



Johannes Vermeer

Dutch, 1632–75

The Astronomer, 1668

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Painting, RF 1938-28

The Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer is admired for his carefully composed images bathed in light. A quiet solemnity pervades his paintings, in part because his subjects are often intensely engaged in their work. Here, Vermeer pictured an astronomer lightly touching a celestial globe, a seemingly revelatory moment that causes him to rise from his chair. The rendering of minute detail enables us to discern the specifics of the scene, including the brass astrolabe (a tool for charting heavenly bodies) next to the globe, a Netherlandish floral tapestry casually draped on the table, the astronomer's exotic imported Japanese robe, and even the book he is reading (Adriaan Metius's astronomy and navigation guide of 1621).

Vermeer was highly regarded during his lifetime, and his works were voraciously collected. But his output was extremely small—only about thirty-five paintings; because of this, his reputation waned after his death, especially outside of his native city of Delft. Two hundred years later, the French art critic Théophile Thoré rekindled



interest in this remarkable artist when he published a study of Vermeer's work in 1866. Today, paintings by Vermeer are among the most coveted of all. The Louvre owns only one other, *The Lacemaker*. Since acquiring *The Astronomer* in 1983, this is the first time the Louvre has allowed it to travel to the United States.

Johannes Vermeer, *The Geographer*, about 1668–69, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main
This painting was meant to form a pair with *The Astronomer*.

Photo: © Städel Museum / Artothek



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Antoine-Louis Barye

French, 1795–1875

Lion's Head, 1852

Painted plaster reduction

Musée du Louvre, Department of Sculptures, RF 1569

Barye designed this lion head using a pantograph, a mechanical device that translates basic measurements and proportions from a larger to a smaller scale, or vice versa. For most of his smaller sculptural groups based on *Lion and Serpent*, however, Barye did not use the pantograph but sculpted each group anew.

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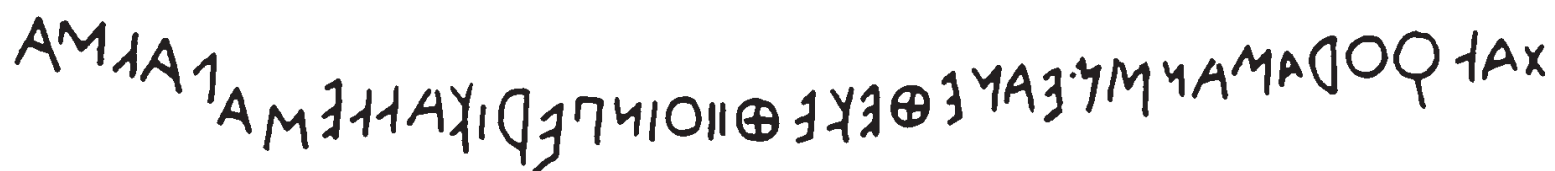
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Sparta (Argos)

The Chalkodamas *aryballos*, late 7th–first third of 6th century B.C.
Bronze

Musée du Louvre, Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities, Br 2918

The ancient Greeks used small, globular containers called *aryballoi* to hold precious perfumed oils. Its diminutive scale may make this bronze *aryballos* seem an unlikely masterpiece. However, the dedicatory inscription encircling it indicates that the maker considered it worthy of the gods:



Chalkodamas dedicated me to the gods as a very beautiful object

Chalkodamas translates as “tamer of bronze,” a reminder that the process of lost-wax hollow casting was just evolving. At that time (the late 7th century B.C.), the best artisans began signing their names to their work, and Chalkodamas’s may be the oldest known signature of a Greek bronze worker.

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Egypt, Nagada I period

Vase, about 3800–3500 B.C.

Basalt

Musée du Louvre, Department of Egyptian Antiquities, E 23449

This elegant vase was a tomb offering that accompanied a high-status person into the next world nearly six thousand years ago. Its stark, daring shape and smooth, unembellished surface seem surprisingly modern. Thousands of similar vases have been found in tombs in southern Egypt. This one is a masterpiece not only because of the painstaking care with which it was made, but also because it is much larger than most other remaining examples.

Master craftsmen in predynastic Egypt fashioned blades from napped, or flaked, stones. By fixing a blade to a wooden shaft, a sculptor could make a tool that functioned as a kind of drill. The ensemble was rotated by a bow attached by its string to the shaft. While holding the top of the shaft, the sculptor moved the bow back and forth, causing the shaft to turn. Napped blades wear out quickly, so creating a vase such as this—out of hard basalt—would have required many blades and many weeks of work.

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Italy

Dish from the Boscoreale Treasure, first half of 1st century A.D.

