

The Michael Marks Charitable Trust Supplement

Recent acquisitions (2004–09) at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

IN THE FIVE years since our last acquisition Supplement in this Magazine in May 2004, the Ashmolean has been increasingly focusing its efforts on the delivery of the new galleries in the spectacular extension to the Museum by Rick Mather Architects. This new building, at a total cost of £61 million, is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Linbury Trust and hundreds of other donations great and small; it is due to open in November 2009 and will dramatically expand and improve the Ashmolean's displays, presenting the collections in an arrangement ('Crossing Cultures Crossing Time') emphasising cross-cultural connections and links over time, without of course losing our time- and culture-specific galleries. The ingeniously designed building contains, on the footprint of the old late nineteenth-century extension and connecting through to the Cast Gallery, thirty-nine new galleries, including four for special exhibitions, as well as an education centre, storage and study areas, conservation studios, teaching rooms, offices and Oxford's first rooftop restaurant. At the same time the galleries of Western Art in the original building by C.R. Cockerell are being reconfigured and refurbished and will include, among others, a gallery entitled 'Britain and Italy in the 18th century' (the David and Margita Wheeler gallery), which we believe to be the first permanent museum display in England devoted essentially to the Grand Tour.

Despite the concentration of our resources on achieving this transformation of the Museum, we have continued to collect over a wide variety of cultures and media. The Art Fund has, as ever, been a mainstay of our acquisitions and we are also warmly indebted to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Elias Ashmole Group, the Tradescant Group and the Friends of the Ashmolean, as well as private donors too numerous to thank here individually. In particular we have benefited from the systems of Acceptance in Lieu of Inheritance Tax and of tax-concessionary private treaty sales to museums, and we thank warmly the AIL Panel and the administrators of the schemes at the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. It may be noted here that American donors have been able to make donations of works of art to the Ashmolean through Oxford University's support charity incorporated in the USA, Americans for Oxford; and, unlike donors in the UK (as British law currently stands), they can claim a tax deduction on such gifts.

Alongside the items listed here, the Ashmolean has over this period continued systematically to build up its collections of modern and contemporary art in certain focused areas – notably Chinese paintings, British prints and drawings (including an archive of the graphic work of Tom Phillips, RA), studio ceramics and British silver.



I. *Music*, by Edward Burne-Jones (1833–98). 1877. Canvas, 67.7 by 43.5 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax on the estate of Miss Jean Fiora Preston and allocated to the Ashmolean Museum. (WA2008.15). *Music* was painted in 1877 for Burne-Jones's principal patron, William Graham, a wealthy India merchant and Liberal MP for Glasgow. The subject of the painting epitomises the artist's interest in the Aesthetic style in eschewing narrative content in favour of purely formal values. The intensely Italianate nature is also characteristic of Burne-Jones's work of this period.

A complete listing of recent acquisitions at the Ashmolean, together with basic information on and images of increasingly large areas of the collections, including all the Western paintings and the Italian and French drawings, is available on www.ashmolean.org/collections.

CHRISTOPHER BROWN

Director



II. Hair-ring. Late Bronze Age, c.1200–700 BC. Gold leaf on a metal core, diameter 2 cm. Found at Combe, Oxfordshire, in 1911. Presented by J.M. Joslin in memory of his father, John Joslin, and his grandfather, John Joslin. (AN2005.17). Rings like this, apparently for use as personal adornment, are recorded from Britain and Ireland; this is the first example found locally to be acquired by the Ashmolean.



III. The Wilshere Collection of thirty-six fragments of gold-glass and twenty-three sculpted reliefs and inscriptions. Fourth century AD. Acquired from the Governors of Pusey House, Oxford, with the aid of The Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and the Patrons, Friends, Young Friends and private benefactors of the Ashmolean. (AN2007.13; illustrated). The Wilshere Collection was formed at the end of the nineteenth century. All objects commemorate the dead, mostly of the fourth century AD, when Christianity was given legal status at Rome, but paganism and Judaism remained prominent. The Jewish memorials come from the Randanini Catacomb. Illustrated is the gold-glass base of a plain glass bowl, most likely deliberately broken at a funeral feast, the base preserved and subsequently embedded in the wall of the tomb as a permanent memorial to the deceased. Husband and wife are portrayed in contemporary dress at the centre. Radiating from them are Old and New Testament scenes: at the top, Christ instructs the paralytic to take up his bed and walk, then Lazarus is raised from the dead, Adam and Eve appear in the Garden of Eden, Abraham sacrifices Isaac, and Moses strikes the rock to bring forth water.



