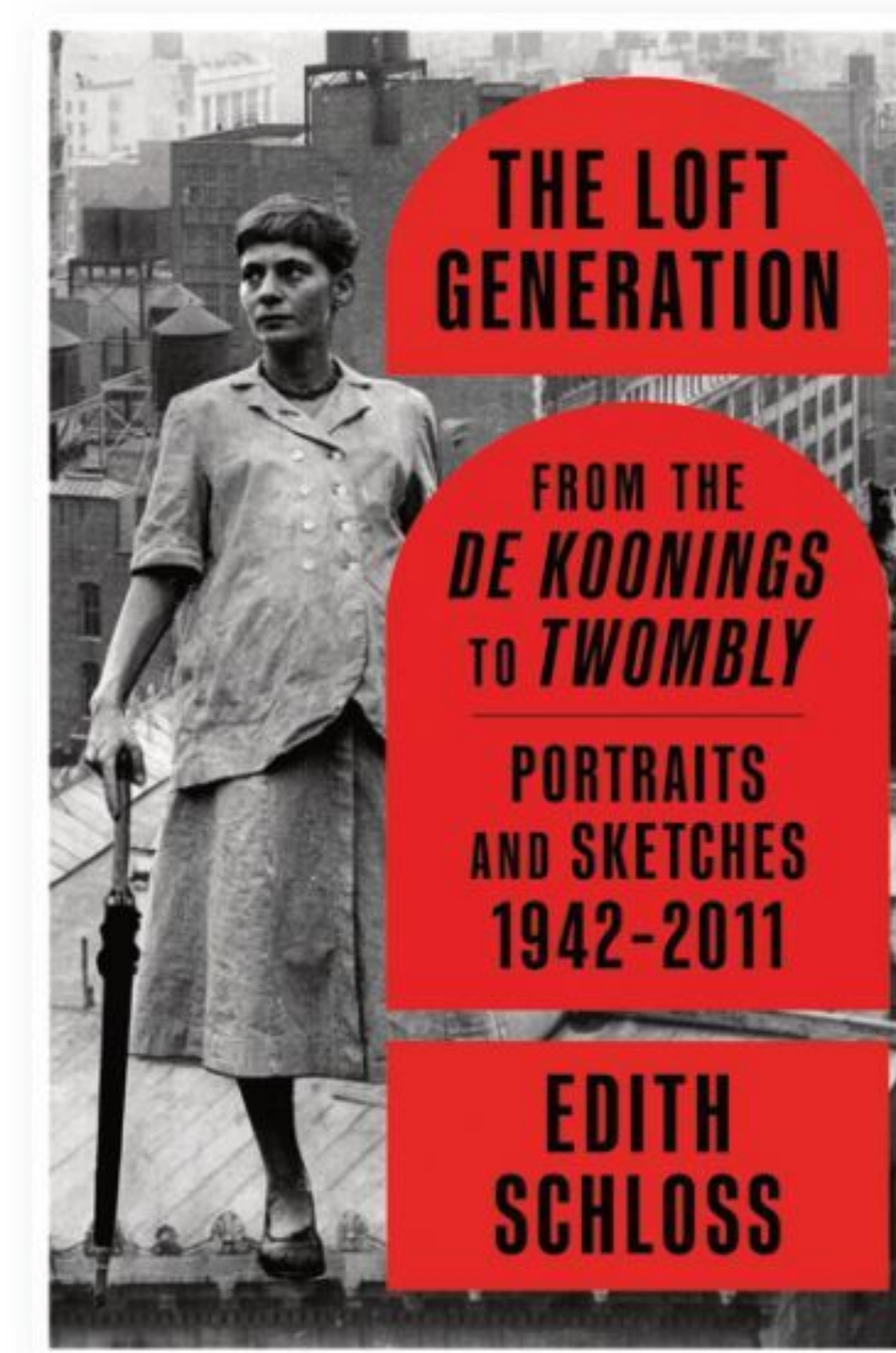
In this wide-ranging study, Guth sets out to shift the focus of historical craft production in Japan from elite patrons to the networks of artisans, in the city and the countryside, who developed new ways of working with everything from lacquer and silk to iron.



The Life of Lambert Lombard (1565); and Effigies of Several Famous Painters from the Low Countries (1572)

Dominicus Lampsonius;
Edward H. Wouk (ed.)
Getty Publications, £45
ISBN 9781606067406

The earliest published biography of a Dutch painter appears for the first time in English, translated by Wouk along with Lampsonius's later inscriptions for 23 portraits printed by Hieronymus Cock.



The Loft Generation: From the de Koonings to Twombly: Portraits and Sketches 1942-2011

Edith Schloss; Mary Venturini (ed.)
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, €32
ISBN 9780374190088

The artist and writer Edith Schloss (1919-2011) was at the heart of New York's lively cultural scene after the Second World War; combining memoir with art criticism, this volume recounts her experiences.

Terracotta warrior

Luisa Roldán's independence led to her great success as a sculptor at the Spanish court, writes Nicola Jennings