Partially gilt silver

Discovered at the Boscoreale Villa near Pompeii

Musée du Louvre, Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities, Bj 1969

The Boscoreale Treasure is one of the most important troves of Roman silver objects ever discovered. The silver was hidden in an empty cistern when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79 and buried the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum in volcanic ash. Archaeologists excavated the treasure—more than one hundred objects—in 1898.

This dish clearly reflected the status of its owner and was meant for display only. But whose portrait occupies its center? A close look reveals that the woman's hair is covered by the skin from an elephant's head. The large ears, washed with gold, hang down and brush her shoulders, while the raised trunk and small tusks form a sort of crown. Most scholars today agree that this is Cleopatra Selene II, the daughter of Cleopatra VII (who ruled Egypt for twenty-one years) and Mark Antony. She is surrounded by attributes of the principal Greek gods and goddesses.

The Boscoreale dish not only has a dramatic history, it is a tour de force of silver-making techniques, including solid casting, repoussé (hammering from behind to form a raised design on the front), and chasing (chiseling designs into the surface).



Left: Detail of repoussé work

Right: Detail of chased decoration

Photos: © Hervé Lewandowski / Réunion des Musée Nationaux / Art Resource, NY



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France (Limoges)

Saint Matthew, about 1220–30

Engraved, chased, and gilded copper; enamels; glass cabochons;
and enameled beads

Musée du Louvre, Department of Decorative Arts, MR 2650

This copper image of Saint Matthew originally belonged to an altarpiece or altar frontal, probably from the abbey church of Grandmont (destroyed in 1790) in the Limousin region of France. Comprising a figure of Christ in Majesty surrounded by the Four Evangelists, along with the Twelve Apostles and a thirteenth “apostle” (Saint Martial of the Limousin region), the frontal would have been a spectacular focus of worship. We can only imagine the dazzling effect of the entire ensemble seen by flickering candlelight.

During the age of cathedrals (roughly 1000–1400), craftsmen’s guilds guarded their professional secrets and controlled the training of future generations. The masters of Limoges knew how to cast, hammer, and carve copper, cover it with a thin layer of gold, and add enamel by melting colored minerals. Their artistry is evident in this finely sculpted representation of Saint Matthew with its fluid robe, delicate details, inlaid glass beads, and sumptuous enameled blue background.

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Ahmad al-Dhakî (al-Mawsilî)

Syria

Basin in the name of the Ayyubid Sultan al-'Adil II

Abû Bakr, 1238–40

Hammered copper alloy inlaid with silver, gold, and black paste

Musée du Louvre, Department of Islamic Arts, OA 5991



This dynamic example of inlaid metal is one of three signed by the master Ahmad al-Dhakî. The sultan's name appears in a long inscription around the basin's lip, and the artist's signature is woven into the horizontal band of twining plants dividing the outside of the basin into two zones of small scenes. In al-Dhakî's workshop, the art of inlaying copper alloy with precious metals reached its height in the first half of the 13th century. All manner of life, both real and imagined, is depicted here in astonishingly refined detail: hunters, fighters, acrobats, and dancers are joined by sphinxes, griffins, monkeys, lions, tigers, and birds. On the inside, just where the lip rolls down into the bowl, groups of horsemen ride their mounts in all directions, creating the illusion of chaotic action and depth.

Signature of the artist, Ahmad al-Dhakî (al-Mawsilî)

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This case was specially designed to protect the metalwork from corrosion caused by oxygen. A compressor pumps nitrogen into the display area, and two data loggers constantly monitor the temperature and humidity.

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Pierre Hutinot

French, 1616–79

Time Revealing Truth and Love of the Arts, 1667

Marble

Musée du Louvre, Department of Sculptures, MR 2730

In 1648, Louis XIV created the Royal Academy—in theory to raise the level of the fine arts, but also to break the power of guilds, which judged mastery principally by technical skill. A large oval medallion was the standard format for sculptors seeking to be accepted as members of the new Royal Academy. A sculptor's *morceau de réception* (reception piece) also had to follow a drawing provided by an academician. Usually an allegorical subject was chosen, thus marrying the new requirement of intellectual content with technical mastery. The topics “Time revealing Truth” and “Love of the Arts” were assigned to many artists. Pierre Hutinot's interpretation shows an old man with wings, Father Time, pulling aside a curtain to reveal Truth holding a sun. The winged child (a genie, or spirit) is surrounded by tools representing various art forms.