IV. Altar. First century AD. Marble, 66 cm. high. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax on the estate of Sir Howard Colvin and allocated to the Ashmolean. (AN2008.47). This altar was brought to England from Italy in the eighteenth century. It is inscribed in Latin with a dedication to the gods of the underworld by a certain Istimennia Primigenia, her husband, Murrius Primus, and members of their household, and was probably made in the first century AD. The reliefs carved on the sides are a meat cleaver and a steelyard for weighing goods. The family was probably in the meat trade. By 1785 the altar was to be found supporting a classical figure near the entrance of what was known as 'Pope's Grotto' in Twickenham. Sir William Stanhope had acquired the villa of the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744) in 1745 and enhanced it with classical additions. It comes from the collection of the architectural historian Sir Howard Colvin (1919–2007).



V. The Chalgrove II Hoard with coin of Domitianus II. 4,957 Roman base silver coins spanning 251 to 279 AD, in a Roman grey-ware jar. Acquired from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, with the aid of The Art Fund, the Headley Trust for Treasure, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Carl & Eileen Subak Family Foundation and the Friends of the Ashmolean. (HCR6365). The hoard, found less than ten miles from Oxford, contained a remarkable coin of an unknown Roman emperor of the early 270s AD called Domitianus. Brian Malin, who discovered the hoard with a metal detector in 2003, brought it in to the Ashmolean with admirable care and promptness. He found it only 100 feet away from another hoard ('Chalgrove I'), which he and other members of his family had unearthed fourteen years earlier.

VI. Ottoman embroidered wall-hanging. Turkey, sixteenth century. Linen with silk embroidery, 237 by 130 cm. Purchased with the aid of the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. (EA2007.104). This is an exceptionally fine example of Ottoman embroidery, intended to be displayed in interior spaces. Similar textiles appear in paintings as wall hangings or cushion covers. This piece is made up from three panels embroidered with pomegranates and tulips and its size suggests it was used as a wall hanging. The only other three-panelled Ottoman embroidery with this design is in Budapest.



VIII. *Chandikeshvara*. Tamilnadu, South India, late twelfth century. Bronze, 55 cm. high. Purchased in memory of J.C. Harle (Keeper of Eastern Art 1967–87), with the help of an anonymous benefactor. (EA2005.90). The youthful saint Chandikeshvara is venerated in South India as foremost among the devotees of Shiva. His image in bronze is often carried in procession, along with those of Shiva and his family, during the great annual temple festivals. In this highly sensitive bronze of the Chola period, Chandikeshvara stands with his hands joined in *anjali mudra*, the gesture of respectful greeting or adoration, while holding an axe in the crook of his arm. This purchase is a fitting memorial for the late James Harle, a leading authority on the art and architecture of South India.



VII. The mandala of Manjuvajra. Tibet, early fifteenth century. Gouache on cotton cloth, 49.5 by 41.3 cm. Purchased with funds provided by the Neil Kreitman Foundation in memory of Hyman and Irene Kreitman. (EA2007.246). This finely painted Tibetan Buddhist mandala – a cosmic palace in diagram form, peopled by Tantric deities – may have been produced by Newar artists from the Kathmandu valley in Nepal. Famous for the delicacy of their art, they are known to have produced related works for the Ngor monastery, south-west of Lhasa in Tibet. Originally used in monastic initiation rituals, this mandala is dedicated to Guhyasamaja–Manjuvajra, an aspect of Akshobhya, the ‘Imperturbable’ Buddha. Manjuvajra here presides at the centre of the cosmos, embracing his wisdom goddess (*prajna*) and thus embodying the secret union (*Guhyasamaja*) of wisdom and compassion as the means to enlightenment.



IX. *Musician in a landscape*. North India, Mughal, c.1575–80. Attributed to Basawan. Gouache with gold on paper, 9.6 by 6 cm. Purchased with funds provided by the Neil Kreitman Foundation in honour of Andrew Topsfield. (EA2008.81). A clean-shaven man wearing a fur hat of European style sits by a stream, his head inclined in reverie as he bows a *kamancheh* (a Persian stringed instrument). This early Mughal painting playfully combines the theme of musicianship with the conventional subject of a lone lover in a landscape and the more novel genre of the exotic *Firangi*, or European. It can be attributed to Basawan, a leading court artist during the reign of Akbar (1556–1605). Basawan refined his style through the study of European prints and paintings, which had begun to reach the Mughal court in growing numbers.