Luisa Roldán

Catherine Hall-van den Elsen

Lund Humphries, £30

ISBN 9781848224469

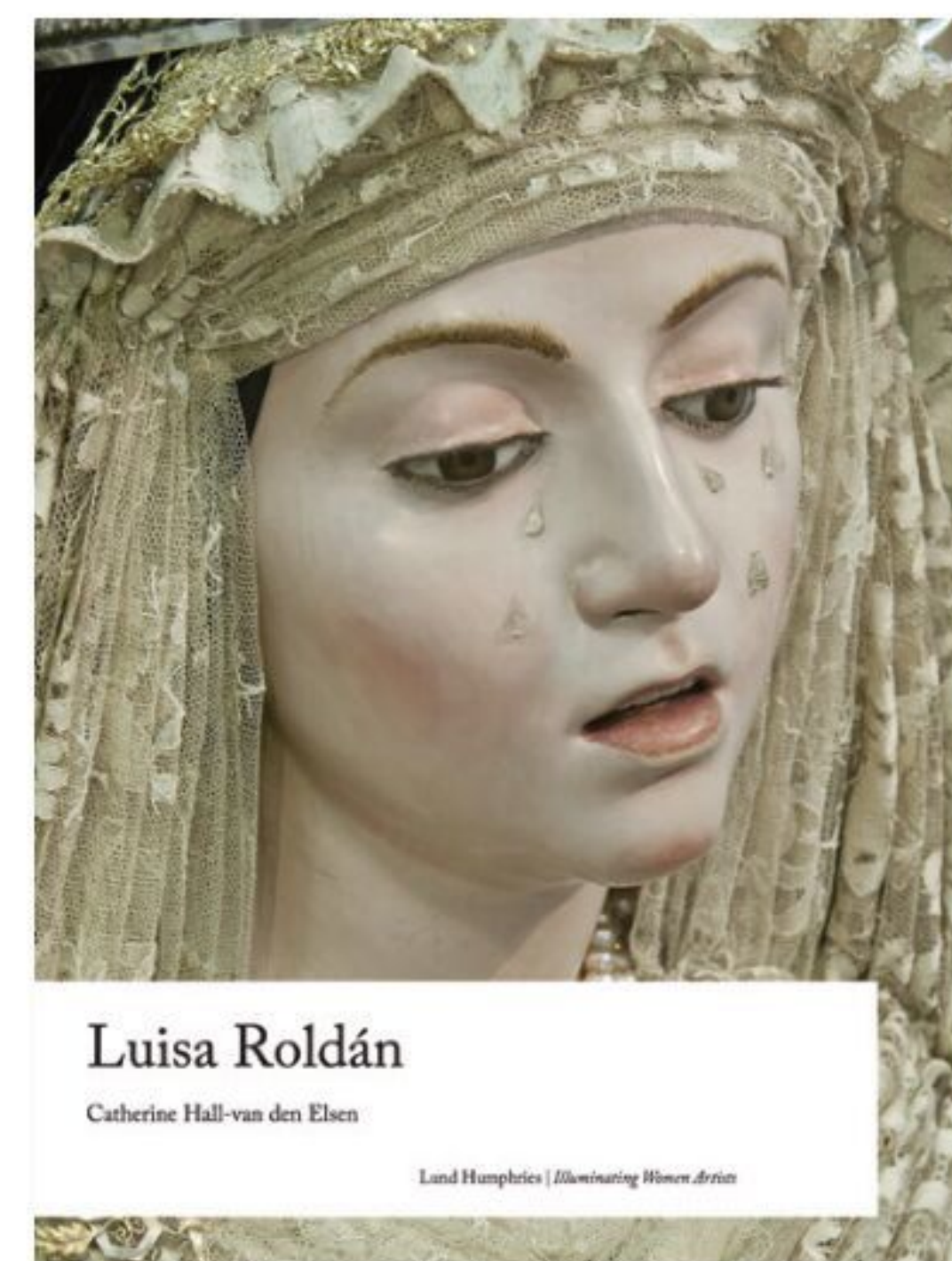
The publication of Catherine Hall-van den Elsen's monograph on the Spanish sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652–1706) is cause for celebration. Not only is it the first study in English, it is also the first in a new series, *Illuminating Women Artists*, intended to show, according to its editors Marilyn Dunn and Andrea Pearson, how early modern women 'negotiated, and sometimes resisted, structural constraints in the sphere of the visual arts'. 'La Roldana', as Luisa is known in Spain, began her career in Seville, carving some of the spectacular polychromed wood altarpieces and *pasos* (floats) paraded throughout Andalusia during Holy Week. But it was her smaller, delicately coloured terracottas – anticipating some of the devotional porcelains produced by Meissen some 50 years later – that brought her fame at the court in Madrid towards the end of her short life.

Hall-van den Elsen sets the scene in Luisa's native Seville at the height of the Counter-Reformation, with churches, religious orders, confraternities and merchants hungry for figures of Christ and popular saints and martyrs. She also provides an excellent introduction to the technique of polychrome sculpture. Half a century earlier, Seville had been the birthplace of Spanish naturalism, with sculptors such as Juan Martínez Montañés and painters such as Diego Velázquez working individually and together to bring the Christian story to life and elicit an emotional response from the faithful.

Luisa's father, the sculptor Pedro Roldán, was one of the leaders of the next generation which also included Bartolomé Murillo, Juan de Valdés Leal and the lesser-known Flemish sculptor José de Arce. Pedro ran a busy workshop in which Luisa was one of many trainees, helping to produce, for example, the magnificent *Entombment* in Seville's Hospital de la Caridad. However, Luisa's gender disqualified her from being formally acknowledged

as an independent sculptor and barred her from applying for membership of a guild. It was in her father's workshop that Luisa met Luis Antonio de los Arcos, her future husband and artistic/business partner. Hall-van den Elsen's book opens with an excerpt from proceedings in 1671 at Seville's Ecclesiastical Court, where Luisa was legally obliged to seek permission for a marriage to which her father objected. This declaration suggests a strength of character that no doubt contributed to her appointment, some 20 years later, as the first female sculptor to the Spanish king.

For Luisa, nursing and caring for children meant time away from the studio – there was also the heartache of losing several children in infancy. As a woman she was not allowed to sign contracts and this, along with her exclusion from guild records, means that we know little about her working life. The earliest mention of her in connection with a sculpture is in a note found inside an *Ecce Homo* in Cádiz Cathedral and dated 1684, which states, 'This work was done by the hands of the esteemed artist Doña Luisa Roldán in company with her husband Luis Antonio de los Arcos'. On the basis of this note and a few other mentions in official documents, it is likely that Luisa worked alongside Luis Antonio after leaving her father's house in 1671. However, the assumption made by Hall-van den Elsen and many others – apparently based on Luisa's later success in Madrid – that she was the principal sculptor of the *Ecce Homo* and other figures commissioned in Luis Antonio's name is problematic. The *Ecce Homo* conforms closely to the style associated with the workshop of Pedro Roldán of which both Luisa and Luis Antonio were products. In what sometimes appears to be circular reasoning, the same assumption has led to other attributions involving works for which there is no documentation at all. These works are all dateable to a period in which Pedro Roldán and others were also producing works in a very similar style. As the Sevillian scholar Alfonso Pleguezuelo has recently written, there are 'a high number of works of dubious attribution which continue to result in a confused vision of her authentic production'.