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François Barois

French, 1656–1726

The Death of Cleopatra, 1700

Marble

Musée du Louvre, Department of Sculptures, MR 1756

By 1700, three-dimensional tabletop sculptures like this one were the preferred format for sculptors submitting a *morceau de réception* (reception piece) for admission to the Royal Academy. Sculptors were judged on their ability to imbue their work with a sense of movement and expression. The most successful pieces also engaged the viewer's emotions. In this case, François Barois depicted the moment when Cleopatra—having allowed an asp to deliver its deadly bite—recoils from the realization that she will soon die. By showing her at the moment of collapse, Barois elicits our sympathy for the noble queen who has lost both of her Roman lovers (Caesar and Mark Antony) as well as her kingdom. Changing tastes in sculpture are well documented at the Louvre, where most of the *morceaux de réception* that survived the French Revolution (1789–99) are on view.

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François Boucher

French, 1703–70

Rinaldo and Armida, 1734

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, INV 2720

At the age of only thirty, François Boucher submitted this work to the Royal Academy. As his subject, he chose a scene from *Jerusalem Delivered*, an epic poem by the 16th-century Italian Renaissance poet Torquato Tasso. Boucher's painting shows the beautiful sorceress Armida bewitching Rinaldo, a Christian knight, to prevent him from attacking the Muslims who control Jerusalem. Rinaldo's two friends Carlo and Ubaldo, peeking out from the green curtains, will attempt to rescue him. In addition to presenting a complex story, Boucher successfully demonstrated his ability to depict armor, stone, water, clouds, flesh, fabrics, fur, bronze, pearls, and more. His lush composition was well received, and Boucher went on to become the favorite of Madame de Pompadour, dominating French painting before the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789.

Théodore Géricault

French, 1791–1824

Study for *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1819

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, RF 2229

On his return to Paris from Italy, where all serious young artists went to study, Géricault realized he would have to “surprise the world” in order to be recognized. He proceeded to do so by depicting a controversial contemporary event—rather than a scene from mythology or the distant past—rendered with gut-wrenching detail. In this small study, Géricault worked out all the compositional elements for what would be a 16-by-23-foot painting (one of the largest in the Louvre’s collection). The horror and violence portrayed in *The Raft of the Medusa* created a sensation when the work was presented at the 1819 Salon, and the painting continues to enthrall visitors to the Louvre today. In the past, “masterpiece” had signified a work of art that was technically superb. After Géricault, a masterpiece was expected to be intellectually challenging and the result of a unique creative imagination.

Although well received at the Salon of 1819, Géricault’s masterpiece was not purchased by the new state museum devoted to work



The Raft of the Medusa is a star attraction at the Louvre.

by living artists. The following year, it was exhibited in London. But when Géricault died in 1824, *The Raft of the Medusa* was still in his studio. Both the study and the full-size version entered the collection of the Louvre shortly after the artist’s death.



The Story of *The Raft of the Medusa*

In 1816, after the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the French monarchy, France sent a military expedition to Africa to retake Senegal. The lead ship, the frigate *Medusa*, was commanded by a captain who had left France during the Revolution and had not navigated in twenty-eight years. He ran the ship aground on a sandbank off the African coast. There were not enough lifeboats, so the remaining 150 people built a large raft from parts of the ship. For thirteen days they were adrift, with little food but plenty of wine. Mutiny, murder, and even cannibalism occurred. When another ship from the convoy finally came to their rescue, only fifteen men survived on the raft.

The *Medusa* disaster was reported in the press, and there was an outcry against the government of Louis XVIII. The minister of the navy was singled out for blame, for he had appointed an old friend of the monarchy as captain. Although the captain was tried, he was acquitted of the most serious charges, further outraging the French public.



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Attributed to Jean-Baptiste-Jules Klagmann

French, 1810–67

Ewer, about 1848

Cast and chased silver worked in repoussé

Musée du Louvre, Department of Decorative Arts, OA 11741

This elaborate vessel is dedicated to the celebration of wine.

On one side, figures surround the god of wine, Bacchus, and his love interest, Ariadne, who treads on a panther skin. On the other side, we see intoxicated bacchants and satyrs. On the handle, Jupiter in the form of an eagle snatches the youth Ganymede to serve as a cupbearer for the gods on Mount Olympus. The ewer was one of a pair designed by the sculptor Jean-Baptiste-Jules Klagmann, who, like other 19th-century artists, tried to surpass the artistic achievements of the Renaissance. Such monumental works were exhibited at the international expositions and world's fairs that became popular after the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. They also appealed to wealthy collectors.

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Cylinder Seals from Ancient Mesopotamia

Artisans in the region that is present-day Iraq first created cylinder seals such as these more than five thousand years ago. The emergence of the first towns and the invention of writing on clay are closely linked to the development of carved seals. The seals were rolled across small rectangles of moist clay to seal bales and jars of food, secure warehouse doors, and verify accounting records. Their engraved images represent gods, cosmic powers, and the eternal cycle of nature. Though often overlooked because of their small size, some of these “minute monuments” are true masterpieces.