X. *A wind (Aeolus) unchained*, by Giulio Romano (1499–1546). Preparatory drawing for a fresco compartment in the Camera dei Venti at the Palazzo Te, Mantua, decorated in 1527–28. Pen, brown ink and wash over black chalk, pricked for transfer, 32.8 by 27.7 cm. Presented by Charlotte Gere in accordance with the wishes of the late John Gere, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, London. (WA2007.77). Giulio was a virtuoso draughtsman and this drawing displays the wiry pen lines and flowing rhythms characteristic of his mature style.



XI. *Study of a youth*, by Cristofano Allori (1577–1621). c.1615. Black chalk on off-white paper, 21.0 by 16.7 cm. Presented by Mary-Jane Harris of New York City, in honour of Timothy Wilson and Catherine Whistler, through Americans for Oxford. (WA2006.59). One of the most eloquent artists of his generation in Florence, Cristofano was admired for his graceful, lyrical style and his warm, rich colouring. This expressive study is for a figure in the painting of Michelangelo and the Muse of Poetry, part of the decoration of the Casa Buonarroti in Florence. The painting was begun in 1615 and completed by Cristofano's pupil Zanobi Rosi.



XII. Salver on foot. London, 1688–89; mark of William Gamble. Silver, diameter 24.1 cm. Presented by the Executors of Mrs Corinne Whiteley. (WA2004.97). The crisply preserved engraving, showing a fashionable lady, her page and a gentleman suitor surrounded by foliage with putti, birds and animals, is in a style strikingly reminiscent of contemporary English embroidery. This is the latest in a series of important additions to the Ashmolean's collection of English silver made possible by the generosity of the Whiteley family. A three-volume catalogue of the gold and silver in the Ashmolean by Timothy Schroder will be published in October 2009.



XIII. Ewer and basin. London 1592–93. Silver-gilt, diameter of basin, 41.2 cm; ewer, 29.8 cm. high. Maker's mark of IN or TN above a mullet. Formerly in the collection of Sir Ernest Cassel. Purchased (France Fund) through Sotheby's with the aid of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund and the Friends of the Ashmolean, with donations from Diane Bacon and Helen Smyth in memory of their grandfather A.H. Whiteley, Mr and Mrs Brian Wilson, Mr and Mrs Michael Pix, Lady Heseltine and other donors. (WA2005.131). The enamelled roundel on the basin has the arms of Richard Proctor, Master of the Merchant Tailors' Company, and his wife; in his will of 1610 he left this to his son Samuel, 'my Bason and Ewer of silver guilte'.



XIV. Tureen in the form of a boar's head. Chelsea porcelain factory, c.1755-59. Soft-paste porcelain, red anchor mark; 27 cm. high. Purchased by tax-concessionary private treaty sale through Christie's (Bouch, Madan, Jones, and Virtue-Tebbs funds), with the aid of the Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Ashmolean, Martin Foley, the Oxford Ceramics Group and numerous private donors. (WA2007.1). The Boar Tureen, one of which was described in a Chelsea sale catalogue of 1755 as 'a very curious Tureen in the form of a boar's head, and a beautiful dish to ditto with proper ornaments', is one of the most spectacular sculptural achievements in English porcelain. It is part of a uniquely historic assemblage, bought to furnish a house in Yorkshire shortly after 1760 by the family in whose possession most of the collection remains virtually intact. The collection has been on loan to the Ashmolean since 1993.



XV. Osprey. Meissen factory, modelled by J.J. Kändler (1706-75). 1731. Hard-paste porcelain, 54.5 cm. high. Presented by a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. (WA2008.61). This monumental sculpture in porcelain, modelled in 1731 by Johann Joachim Kändler, was part of an extraordinary 'menagerie' of hundreds of more-or-less life-size porcelain creatures commissioned by Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, for the Japanese Palace in Dresden. Most of the Japanese Palace creatures have remained in Dresden but some, of which this is one, have been sold at various times over the centuries. They are the most ambitious series of porcelain sculptures in the history of ceramics.



XVI. Maiolica dish with Alcyone and Ceyx. Italian, probably Pesaro, c.1500. Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 29.4 cm. Purchased (Madan Fund) with the aid of the Art Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Ashmolean and private donations. (WA2006.3). The dish shows a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: King Ceyx departs on a sea voyage on which he would be drowned and his wife Alcyone laments. The subject is based on a woodcut from an illustrated version of Ovid published in Venice in 1497. It is one of the earliest known examples of *istoriato* (narrative-painted) decoration on maiolica.