The first extant work signed by Luisa alone is a terracotta *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* which bears the inscription on its front edge: 'D LUISA ROLDÁN FEB 1691'. Three years earlier, Luisa and Luis Antonio had moved to Madrid to seek the patronage of the Spanish monarchs and benefit from a larger market. In 1692 she was named Escultora de Cámara (Sculptor of the Chamber) by the king and signed another work, the *Saint Michael Smiting the Devil* in polychromed wood, at the Royal Monastery of El Escorial (Fig. 1). Although Hall-van den Elsen acknowledges the lack of documentation for many of the works included in her book, it might have been helpful had she started with signed pieces like this, which are unquestionably by Luisa alone.

The *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* was one of many similar works Luisa would produce over the next 15 years. Finished works in terracotta were highly unusual, but, like Florentine figures of the Virgin and Child from the early 15th century, Luisa's sculptures responded to the demand for intimate and beautifully coloured works of devotion. They could also be made without a large workshop. Not only were Luisa's terracottas relatively small, but the existence of multiple versions of the same composition suggests that they may have been made using moulds (a possibility first raised by Holly Trusted). The number of pieces she seems to have completed in a short period supports this hypothesis – more than 80 for the palace alone, as she wrote to the king in 1701.

Luisa Roldán's story is full of paradoxes. Despite her success she died in penury. She was remembered as 'an immortal' by the early 18th-century art historian Antonio Palomino but was not the subject of a solo exhibition until 2007. Hall-van den Elsen's monograph makes an important contribution to the existing bibliography, only some of which is included at the back of the book, and to raising the profile of Roldán's enchanting terracottas, which deserve a catalogue all of their own.

Nicola Jennings is director of the Athena Art Foundation and associate lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art.



1. *Saint Michael Smiting the Devil*, 1692, Luisa Roldán (1652–1706), polychromed wood, 230 x 160cm. Monastery of El Escorial, Madrid

Armchair exploration

Andrew James Hamilton follows the curious quest to locate a lost work of Maya sculpture

A Maya Universe in Stone

By Stephen Houston (ed.), Charles Golden, Andrew Scherer, David Stuart and Karl Taube
Getty Research Institute, £40
ISBN 9781606067444

A Maya Universe in Stone offers a new take on the familiar tale of adventure and archaeological discovery. Rather than telling the story of an intrepid explorer venturing off into the jungle, facing dangerous wildlife or river rapids, and finding a lost city and hidden treasure, the authors set off on an intellectual expedition. Their quest concerns a Maya carving that has already been found – first by such explorers in 1950 and then by looters. They trace its path on to the art market, mourn the loss of knowledge that was a consequence of these clandestine activities and attempt to reconstruct what can still be known about this missing masterpiece, before concluding that its current whereabouts are seemingly unknown. In the acknowledgments, the book's editor (and one of its authors), Stephen Houston, states his motivations for producing this volume: 'Is expanding knowledge enough, or must there be some final result, such as the repatriation of an art object to its country of origin? The mind may be satisfied with the first goal, but a sense of ethics demands the second.' This is, therefore, a timely and important story. As public discussions of looting and repatriations of art grow more common and as collectors and institutions address such issues more openly, this book belongs to a scholarly genre that will only grow. It is essential for these accounts to be written down in order to confront what took place all over the world – what is still taking place in some parts of the world – so that those who follow us may try to avoid repeating it.

Nonetheless, as the authors acknowledge, it remains a difficult story to tell. The book focuses on an intricately carved lintel – the top portion of a door frame – created in AD 773. It was first photographed in situ along with a second lintel by the explorer Dana Lamb in 1950

at a site he came to call Laxtunich. The authors lament, however, that Lamb never precisely logged where the site was; he only circled a large area between Mexico and Guatemala on a map. They reconstruct his trek through the forest using his field notebook, a letter he wrote to his wife Ginger and notes scrawled on the backs of photographs – all of which present conflicting information. The authors ask: 'What stratagem lay behind such point-less deceit?' Certainly, he had his reasons. In 2014, Andrew Scherer and Omar Alcover Firpi tried to repeat his journey, taking into account distances and reported landmarks. This impressive endeavour has led them to believe that Laxtunich is most likely a site known as El Túnel, in Guatemala. What might eventually clinch the identification would be finding the backsides of the carvings – called 'carcasses' in the field – which were sawn off by the looters to lighten the heavy stones and were presumably dumped nearby.

The authors continue piecing together the fragmented biography of the lintel, relating that it eventually came to be owned by a collector in Falmouth, Maine, possibly by 1968. The lintel, along with the second lintel that Lamb also photographed, as well as a third piece, were all found and photographed in a storage facility in Zurich, in or soon after 1982 – although these photographs are not reprinted in the book. The renowned scholar Linda Schele apparently saw these images in 1990 and discussed them with colleagues. Nonetheless, the more recent history of the lintels is not treated; although Houston indicates 'their latest reappearance' allowed for the present study, we are not told when this was or how it came about.