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Egypt, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty

Head of Amenhotep III, about 1391–1353 B.C.

Granodiorite

Musée du Louvre, Department of Egyptian Antiquities, A 25

Egypt flourished during Amenhotep III's reign, and the art and architecture of the era are admired for their elegance, harmony, and refinement. Thousands of statues of Amenhotep and his consort, Queen Tiy, remain—including several colossal examples—and they consistently show the royal couple with features so precisely rendered as to make them readily recognizable. Amenhotep III's eyes, thickly outlined by makeup, turn slightly upward toward his temples. His lips are full and well-defined, adding to the image's gentle sensuality and calm. These characteristics were a radical departure from portraits of previous pharaohs, which conveyed a sense of continuity and permanence without concern for individual likeness or personality.

Among the many portraits of Amenhotep III, this is one of the finest. Skillful sculptors took full advantage of the mottled granodiorite stone preferred by the pharaoh. The face was polished smooth to suggest taut and youthful skin, and the ceremonial crown, embellished with a cobra, was lightly pitted to give it the texture of cast metal.

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Roman

Leaning Aphrodite, 1st or 2nd century A.D.,
after a lost late 5th-century B.C. Greek original
Marble

Musée du Louvre, Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities, Ma 420 (left)
and Ma 414 (right)

Because nearly all ancient Greek bronze sculpture has disappeared—often melted down to make weapons and tools—scholars rely on descriptions in ancient texts and on later copies of whatever material or size, including images on coins. This method of practicing connoisseurship is known by the German term *Kopienkritik*. Its goal is to find the copy that is closest in every detail to the original Greek work of art.

The *Aphrodite* copy on the right has a bared left shoulder with hints of soft underarm flesh, a characteristic of several figures from the Parthenon in Athens. The copy on the left has the goddess's belly covered with a cascade of stiff folds, whereas that on the right reveals her navel through gauzy fabric. The stance and weight distribution of the left-hand sculpture are awkward, but the figure on the right leans against a pillar in a believable manner. These elements seem to suggest that the sculpture on the right is closest to the original; however, the bunching of fabric under the arm, as in the figure on the left, is found on many replicas of the lost original. It may be that the copy on the right was created by a more skillful (though later) sculptor. The example on the left, while an inferior rendition, may in fact be closer to the original.

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Roman

Eros, 1st or 2nd century A.D.

Marble

Musée du Louvre, Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities, MR 140



This figure of Eros likely came out of a digging expedition looking like the inset photo. It was common practice in the 17th century to restore the missing parts of antique sculpture, and at some point Eros acquired his wings, arms, and legs. The figure was thought to be a Roman copy of a masterpiece by the great Athenian sculptor Praxiteles, an attribution supported by descriptions in texts and images on coins. It became a celebrity object when Napoleon purchased it for the Louvre in 1807 from his brother-in-law, Prince Camille Borghese.

By the end of the 19th century, however, Greek art was discredited as sterile and academic, and *Eros* came to be viewed as mediocre. After 1935, the figure was de-restored and relegated to the Louvre's storeroom. In 2004, with new scholarship and conservation techniques, *Eros* was re-restored as a dramatic example of the shifting tides of taste and the ever-changing definition of "masterpiece."

Eros before 2004 re-restoration

Photo: © Musée du Louvre / Maurice and Pierre Chuzeville



Leonardo da Vinci

Italian, 1452–1519

Drapery study, 1470–79

Tempera on linen

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, RF 41905

A masterpiece needn't be a finished work of art. Scholars believe that Leonardo da Vinci produced this drapery study while he was apprenticing under the Florentine painter and sculptor Verrocchio. Students undertook such studies to train their eyes in close observation and to polish their technical skills. Cloth dipped in wet plaster was draped over mannequins—or in this case, a chair—to create a complicated form for students to render. Leonardo's ability to capture of the subtle play of light across the breaks and folds of fabric is astonishing, and the composition is satisfying, even as an incomplete study. This is one of six drapery studies in the collection of the Louvre that are attributed to Leonardo.



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Bartolomeo Passarotti

Italian, 1529–92

Jupiter Seated on Clouds

Pen and ink over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 8463

The Bolognese painter Bartolomeo Passarotti carefully studied Michelangelo's works and emulated his pen and ink drawing style—particularly his extensive cross-hatching—and the hard outline of forms in his fresco paintings. Passarotti's Jupiter, the Roman god of the sky and thunder, echoes several figures in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling, especially the pose of the prophet Jeremiah. The figure of Jupiter is repeated in Passarotti's more complex drawing *Homer and the Sailors*. In the 18th century, before large numbers of genuine drawings by Michelangelo were widely known, Passarotti's drawings were often mistaken for Michelangelo's. It was then, in all likelihood, that this drawing was annotated with Michelangelo's name.