XVII. Jug painted with grotesques. London (Southwark), c.1635-40. Tin-glazed earthenware (delftware), 28 cm. high. Initialed on the neck with D over IE. Purchased at the sale at Christie's of works from the collection of the late Simon Sainsbury, with the aid of the Art Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Ashmolean, Martin Foley, Sir Harry Djanogly, the Oxford Ceramics Group and other donors. (WA2008.65). The English delftware industry was founded in the late sixteenth century partly by men from Antwerp, two of whom were sons of Guido di Savino, a potter from Castel Durante in Italy, who had settled in Antwerp by 1508. In the reigns of James I and Charles I several potteries were set up in South London, mainly run by immigrants. This jug, painted with the owners' initials and a rare example of London decoration in the Antwerp style, forms an eloquent bridge between Italian Renaissance maiolica and English delftware.



XVIII. *Triumph of Love*, by Titian (c.1485–1576). c.1545. Canvas mounted on panel, diameter 88.3 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the Ashmolean, hybrid purchase (Virtue–Tebbs, Madan and Russell Funds) with the assistance of the Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation), Daniel Katz Ltd, the Friends of the Ashmolean, the Tradescant Group, the Elias Ashmole Group, Michael Barclay, the Highfield family, the late Yvonne Carey, the late Felicity Rhodes and other private donations. (WA 2008.89). See the article by Catherine Whistler, with a technical appendix by Jill Dunkerton, in the August 2009 issue of *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*, pp.536–42.



XIX. *Portrait of a lady*, by Jan Cornelisz Verspronck (c.1606/9–62). Early 1640s. Canvas, 101.9 by 78.8 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the Ashmolean. (WA2004.102). Verspronck was a highly successful portraitist in Haarlem, although documentary evidence for his career is scarce and his date of birth is unknown. The son of a painter, he was powerfully influenced by Frans Hals in his early career. This portrait was probably painted just after 1640, when Verspronck was at the height of his powers. Although her identity is unknown, the sitter's jewels and costume, with its splendid 'millstone' ruff, testify to her high social standing.



XX. *Seated shepherd with cows and sheep in a meadow*, by Aelbert Cuyp (1620–91). c.1644. Panel, 48.3 by 74.3 cm. Signed lower right 'A. Cuyp'. Purchased under the tax-concessionary scheme for private sales to museums, with the assistance of the Art Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Ashmolean, the Tradescant Group, the Elias Ashmole Group and a private donation. (WA2004.123). Born in Dordrecht, Aelbert Cuyp was an enormously influential landscape painter. His work was greatly admired in Britain from the eighteenth century onwards and had an impact on artists such as Richard Wilson, Gainsborough, Constable and Turner. A relatively early work, this atmospheric and luminous pastoral scene reveals Cuyp's distinctive poetic feeling for landscape.



XXI. *Cicero and his friends, Atticus and Quintus, at his Villa at Arpinum*, by Richard Wilson (1713–82). c.1769–70. Canvas, 91.8 by 129.5 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the Ashmolean. (WA2007.155). This sophisticated landscape illustrates a passage from Cicero's *De Legibus*, recording a conversation between Cicero and his friends Atticus and Quintus in which Cicero advocated the delights of retiring into the country 'for undisturbed meditation, or uninterrupted reading or writing'. Wilson's patrons shared Cicero's enthusiasm for the country and identified his Italianate scenery with their own estates.



XXII. *Jerusalem*, by Edward Lear (1812–88). Signed in monogram and dated 'EL 1865'. Canvas, 81 by 161.6 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax on the estates of Captain and Mrs L.E.D. Walthall and allocated to the Ashmolean. (WA2006.26). It was not until 1858 that Lear achieved his life-long ambition to visit Palestine. He spent a fortnight making careful studies of Jerusalem from the surrounding hills. These formed the basis for five paintings, of which this is the largest and most magnificent. It was made for Samuel Price Edwards, a close personal friend of the artist, on his retirement from the Customs at Liverpool in 1865.