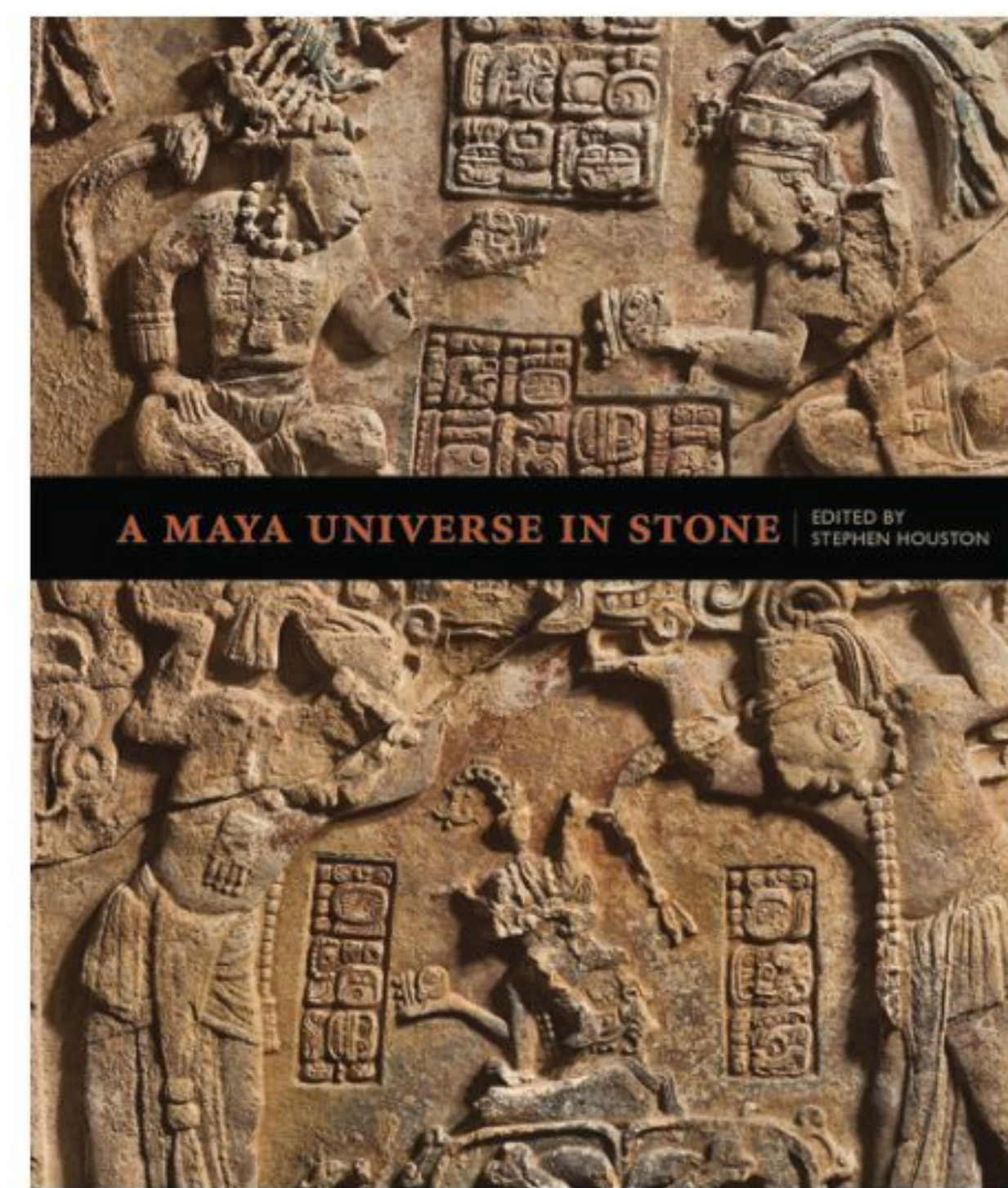
The crux of this book, though, is that these three lintels – plus a fourth in the collection of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas – can be convincingly attributed to a single artist. His name was Mayuy. Too often, art-historical writing is descriptive and framed in the passive voice, erasing the maker (something like: 'The stone was carved with...'). This is a particular problem in the ancient Americas where so many makers went unrecorded. In *A Maya*

Universe in Stone, the sentences that most tingle the spine are where Mayuy is granted the agency of being the subject of a sentence about his work: 'Mayuy framed the image with a column of hieroglyphs...' The discussion of his career would be an excellent addition to a syllabus seeking to give space to artists from outside the Euro-American tradition. Indeed, it is this appreciation of Maya art, of specific Maya artists, that may be the most convincing argument for those who cherish Mayuy's works that his *oeuvre*, as the authors contend, should one day be reunited.

The book includes a brilliant exegesis of Lintel 1, as it is known, although one that might have benefitted from images other than the one photograph from the 1960s (Fig. 1). The highlight is the discussion of Mayuy's signature. This is not a dissembling scrawl in a lower corner, as in any number of European or American paintings, but boldly occupies the centre of the carved stone. Moreover, the glyphs are inserted into the middle of a depiction of a stone carving, a self-referential statement calling to mind Van Eyck's *Als Ich Can*. As the authors point out, the two glyphs of his signature are – like Velázquez looking out from the canvas of *Las Meninas* – somewhat gobsmackingly inserted into the eyes of a face. While all the other carved figures direct their gazes at each other, it is as if Mayuy is looking straight at us.

In the end, *A Maya Universe in Stone* tacitly acknowledges that, in spite of the digital revolution – as Mayuy himself would agree – the analogue medium of print remains more durable. Dedicated readers of these authors will realise that the book consolidates a series of more detailed essays originally published in 2017 on Stuart and Houston's website, mayadecipherment.com and still available in corners of the internet. Obviously, there is much more to say about Lintel 1 from Laxtunich – and the next chapter of its biography remains to be written.

Andrew James Hamilton is associate curator of Arts of the Americas at the Art Institute of Chicago and the author of *Scale and the Incas* (Princeton).





1. Lintel 1 from Laxtunich, AD 773, Guatemala, limestone.
Current location unknown (photo: William Palmer, 1960s)

Cracking the codex

A superb new book shows what we can learn from medieval manuscripts, writes Charles Nicholl

Hidden Hands: The Lives of Manuscripts and Their Makers

Mary Wellesley

riverrun, £25

ISBN 9781529400939

An old manuscript is by definition a text, to be read with varying degrees of difficulty, but it is also a material object. To the expert eye its physical details are in themselves a kind of text, full of tiny clues about the circumstances of its creation and the vicissitudes of its afterlife. 'Manuscripts teem with life,' writes Mary Wellesley, who delves with gusto among various aged folios to demonstrate the truth of this proposition.

Wellesley's main focus is on medieval manuscript books, or codices, and her main purpose is to rescue from obscurity the anonymous scribes and artists who laboured patiently in chilly monastic scriptoria to create them. But as well as these 'splendid manuscripts', there are also 'some unassuming ones, because sometimes the unassuming manuscripts have the most interesting human stories to tell'. The shadowy presence of early women writers is a particular interest of the author. The anchoress Julian of Norwich and the autobiographer Margery Kempe are well known, but few readers will have heard of Hugeberc, an English nun in a convent in Bavaria, who wrote a Latin account of the lives of two saints sometime before 786, and asserted her authorship in a coded message which was deciphered only in the 1930s. Also new to me is the provocatively profane Welsh poet Gwerful Mechain, active in the late 15th century, whose most popular poem, 'Cywydd y Gont', politely translates as 'Ode to the Vagina'.