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Bartolomeo Passarotti

Italian, 1529–1592

Homer and the Sailors

Pen and ink over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 8469

In this marvelous pen and ink drawing, Passarotti illustrates a passage from Homer's *Odyssey* in which a blind singer entertains Odysseus and his sailors at the court of the Phaeacian king. The passage is a significant one because Homer, who is believed to have been blind, may have cast himself as the singer Demodokos in the story. In this drawing, Passarotti shows Demodokos (or Homer) sitting on the rocky seashore with Odysseus and his men in the boat. In rendering a young sailor seated on the edge of the boat, Passarotti repeated the pose of his Jupiter (also on view).

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Blue Head, 20th-century forgery

Blue glass

Musée du Louvre, Department of Egyptian Antiquities, E 11658

Egyptomania began with Napoleon's Egyptian campaign in 1798, but it became a worldwide fever in 1922, when the English archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the tomb of Tutankhamen (King Tut). Soon Egyptian style was all the rage in fashion, graphic design, furniture, and even the movies, where the early film star Louise Brooks popularized the Egyptian "bob."

It is said that every forgery contains something of the spirit of its own time. The Louvre acquired the Blue Head in 1923, and it became an instant sensation. But scholars were skeptical of the head's authenticity, especially in the absence of any documentation of its history. Finally, in 2002, scientists analyzed the glass by the noninvasive particle-induced X-ray emission method. They discovered that the cobalt oxide used to tint the glass blue, and also a chemical added to make the glass opaque, were not available to ancient Egyptians. Once the Blue Head was recognized as a 20th-century fake, its severe hairstyle suddenly seemed obviously close to modern hair fashions.

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Mesopotamia, Neo-Sumerian period (about 2119–2004 B.C.)

Fragmentary bas-relief dedicated to the female divinity Nin-sun

Diorite

Musée du Louvre, Department of Near Eastern Antiquities, AO 2761

This precisely carved regal figure is identified by the inscription on the upper left edge as Nin-sun, the divine mother of Gilgamesh, mythical king of ancient Mesopotamia and hero of the oldest written story on Earth. This relief suggests the ways in which taste and political ideology changed between the Akkadian Empire (about 2340–2150 B.C.) and the Neo-Sumerian period (about 2119–2004 B.C.). While the Akkadians preferred to depict their gods as strong and warlike, Sumerians portrayed theirs as



wise and pious protectors. Hence, Nin-sun's posture is staid and her expression gentle but serious, signifying her exalted position. The relief fragment entered the Louvre's collection in 1898, when all of Europe was fascinated by new archaeological evidence of the civilization that grew up between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

"Lady with the *aryballos*," Mesopotamia, about 2119–2004 B.C., Musée du Louvre
Like this goddess, Nin-sun may have held an *aryballos*, a vessel used for sacred offerings.
Photo: © Franck Raux / Réunion des Musée Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

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Southern Turkey

Stele of the scribe Tarhunpiyas, late 7th century B.C.

Basalt

Musée du Louvre, Department of Near Eastern Antiquities, AO 19222

On this touching grave marker (stele), a mother proudly but protectively holds her son on her lap. He is tall, almost a young man. His stylus and portable, booklike writing desk show that he became a scribe and was therefore well educated. We also learn that he was a falconer. These activities indicate that he was from a fine family, perhaps even a royal one. The child's name, Tarhunpiyas, is written above his head in an old-fashioned style of Hittite hieroglyphs, probably to emphasize his ancient lineage. Before the great archaeological expeditions of the 19th century rediscovered the ancient cultures of the Near East, it was impossible to unlock the secrets of such a memorial.



Egypt, Ptolemaic period

Fragment of a statue of a woman, 3rd–2nd century B.C.
Porphyry

Musée du Louvre, Department of Egyptian Antiquities, AF 12417



TV shows such as National Geographic specials and *Secrets of the Dead* routinely document the detective work of scholars, with the result that museum visitors have become more interested in authenticity and more comfortable with fragments. This figure was de-restored in 1998 when 17th- and 18th-century additions of legs, left arm, and head were removed. The original torso is a rare example of Egyptian sculpture carved from porphyry, an igneous rock that became popular among later Roman sculptors. The woman holds a flywhisk, a status symbol indicating that she was of high rank. The sculptor's careful modeling of the human form was enhanced by polishing the porphyry with sandstone—a technique mastered by Egyptian carvers several thousand years earlier.

