

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Italian, Milan 1571–1610 Porto Ercole

Judith and Holofernes, c. 1599

Oil on canvas

Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome

Michael Wolgemut

German (Nuremberg), 1434–1519

Wilhelm Pleydenwurff

German (Nuremberg), c. 1460–1494

Judith and Holofernes, 1493

Woodcut from Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle (Liber Chronicarum)* (Nuremberg, 1493)

Gift of Herschel V. Jones P.10,960

This woodcut, from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, an illustrated history of the world, depicts the entire brave, bloody, dangerous story of Judith. At the upper right, she and her maid are shown venturing from the Jewish town of Bethulia, which is under threat from the Assyrian army. Judith is soon discovered by Assyrian soldiers, who take her to their general, Holofernes. He first appears in a tent in the background, enthroned and awaiting the approaching group. Smitten with Judith, he hosts a banquet for her in the middle tent. In the lower-left corner we witness his decapitation, with Judith's maid ready to bag the severed head. At the upper left, the two women escape with their trophy and are greeted at the town gate. High above the city, Holofernes's head is brandished on a pike. Assyrians attempting to flee in the foreground are met with Israelites attacking from the right.

Antonio Gionima

Italian (Bologna), 1697–1732

Judith Presenting Herself to Holofernes, 1720s

Oil on canvas

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 62.45

Antonio Gionima represented a less common episode in the story of Judith, when Holofernes first meets the wealthy young widow. The composition focuses on Judith's beauty and the colorful drapery and elegant jewels she donned to charm the Assyrian general. It's all part of her plan to insinuate herself into the Assyrian camp. Her maid, standing at center, and Holofernes play supporting roles. He bends before the brightly lit heroine in a deferential gesture. This closely follows the text, which notes that the Assyrians "marveled at her beauty and admired the Israelites, judging them by her" (Judith 10.19). Gionima's interpretation highlights Judith's virtue and bravery rather than her sexual power.

Giovan Gioseffo dal Sole

Italian (Bologna), 1654–1719

Judith with the Head of Holofernes, c. 1695

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Bernard H. Ridder Family 77.24

Giovan Gioseffo dal Sole interpreted the moment after Judith slays the enemy, portraying her as brave and sensual. Looking directly at the spectator, she calmly displays a sword in one hand and gestures with the other toward Holofernes's decapitated head. Judith's powers of seduction are suggested by her ruffled gown, which hangs down to reveal a bare breast. Dal Sole's erotic treatment casts Judith as a temptress, emphasizing the dangerous power women can have over men who fall victim to their charms. In a novel twist, this is also a portrait. It reportedly depicts Contessa Marsili, a Bolognese noblewoman, who was portrayed at the request of her husband, Conte Silvio Marsili, the patron of the picture.

Ludovico Carracci

Italian (Bologna), 1555–1619

Judith Beheading Holofernes, c. 1584–85

Pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash, squared in black chalk

Bequest of Professor Alfred Moir 2012.58.15

Ludovico Carracci's exceptional gifts as a storyteller are displayed in this sparkling sheet. It represents the riveting moment before the slaying: Judith, sword raised, grips Holofernes's hair to steady his head while her naked victim struggles on his bed. Ludovico enhances the suspense by having Judith's maid discover the assassination alongside the viewer; emerging from the darkness, she pulls back the tent curtain to expose the horrific scene within. Ludovico used other various compositional devices to dramatize the moment. The diagonal line of the curtain creates movement and tension, while another line extends across Judith's arms and along Holofernes's body. The shimmering wash, which casts half the scene in darkness, adds mystery and excitement.

Gottfried Bernhard Göz

German (born Moravia), 1708–1774

Judith with the Head of Holofernes, and a Vision of the Virgin and Child Casting Out Evil, c. 1749

Pen and brown ink, brush and gray and brown wash, heightened with white gouache on laid paper

Gift of David M. Daniels 66.59.8

Nervous movements and flickering light electrify this terrifying scene with a headless body sprawling behind Judith's sword. This wash drawing may relate to a ceiling fresco Gottfried Bernhard Göz painted in southern Germany. He reworked the composition from an earlier painting; both works depict Judith whisking Holofernes's head into her maid's bag. For the fresco design, he added the Virgin Mary and Child in the sky, shown stabbing a serpent with a cross. Göz's fresco cycle, completed for a magnificent rural pilgrimage church, was dedicated to iconography related to Mary. Including Judith in the cycle revives the medieval idea of Judith as a prefiguration of Mary.

Lovis Corinth

German, 1858–1925

Judith Beheads Holofernes, 1909

Color lithograph from *Das Buch Judith* (The Book of Judith) (Berlin, 1910)

The F. S. Winston Fund, by exchange P.70.59

Lovis Corinth created this lithograph for an illustrated *Book of Judith* published in Berlin in 1910. It draws on Caravaggio's famous painting in this exhibition, or the many Italian baroque iterations Caravaggio inspired that focus on the grisly act of decapitation and on Holofernes's terror. However, in place of Caravaggio's chaste and dismayed Judith, Corinth created a disheveled, crazed woman possessed by a murderous passion. The forceful poses, expressive lines, and glaring use of color heighten the dramatic tension. The facial expressions are reportedly Corinth's own, sketched from looking in the mirror.