The basic material of the medieval codex was parchment, so the prologue of the book takes Wellesley to the workshop of William Cowley near Milton Keynes, the only firm of parchment-makers still active in Britain. Here she observes how 'animal hides – hairy, fatty, lumpy things – are transformed into immaculate writing surfaces'. It is an unglamorous process, which smells 'like the inside of a

boxing glove', but nonetheless 'magical'. A photograph shows her scraping the hair off a hide with a two-handled knife called a 'scudder'.

The Winchester Bible, a two-foot-tall codex produced in the mid 12th century, required 234 calf skins. The scribe, probably a Benedictine monk in St Swithun's Priory (now Winchester Cathedral), took about four years to write the text. The illustrations took a further 15 years but were never completed. The bible's unfinished form makes it a trove of technical data – it 'allows us to lift the bonnet and see the workings of the artistic engine'. Some of its folios still contain marginal instructions for the 'limners' or illuminators. Decorated initials were abandoned, showing the various stages of illumination: the lead underdrawing, the inking of the lines, the application of gesso, the gilding, the burnishing, then finally the painting of the ungilded parts. Six artists worked on it, now known by such sobriquets as the Master of the Apocrypha Drawings and the Master of the Leaping Figures (an improvement on the customary Hand A, B, etc., but still anonymous).

One of the few manuscript artists whose name is known is John Siferwas, who smuggled ten tiny self-portraits into various nooks and roundels of the Sherborne Missal (Fig. 1). We see a rather plump man with a beaky nose and a monk's tonsure. But little more is known of him: he wears Dominican robes, so is probably the John Cyfrewas recorded at a Dominican community in Guildford; elements of his style suggest he might have visited Germany.

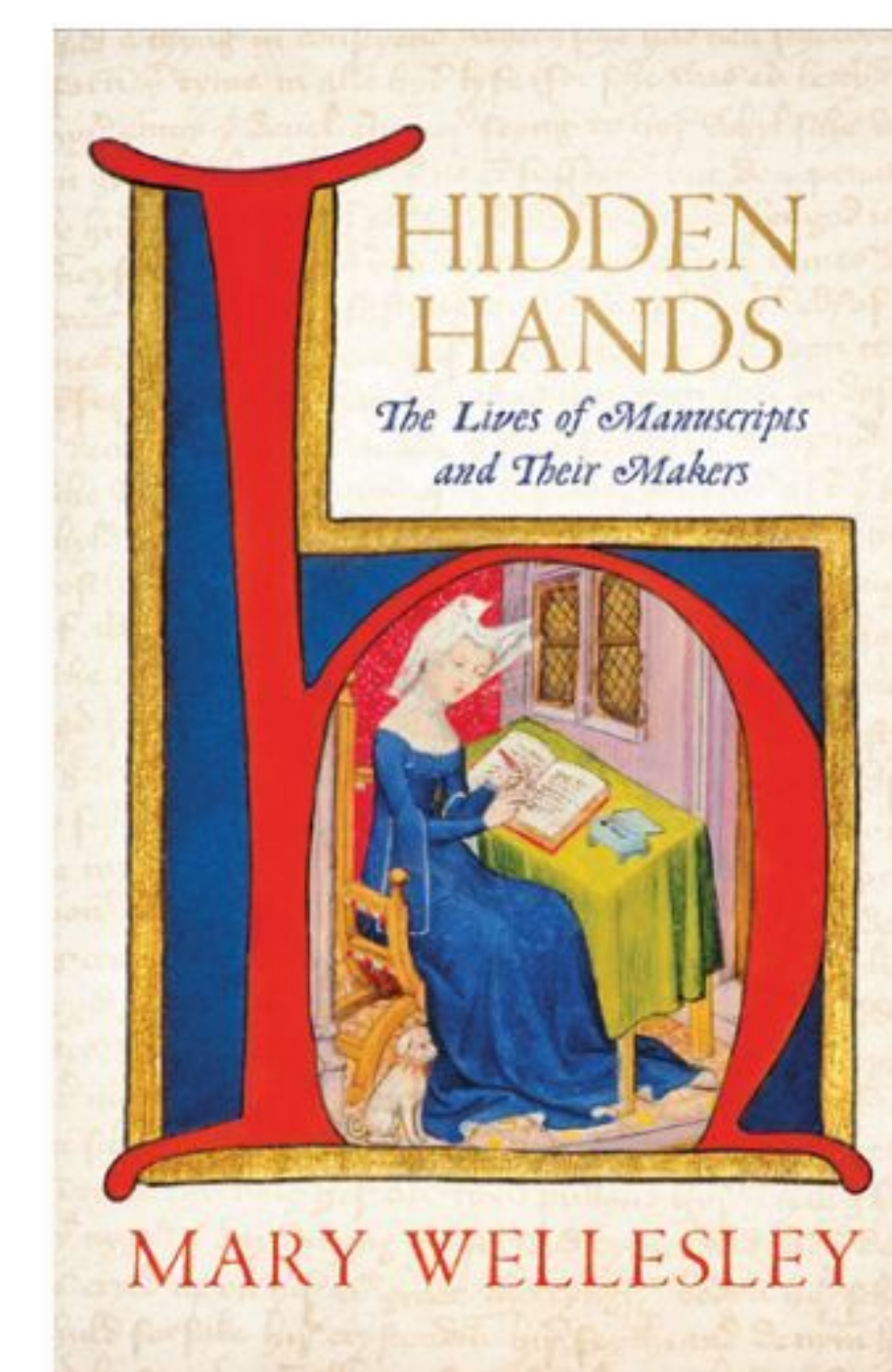
An extant manuscript is a survivor; it has been through a lot to get here. A notable example is the Cuthbert Gospel, a copy of St John's Gospel in Latin, created at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the early eighth century. This postcard-sized little volume (14 x 10 cm) is the oldest intact European book: original red leather binding, wooden boards, remarkably bright folios filled with the elegant rounded script known as uncial (from Latin *uncia*, an inch). It spent its first few centuries in the coffin of Saint Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne, which for some time after 875 was on the move, one step ahead of marauding Vikings, and it was

more than a thousand years old when it was evacuated from the Jesuit College in Liège during the Napoleonic Wars. In 2012 it was bought for £9 million by the British Library, where it resides discreetly under the guise of Additional MS 89000.