Statue before de-restoration in 1998

Photo: Courtesy Musée du Louvre

Aquitaine (?) and Île-de-France

Capital: Daniel in the lions' den; acanthus leaves,

6th century and first half of 12th century

Marble

Musée du Louvre, Department of Sculptures, RF 457

In 1881, the Louvre's curator of sculpture, Louis Courajod, discovered this capital in the storerooms of the abbey church of Saint-Denis in Paris. He recognized the side showing a squatting figure as a masterpiece of the earthy and muscular Romanesque style. A 12th-century sculptor had created an artful tableau of one of the Bible's best-known stories, that of the prophet Daniel thrown into a lions' den for his steadfast faith.

Originally carved in the 6th century with acanthus leaves, seen on the back, the capital probably graced the top of a church column in southwestern France. About six hundred years later, as a way of reusing the precious marble, it was partially recarved with Daniel and the lions for a new setting, possibly the cathedral church of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris. Many churches were destroyed during and after the French Revolution, and somehow this capital came to Saint-Denis, where it was used as the base for a statue before being relegated to the storeroom.

The study of such fragments, now scattered among churches, museums, and private collectors, is important in deciphering the complex stylistic development of medieval French architecture and its sculptural decorations.

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Michelangelo Buonarroti

Italian, 1475–1564

Virgin and Child with Saint Anne

Ink, brown wash, and black chalk

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 685

In rendering this pen and ink study, Michelangelo was probably inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of Saint Anne with the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus or his partially completed painting of the same subject, which is now in the Louvre's collection.

We know that the young Michelangelo was well pleased with his attempt to match the genius of the older artist because he wrote on the sheet, "Who would ever have said that I made this with my hands." His infinitely varied cross-hatching to evoke light, shade, and form is masterly, even in the drawing's partially realized state. And Michelangelo's superb grasp of anatomy and movement is evident in his very brief sketch of a nude man below the holy trio.

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Jacopo Ligozzi

Italian, 1547–1627

Allegory of Lust, about 1590

Pen and ink, brown wash, and gold highlights

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 5032

The *Allegory of Lust* is from a series illustrating the seven deadly sins (envy, greed, gluttony, sloth, wrath, and pride are the others) that was made for Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici. The grand duke enjoyed contemplating and discussing elegant masterworks filled with secret meanings known only to a narrow circle. He created the Studiolo (little study) in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence for that very purpose. Ligozzi's art was so admired that he was appointed head of the Florence academy.

From his earlier work at the Hapsburg court, Ligozzi brought with him a northern taste for naturalism and extreme refinement of execution. Each composition in the deadly sins series is dominated by a beautifully rendered nude with exquisite gold highlights, and Ligozzi's attention to detail extends throughout the drawing. Here, a goat, an exhausted Eros, and an embracing couple—all emblematic of Lust—display his masterly and meticulous touch.

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Antonio Pisanello

Italian, about 1395–1455?

Profile of a young woman to the right

Pen and ink over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 2342

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Antonio Pisanello

Italian, about 1395–1455?

Two bridled horses' heads and details of a horse's nose

Pen and ink over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 2354

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Antonio Pisanello

Italian, about 1395–1455?

Fourteen white herons

Pen and ink with green wash on parchment

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 2472

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Antonio Pisanello

Italian, about 1395–1455?

Hunting hawk hooded and perched on a gloved left hand

Pen and ink, brown wash, watercolor, and white highlights
over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 2453

In 1865 the Louvre acquired a bound album of 482 drawings, the *Codex Vallardi*, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). Today, only seven of those drawings are believed to be by Leonardo. Some are by other 16th-century artists, but all the rest—more than 400—are by a highly gifted painter, draftsman, and medalist who had been forgotten for nearly four centuries: Antonio Pisanello.

Pisanello studied animals and birds with the intensity of a naturalist, capturing precisely the hunch of a heron's shoulders, the intricate patterns of a hawk's feathers, and the plump body of a dormouse. We now know that he worked for the most important courts in Italy and that he was one of the groundbreakers in the use of foreshortening to accurately render figures in space. Pisanello's inquisitive mind and sharp eye hint at what was to come in the High Renaissance, and it is understandable that his drawings were thought to be the work of Leonardo, the quintessential artist-scientist.

Antonio Pisanello

Italian, about 1395–1455?

Profile of a greyhound standing to the right

Watercolor and pen and ink over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 2433

In 1865 the Louvre acquired a bound album of 482 drawings, the *Codex Vallardi*, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). Today, only seven of those drawings are believed to be by Leonardo. Some are by other 16th-century artists, but all the rest—more than 400—are by a highly gifted painter, draftsman, and medalist who had been forgotten for nearly four centuries: Antonio Pisanello.