Unknown Engraver

Italian, late 15th-early 16th century

After Andrea Mantegna

Italian (Padua), 1430/31–1506

Judith with the Head of Holofernes, c. 1497–1500

Engraving

Gift of Herschel V. Jones P.10,875

This highly influential engraving, based on a design by Andrea Mantegna, a leading Italian artist of the early Renaissance, depicts the aftermath of Holofernes's killing. Caravaggio's conceit of accentuating Judith's youthful beauty by portraying her maid as old, with exaggeratedly sunken and wrinkled features, may have been borrowed from this print. Mantegna's Judith—tall, elegant, adept, and fearless—has the aura of a superhero. With a cool sideways glance, she assesses any approaching danger; her calm manner suggests that the business of decapitating generals is entirely routine for her. The gruesome scene inside the tent is succinctly evoked by the five lifeless toes at the edge of Holofernes's bed.

Pietro della Vecchia

Italian (Venice), 1602/3–1678

Judith with the Head of Holofernes, c. 1635–50

Oil on canvas

The John R. Van Derlip Fund 66.49

While Judith looks heavenward for guidance, she and her maid, Abra, wrap Holofernes's enormous bearded head in a blood-stained cloth. At right is the general's shiny plumed helmet, now forever empty. A follower of Caravaggio, della Vecchia adapted the famous painter's figure types and dramatic chiaroscuro lighting. Yet this picture also reflects his interest in imitating century-old Venetian artists such as Giorgione and Palma Vecchio—represented by the women's small figural proportions and the antiquated facial types.

Carlo Saraceni

Italian (Venice), c. 1579–1620

Kneeling Woman, Study for Judith's Servant,

c. 1610–15

Black and white chalk on faded blue paper

Bequest of Professor Alfred Moir 2012.58.82

The Venetian painter Carlo Saraceni became an ardent follower of Caravaggio after moving to Rome around 1598. This drawing relates directly to the maid in his painting *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (c. 1610/15, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). He is working out the compellingly realistic if somewhat disturbing pose of the figure, who in the final painting uses her mouth to



hold open the sack where Judith will deposit the bloody head. Here, she looks up in anticipation of receiving the sordid prize. The small rod in her hand represents the candle she holds in Saraceni's painting.

Carlo Saraceni, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

Barthel Beham

German, 1502–1540

Judith, 1525–27

Engraving

Gift of C.G. Boerner in honor of John E. Andrus III's 100th birthday
2009.19.6

The triumphant display of Holofernes's severed head is the scene from the book of Judith that artists most often depict. It shows Judith back home in Bethulia, presenting her grisly trophy to the Israelites. The image came to symbolize the victory of the Jewish people against their ancient oppressors, and more generally the triumph of oppressed people over tyranny. In Barthel Beham's version, Judith is a commanding presence. Adorned with plaited, beribboned hair, laced corset, ermine collar, massive sleeves, and heavy chain, she is dressed as though for battle. Holofernes's disembodied head appears to be frozen in fear, as if reacting to Judith's weapon even in death.

Ignazio Collino

Italian (Turin), 1736–1793

Judith with the Head of Holofernes, 1750

Terra-cotta

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 63.55

Her pose solemn and assured, Judith tilts her head upward to represent the divine inspiration that enabled her to kill Holofernes and save her people. One large, strong hand grasps the Assyrian general's hair (a sign of his virility) while the other hand—note the thick drapery fold that visually connects them—holds her sword. Holofernes's eyes bulge and his mouth gapes in an eternal scream. Collino's treatment of Holofernes closely mimics Goliath in Caravaggio's painting *David and Goliath* (c. 1610, Galleria Borghese, Rome), where Caravaggio inserted a self-portrait for the face of the decapitated giant.

Max Thorek

American (born Hungary), 1880–1960

Judith, c. 1940

Gelatin silver print

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 84.101.4

It is easy to imagine how Judith could be viewed as a dangerous woman. Max Thorek's erotic portrayal of the biblical heroine casts her as a femme fatale—traditionally a figure who feigns weakness and vulnerability but schemes to lure men to their ruin. Thorek, who specialized in female nudes and portraits, was a surgeon as well as an acclaimed photographer.

Benjamin Miller

American, 1877–1964

Judith in the Tent of Holofernes, 1928

Woodcut on Japan paper

Gift of John W. Ittmann P.84.58

Benjamin Miller frequently reinterpreted stories from the Bible, seeking to examine the anguished, emotional aspects of the age-old tragedies and traumas. His muscular Judith is a blunt representation of her sexual power, while also suggesting the psychological trauma resulting from her deed. The print's raw emotionalism is enhanced by the pitch-black setting and the forceful woodcut gouges that make up Holofernes's face and corpse.

Tina Blondell

American (born Austria), 1953

I'll Make You Shorter by a Head (Judith I), 1999

Watercolor and acrylic

Gift of Shelley Holzemer Gallery 2000.179

The Judith story endures, yielding fresh meaning as successive artists, particularly women, interpret it anew. Tina Blondell's Judith may initially appear to be just another seductress—a voluptuous villain with bedroom eyes, wild hair, and monstrous wings. But the work's title gives voice to the heroine and asserts the depth of her power and conviction. As with other women in her Fallen Angels series, the Minneapolis-based painter gave Judith spiral-patterned flesh, which might be interpreted as henna, lingerie, scars, tattoos, or even scales. The marks are a symbolic map of personal experiences revealed on her body, which, in Blondell's words, "reflect the gamble of transforming pain into beauty." Judith's wings further represent the culmination of her metamorphosis.