'Infinite are the losses which have been inflicted upon the race of books by wars and tumults,' wrote the medieval bibliophile Richard de Bury. He might have added fires and floods, and the casual destructions and dispersals of what earlier generations deemed expendable. Elizabethan writers refer frequently to old manuscripts being used for stopping mustard pots or lining pie dishes, or being 'bequeathed to the privy'. In 1706, Christopher Wren, supervising the removal of the great Cottonian collection of manuscripts to London, thought it 'may be purged of much uselesse trash, but this must be the drudgery of librarians'. The drudges thought otherwise, and the collection was housed intact at Ashburnham House in Westminster; 25 years later a disastrous fire broke out there – of the collection's 958 volumes, 114 were 'lost, burnt or intirely spoiled' and a further 98 badly damaged, while inept restoration procedures put paid to some more.

A survivor of the Ashburnham House fire was the unique surviving manuscript of the seminal Old English poem *Beowulf*. The singed edges of its folios are 'a chilling reminder of the fate it nearly suffered'. Wellesley notes the paucity of Old English poetic manuscripts, less valued at the time than devotional texts. A corpus of about 30,000 lines survives, most of it found in just four books. One of these is the famous Exeter Book, a collection of poems and riddles compiled in c. 960–80, from which she quotes an enigmatic little verse about another threat to the survival of old manuscripts: the devouring moth larvae known generically as bookworms – 'a thief in the shadows, a worm, / swallowed the words of someone's song [...] / Yet the stealing guest was not a whit wiser for the words he swallowed.'

Charles Nicholl's collection of essays, *Traces Remain*, is published by Penguin.





1. Crucifixion scene from the Sherborne Missal, c. 1399–1407, John Siferwas (fl. 1380–1421), illuminated manuscript on vellum, 53.5 × 38cm. British Library

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Cutting it fine

Thomas Marks relishes a feature film that shoots the drama of a restaurant service in real time

***Boiling Point* (dir. Philip Barantini; 2021)**

Cooking takes time. So when people prepare food on screen, they usually serve up an edited version. Television viewers are spared slow cooking; chopping rarely makes the cut. In videos posted on social media, dishes come together from a bird's-eye view that shows only a cook's disembodied hands as they whisk and stir and sauté, with the processes set to fast forward. A TikTok crème brûlée zips along like a short by Buster Keaton.

Most cookery programmes, whether they show restaurant kitchens or a staged version of home cooking, set out to make food inviting, not routine. The actual duration of preparing a meal may in some circumstances be soothing but it can also, in professional and domestic contexts, be either cause for stress or a type of drudgery. In the film *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), Chantal Akerman showed her title character, a widowed mother, cooking dinner for her son: Jeanne Dielman's meatloaf takes as long as a meatloaf takes, as she folds an egg, breadcrumbs and seasoning into a sticky wodge of mince.

But cooking filmed in real time also brings mild jeopardy, reminding us of the potential for cuts and burns, spillages and breakages, that lurks in any kitchen. That's certainly the case with *Boiling Point* (2021), a feature film by Philip Barantini that is shot in one take, and in which the drama unfurls during the course of a busy service in a restaurant in East London. Here are actors playing professional chefs – shucking oysters, wielding knives, working the grill – with no leeway in their performances for any mishap that would force the camera to stop rolling. Even scripted mistakes, such as a sauce ruining on the stove, reiterate just how finely poised between triumph and disaster is the single-take format. It feels appropriate – and it's a neat joke – that the film opens with a kitchen inspection by a food-safety officer. 'Always err on the side of caution,' he says.

As a work of drama, the film's achievement is to make its plots credible, while a full restaurant service functions and founders around them. Barantini's short film of the same title, also shot in one take and released in 2019, focused on the aggressive,



1. Vinette Robinson and Stephen Graham in *Boiling Point* (2021)

intemperate head chef (Stephen Graham) as he struggled to follow his own rule for staff that 'stuff going on' – in his case, addiction and his failings as a father – had to be left outside the kitchen. In the feature film, Graham's character is more vulnerable, still angry but also compulsively apologetic, and with a more nuanced back story: recently split from his partner, in debt to his former employer and desperate to live up to his name above the door. The aspirations and fragilities of other characters are felt more strongly here, too: the sous chef (Vinette Robinson) weighing up professional loyalty against a career opportunity elsewhere; the seemingly self-assured manager (Alice Feetham) who withdraws to a toilet cubicle in tears; the junior pastry chef (Stephen McMillan) who wears his sleeves long, against chef's orders, to conceal scars caused by self-harm.

But beyond narrative and character, *Boiling Point* is disquietingly brilliant on the demands of time – and not least because, as a viewer, we know that the clock is always ticking on the continuous take in which the film must reach some form of resolution. (One of the kitchen porters idly watches a football match on his phone while a colleague picks up the slack: another wry reminder that the film must pack all its action into 90 unbroken

minutes.) The refrain at the pass is 'How long?' – 'How long on the duck?', 'How long on that garnish?' – and its insistent repetition contributes to a growing sense that time in this restaurant is out of joint. Dialogue swerves between admissions of tardiness ('We're running a bit behind'; 'So sorry about the delay') and the granting of brief pauses ('You take five minutes'; 'Take your time'). Waiters are forced to linger beside tables while diners make their choices. The head chef speaks too quickly for a French employee to understand him. Everything is too fast or too slow – and yet also in real time.