Pisanello studied animals and birds with the intensity of a naturalist, capturing precisely the hunch of a heron's shoulders, the intricate patterns of a hawk's feathers, and the plump body of a dormouse. We now know that he worked for the most important courts in Italy and that he was one of the groundbreakers in the use of foreshortening to accurately render figures in space. Pisanello's inquisitive mind and sharp eye hint at what was to come in the High Renaissance, and it is understandable that his drawings were thought to be the work of Leonardo, the quintessential artist-scientist.

Antonio Pisanello

Italian, about 1395–1455?

Four views of a dormouse

Black chalk, pen and ink, pink wash, and oxidized white highlights over a black chalk preparatory drawing

Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, INV 2387

Attributed to Desiderio da Settignano

Italian, about 1430–64

Saint John the Baptist, about 1455

Marble

Musée du Louvre, Department of Sculptures, RF 679

Florentine sculptors of the 15th century excelled at depicting delicate, heroic youths. Over the centuries, Donatello was remembered above all other artists of that time, and many works were misattributed to him. Such was the case with sculptures by Desiderio da Settignano, a disciple of Donatello's who excelled at sensitive portraits. This bust of Saint John the Baptist, the forerunner or herald of Christ, shows a sweet young man shyly leaning away from the viewer. He appears emaciated, for he wandered alone in the wilderness, lived off honey and locusts, and clothed himself in animal skins.

Until 1942, this sculpture was exhibited by the Louvre as the work of Donatello, as the inscription on the base asserts. But in 2007, a conference on Desiderio da Settignano in Florence provided the opportunity that connoisseurs needed to see many examples of the artist's work side by side. Comparison with another Desiderio *Saint John*—a full figure in painted wood now in the collection of the Bargello Museum in Florence—convinced the Louvre curators that this is indeed a masterpiece by Desiderio da Settignano.



Lorenzo Lotto

Italian, about 1480–1556

Christ Carrying the Cross, about 1526

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, RF 1982-50

This painting was purchased for a very low price by an antiques dealer in the early 1980s from a convent in Paris where it had been relegated to an attic storeroom. Removal of layers of dirt from the surface of the canvas revealed the signature “Laur. Lotus [the artist’s name in Latin] 1526.” Its placement on the cross in the lower right corner, upside down to us but readable to Jesus, was an act of Christian devotion.

Lorenzo Lotto, one of Venice’s foremost painters, integrated elements of northern European painting into his work, including grotesque facial expressions (seen here in the soldier’s visages), great attention to detail, and dramatic drapery folds (seen here in Christ’s sleeve). In this masterpiece, the tight cropping brings a heightened sense of drama and immediacy to the emotional scene. Although Lotto was much admired during his lifetime, his originality was later overshadowed by the accomplishments of Titian, his contemporary in Venice. However, through the writings of the art historian Bernard Berenson, published in 1895, and retrospective exhibitions in Venice (1953) and Washington (1997), Lotto regained his high standing.



Georges de La Tour

French, 1593–1652

The Card-Sharp with the Ace of Diamonds, 17th century Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, RF 1972-8

Georges de La Tour's artistic output, like that of Vermeer, was extremely limited; only about sixty paintings by him are known today. Adding to his obscurity, he seems to have lived his entire life in his native Lorraine, in northeastern France. He was soon forgotten after his death in 1652, and his paintings were misattributed to other artists. This changed in 1914 when the German art historian Hermann Voss published a study in which he ascribed many admired paintings to La Tour. An exhibition in 1934 further established La Tour's reputation, and today he is the 17th-century painter best known to the French public. This painting was acquired by a private collector in Paris sometime between 1925 and 1930 and entered the collection of the Louvre in 1972.

La Tour's dramatic use of light and shadow, with figures emerging from the inky darkness, owes much to the 16th-century Italian artist Caravaggio. But La Tour's crisp outlines create a distinctive, almost modern impression. In this work, a rich young man is about to be duped by a card sharp who is pulling an ace of diamonds from his belt while looking out at us, the viewers, as if to involve everyone in his misdeed. The courtesan and the serving maid, judging from the movement of their eyes, are also complicit.

Jean Regnaud

French, known active 1679–97

The Victory at Saint-Gothard, about 1686

Bronze

Musée du Louvre, Department of Sculptures, RF 4751



Recently declared a national treasure and a major work of French classicism, *The Victory of Saint-Gothard* is part of a series of medallions commissioned for the Place des Victoires to celebrate the exploits of Louis XIV. Each three-columned lamppost in the

square was to be decorated with six of these medallions, arranged vertically in groups of three between the columns. Drawings for the medallions were prepared by Pierre Mignard, later First Painter to the King, but Regnaud's sculptural genius and fastidious modeling give this composition its dynamism and cohesion. His Victory extends a large palm branch and elegantly treads upon a pile of weapons, flags, and turbans from defeated Ottoman warriors who had threatened central Europe.