XXIII. *The Prospect*, by Samuel Palmer (1805–81). 1881. Watercolour and bodycolour over pencil on London board, 50.8 by 70.5 cm. Signed 'SAMUEL PALMER'. Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Headley Trust, the Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, the Friends of the Ashmolean and many private donations following a public appeal. (WA2005.165). The greatest achievement of Palmer's later years was the set of eight large watercolours illustrating Milton's poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. He completed the first of the series in 1868 and the last on his deathbed. *The Prospect*, seen at sunrise, illustrates lines 69–80 of *L'Allegro*, beginning 'Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures'. It is one of the most personal and poetic of Palmer's late watercolours and one of the last he completed: he was still working on it in February 1881, a few months before his death. The scene, although imaginary, combines reminiscences of Shoreham in the foreground; Naples in the panoramic view over the bay; and of the Italian landscape generally in the city on the gulf and the shimmering castle on the hilltop.



XXIV. *Saint Florent le Vieil*, by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851). c.1826–28. Watercolour and bodycolour on blue paper, 13.7 by 18.5 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax on the estate of Audrey Sale and allocated to the Ashmolean. (WA2006.199). Among the greatest treasures in the Ashmolean are the seventeen views on the Loire by Turner, given by John Ruskin in 1861. These come from a series of twenty-four watercolours made in preparation for the illustrations to the first volume of Turner's *Annual Tour*, published in 1833, of which twenty were engraved. *Saint Florent le Vieil* is another from the same series and shows the village of Saint Florent, midway between Angers and Nantes.



XXV. *Mönchroda*, by Lionel Feininger (1871–1956). Inscribed at lower centre 'MÖNCHRODA'. Dated, lower right in black ink, '6 Dez. 1922'. Signed lower left in black ink 'Feininger'. Pen and black ink and watercolour, 26 by 32 cm. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax on the estate of Sir James Colyer-Fergusson and allocated to the Ashmolean Museum. (WA2005.196). Soon after the First World War, Feininger became a member of the Novemberggruppe, where he met Walter Gropius. When Gropius founded the Bauhaus, he invited Feininger to take charge of printmaking. It was also Feininger who was responsible for the programmatic woodcut of the leaflet to promote the Bauhaus. Feininger retained, during his time at the Bauhaus, his interest in landscape, concentrating especially on the construction of vertical elements. This watercolour is a typical case, where he uses the tower of a church as a striking element to depict the view of a small village. Although the inscription gives a slightly different spelling, it is likely to depict the church of Münchenroda, near Jena.



XXVI. One of a pair of six-fold screens, by Watanabe Seitei (1851–1918). c.1900. Colours on silver-foiled paper in lacquer frame, 60 by 174 cm. Purchased (Story Fund) with the help of the Art Fund, the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of the Ashmolean. (EA2004.9). Seitei (also called Shotei) was an artist of great significance in late 19th-century Japan. In his work the birds and flowers of the Shijo school are combined with the new Nihonga manner of the Meiji era. Seitei's search for new means of expression led him to Europe to become the first Nihonga painter to study there in 1878. His works were exhibited in Paris (1878), Amsterdam (1883) and Chicago (1893), and his abilities as a draughtsman, colourist and designer made him very popular with European audiences. His work thus provided a valuable cultural interface between Japan and Europe and helped to make Japanese painting accessible to a European audience.



XXVII. Lacquer writing set. Tomita Koshichi (1854–1910). Japan, mid-1890s to early 1900s. Lacquer on wood, writing box: 22.5 by 24.7 5.5 cm.; document box: 41.5 by 35.5 15.7 cm. Purchased (Story Fund) with the help of the MLA/V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Art Fund and the Elias Ashmole Group. (EA2007.258–59). This fine example of Meiji lacquerwork fills a major gap in the Museum's otherwise strong collection of Meiji decorative arts. The writing case and document box were made by the Kyoto lacquer artist Tomita Koshichi in the late 1890s. The designs reflect the preoccupations of Japanese artists of the mid-Meiji period, who aimed to preserve Eastern traditions while exploring the potential of Western artistic conventions and painting methods.



XXVIII. *Redining*, by Jean Arp (1886–1966). 1960. Marble, 16.2 by 26 by 3.2 cm. Presented by the Trustees of Robert and Rena Lewin. (WA2007.2). This first work by Arp to enter the Ashmolean is a gift from the collection of Robert and Rena Lewin, collectors, dealers and long-time friends of the Ashmolean, in whose honour the new gallery for twentieth-century and contemporary art in the Ashmolean Development is named. In late works like this, Arp returned to various ideas he had explored earlier, such as the reclining figure or the organic forms that he had first used in his Surrealist work in the 1930s.