'Line cooking done well is a beautiful thing to watch,' wrote Anthony Bourdain in *Kitchen Confidential* (2000). 'It's a high-speed collaboration resembling, at its best, ballet or modern dance.' *Boiling Point* attains something of that choreography, at least in the deftness with which its actors, extras and the camera move through the kitchen and dining room, staging an immersive realism that is utterly convincing. That their dance is tumultuous, and that the film's artifice might at any time crumble, makes for tense viewing. Late in the film, paramedics administer an EpiPen to a diner suffering an allergic reaction. It's another knowing moment: for the viewer, *Boiling Point* generates adrenaline aplenty.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

In 1991 the most expensive project in the history of art-book publishing was about to collide with the internet

Robert O'Byrne

Two hundred and fifty years ago, in 1771, the first complete edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was published in three volumes, most of their contents written by just one man, William Smellie. Readers over a certain age will remember the encyclopaedia, sets of which used to be found on the shelves of all respectable homes, more often than not unread, having being acquired from a door-to-door salesman working on commission. By the time the 15th edition appeared in 1974, it ran to 30 volumes and some 40 million words, provided by more than 4,000 named contributors.

However, the *Britannica*'s days were numbered. In 2012 it was announced that no further editions would be printed: anyone in search of the once ubiquitous work's contents was directed to consult an online version. The internet has changed how we seek and find information and Wikipedia, which is free, appears to have been inadvertently responsible for slaying a publishing giant.

A fundamental shift in knowledge acquisition was already underway but had not yet become fully manifest 30 years ago, in November 1991, when Eric Shanes wrote a feature for *Apollo* about 'the most expensive project ever undertaken in the history of art book publishing'. This was intended to be the visual arts equivalent of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the first edition of which had appeared in four volumes between 1879 and 1889. Like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Grove*'s, as it became known, grew and grew. When a new edition was produced in 1980, it ran to 20 volumes, but despite the size – and

cost – achieved impressive sales. The publisher Macmillan, and more specifically its chairman, the former British prime minister Harold Macmillan, felt that the time was right for the art world to have something similar; and so work began to produce the *Grove Dictionary of Art*.

When Shanes's article appeared, more than a decade had passed, and around £15 million had been spent, without any sign of the finished product. Shanes wondered what were the aims of the publication, where lay its intended readership, and what were its chances of success. He noted how, at the start of the venture, a publicity brochure appeared which 'indicates the naïveté with which Macmillan's moved into this unfamiliar territory', since it promised that the dictionary, when completed, would cover not just the major arts, but also specialist areas like clocks, jewellery, watches – and also architecture. Furthermore, unlike Kenneth Clark's television series and book *Civilisation*, which had appeared in 1969, the dictionary was committed to looking beyond the established Western canon, thereby enormously increasing its scope and required budget.

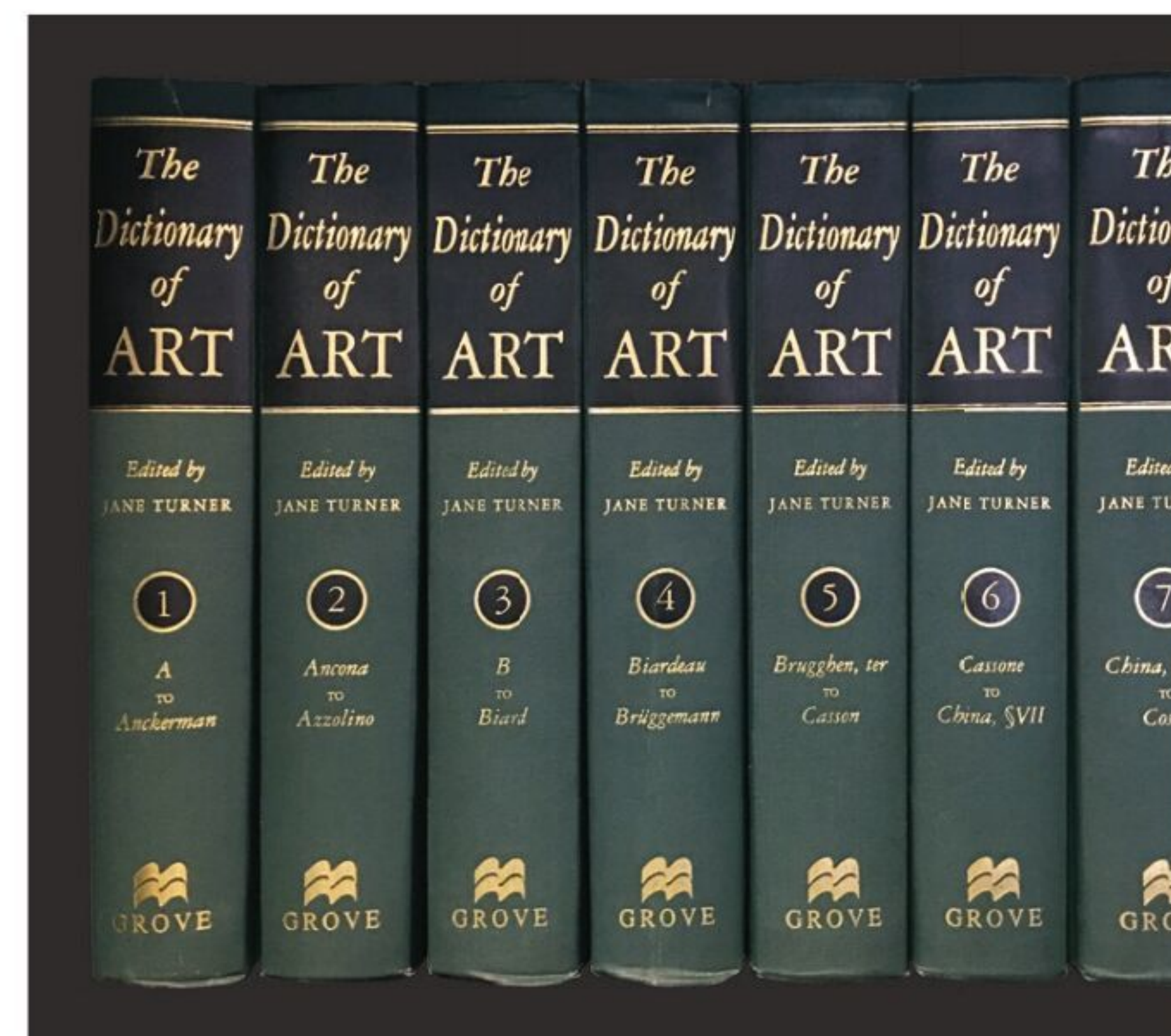
All of which helps to explain why even by 1991, with 35,000 entries from upwards of 6,800 contributors and texts running to some 25 million words enhanced by 16,000 illustrations, the job was far from complete.