Until recently, Jean Regnaud did not receive the critical attention he deserved for this and other magnificent medallions because his name was misreported on the original contract. Furthermore, works from his early career were not signed with his family name but rather with his place of origin (Jean de Sciampagna). Recent scholarship, however, is bringing this heretofore little-known sculptor deserved attention and admiration.

Place des Victoires, Paris, showing Regnaud's medallions on the giant lampposts

Photo: Courtesy Musée du Louvre

Guillaume Voiriot

French, 1712–99

Portrait of a Woman Holding a Booklet, 18th century

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, MI 1132

Private collections, by their very nature, illustrate one person's idea of what constitutes a masterpiece. This portrait was among a group of 583 paintings given to the Louvre by a wealthy doctor who collected exactly the opposite of what was approved by the French academy of his day. Instead of theatrical history paintings, Louis La Caze (1798–1869) appreciated realistic depictions of sympathetic individuals, such as this one, which had gone out of fashion after the French Revolution. La Caze opened his simple Paris salon to progressive artists, Degas and Manet among them, so they could learn from earlier masters like Watteau, Chardin, and Voiriot.

While still in La Caze's possession, this painting was attributed to Jean-Siméon Chardin and hailed as a masterpiece. However, that attribution was discredited in 1881 by the leading specialist in 18th-century painting, Edmond de Goncourt. The portrait then languished until preparations for a recent exhibition at the Louvre about the La Caze collection prompted further research on the work. It is now attributed to Guillaume Voiriot, an artist influenced by Chardin's somber portraits.

John Martin

British, 1789–1854

Pandemonium, 1841

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, RF 2006-21

Inspired by a passage in John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, the British artist John Martin painted this image of Pandemonium, Satan's vast underworld fortress. Across a rocky plain seething with fiery lava, demonic armies mass before the Prince of Darkness, who stands with spear and shield on an outcropping overlooking the fearsome sight. Martin even designed the frame for his apocalyptic vision, guarded by hissing dragons at the four corners.

In the mid-18th century, many English Romantic artists sought to represent the opposite of the serene harmony of Renaissance models, a polarity described by the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke in 1757 in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. These artists stressed strong emotion as a source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on awe and terror as they filled their canvases with the stuff of nightmares.

The acquisition of this startling painting in 2006 furthered the Louvre's mission to add masterworks to its collection and also partly redressed the relative weakness of its English school holdings—the result of a historical nationalistic bias toward French artists.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

French, 1780–1867

Portrait of Ferdinand-Philippe-Louis-Charles-Henri de Bourbon-Orléans, Duke of Orléans (1810–1842), 1842

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, RF 2005-13

The son of King Louis-Philippe appears sober and intelligent, but also eager to engage with life. After his father came to the throne in 1830, the prince took an active part in royal duties. He sought public service, endearing himself to the French nation when he calmed revolts in Lyon without resorting to violence, fought against cholera during the 1831 epidemic, and served as a courageous commander in many military campaigns.

Ingres was a great portrait painter, able to conjure both the character and the physical presence of his sitters. His portrait of the dashing Duke of Orléans, a much-loved, progressive prince of great refinement, took on added meaning when the duke was killed in a road accident at the age of thirty-two. The image became almost a sacred icon, and many copies in a wide variety of sizes were commissioned from the painter. Its extensive distribution virtually assured that the duke's image would be considered a masterpiece of portraiture.

Jean-Siméon Chardin

French, 1699–1779

Child with a Top (Portrait of Auguste Gabriel Godefroy, 1728–1813), about 1738

Oil on canvas

Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, RF 1705

When Chardin painted this portrait of a boy absorbed in the simple pleasure of spinning a top, it did not correspond with what his contemporaries considered “great” painting. That distinction was generally reserved for grand works inspired by history or literature. Nevertheless, Chardin was much admired during his lifetime and held the influential position of Treasurer of the Royal Academy. He was praised by art critics and patronized by European royals, and engravings of his genre scenes made his work available to a wide audience. But after his death in 1779, his art seemed out of sync with the prevailing taste for large, historical subjects, and he was soon forgotten by the general public.

In the 1840s, on the eve of the Realist revolution, Théophile Thoré, the same French critic who drew attention to the works of Vermeer, lauded the subtlety of Chardin’s paintings. A hundred years after the artist painted it, this delicate—but refreshingly unsentimental—depiction of a boy came to be considered a masterpiece. Shortly thereafter the Louvre added a painting by Chardin to its collection, and in 1907 it acquired this work directly from boy’s descendants.