As Shanes wrote, the publishers had to overcome substantial challenges, invariably arising from the decision to make the dictionary all-encompassing. For example, they needed to create 'complex methodological structures that successfully accommodate the vast number of very differing cultures to be covered and

would give all the varying discussions a consistency of approach, whilst equally allowing for very divergent characteristics of cultural development such as geography, chronology and dynastic influence to be dealt with adequately'. The allocation of space also proved problematic, 'for it could easily lead to ferocious territorial and doctrinal editorial disputes'.

Understandably, Shanes wondered how, once all of these issues had been resolved and the work published, the buying public would respond. At the time, a complete set of the latest *Grove* sold for a little over £1,000, but the art dictionary 'could be priced at more than three times as much'. He estimated that if the eventual cost came to £20 million, then the publishers would need to sell between 9,000 and 10,000 sets just to break even. Although declaring this a 'frightening figure', Shanes did not think it inconceivable that sufficient purchasers could be found, not least among university and art-gallery libraries. He believed there might also be large numbers of private buyers, as indeed there had been for the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

When Shanes's text appeared, the expectation was that the new dictionary would be published in 1994. In fact, it did not go on sale until 1996, with 41,000 articles by 6,802 scholars spread across 32,600 pages in 34 volumes, and retailing for £5,700. By then the march of the internet had become unstoppable; just two years later the dictionary made its debut online. This remains the case: it is updated three times a year and available on subscription. Today the likelihood of any other publishing venture on a similar scale looks remote. **A**



Apollo's office run of the *Grove Dictionary of Art*

In the December issue

The glories of Goodwood, Botticelli's object lessons, the new Munch museum, and a fantastical fortress in the Apennines. Plus the Apollo Awards 2021

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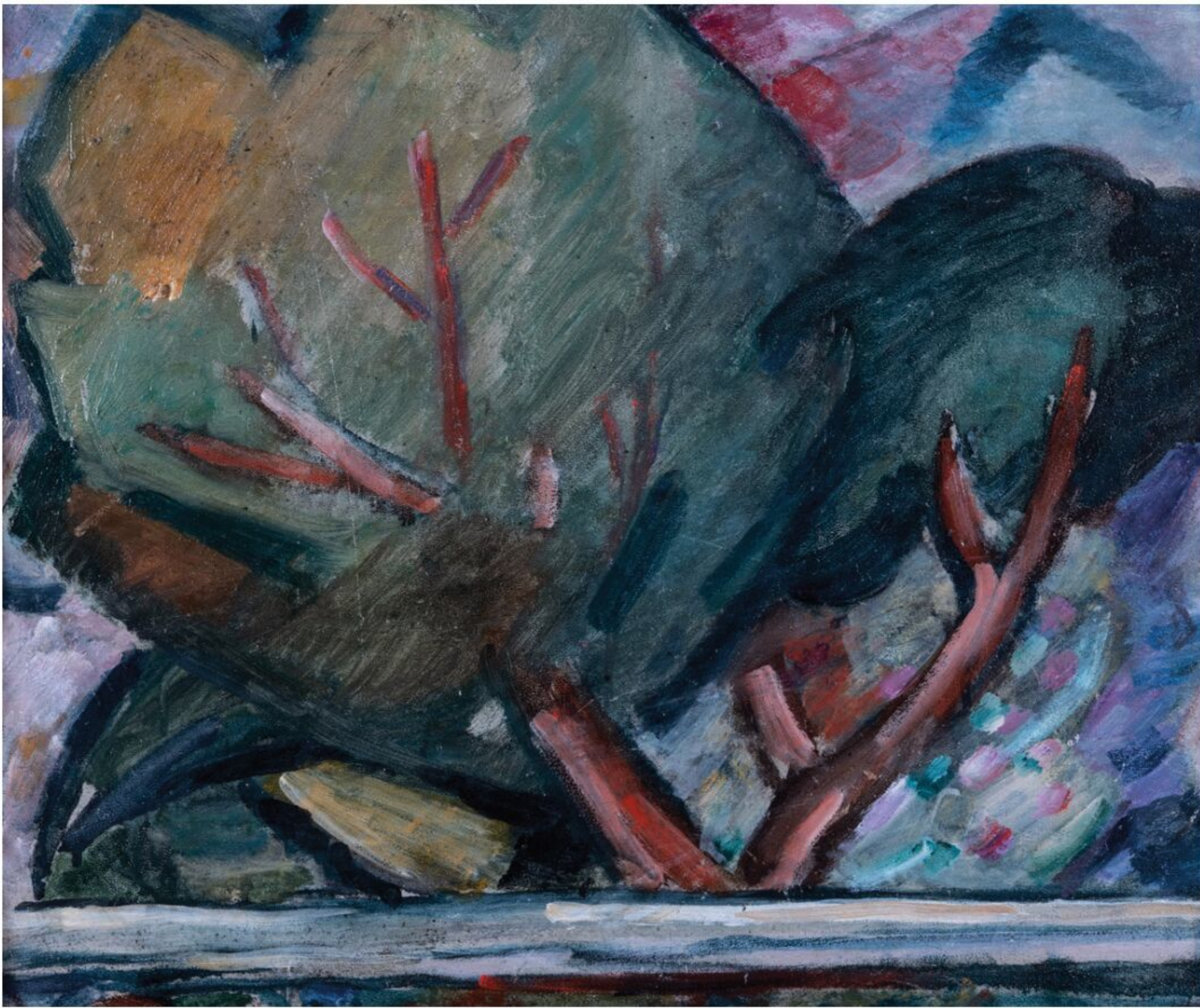
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