

Recent acquisitions (2005–14) at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO comprise two museums in two municipal parks, the de Young and the Legion of Honor, whose buildings and works of art belong to the city of San Francisco. The de Young was established in Golden Gate Park in 1895, and the Legion of Honor opened in Lincoln Park in 1924. Each building has its own character and focus for its collections. Not every aspect of the Fine Arts Museums' broad holdings is illustrated by the recent acquisitions presented here, but the range is indicated: from an ancient Arctic ivory figure, a relief fragment from Persepolis and a native North American earthenware vessel of c.1100, through European and American painting and decorative arts, to a Nkundu figure from the early twentieth century and couture from 1967 inspired by African art.

The de Young opened as the Memorial Museum in March 1895 in the Fine Arts building, a legacy of the California Midwinter International Exposition of the previous year. The newspaper publisher Michael H. de Young (1849–1925) had been the fair's director general and championed the new museum, which featured an eclectic array of exhibits acquired from the exposition. Early on, de Young saw the need for expansion and ensured that resources were available. By the 1920s, the museum's attendance equalled that of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the three-phase construction of a larger museum had begun. The architect Louis C. Mullgardt (1866–1942) was inspired by the sixteenth-century architecture of Toledo, Spain, and by January 1925 the new museum was completed. Two months earlier, in November 1924, city voters had approved a measure to establish a Board of Trustees, and to officially name the new institution the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum. De Young died the following February.

While the museum matured, its collection was refined to retain the most compelling of the international works, and to add works of art from the past and present. Shortly after the centennial of the de Young, irreversible structural damage caused by the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 led to the replacement of the old building with one that is fully up to date in its facilities. The new de Young, designed by the Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron (est. 1978), was built with funds contributed by more than 7,000 donors and opened in October 2005.

The de Young currently holds the Museums' collections of American painting, sculpture and decorative arts from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries; art from Africa, Oceania and the Americas; costumes and textiles; photography; and international contemporary art.

The Legion of Honor was a gift from Adolph (1857–1924) and Alma de Bretteville Spreckels (1881–1968) to the city of San Francisco and dedicated to the 3,600 Californian soldiers killed in the First World War. It opened on Armistice Day 1924 and reflects its founders' passions for European art and culture. At the behest of Mrs Spreckels, the building designed by George Applegarth (1875–1972) was a three-quarter-scale replica of the Hôtel de Salm, the Neo-classical eighteenth-century Parisian residence that became the headquarters for the French Légion d'Honneur under Napoleon I. While the overall appearance of the museum



I. Relief of a gift bearer. Persian, Achaemenid Empire, Persepolis, Palace of Darius or Xerxes, c.490–470 BC. Bituminous limestone, 21.6 by 19.1 by 10.2 cm. Museum purchase, gift of Lisa Sardegna, Albert P. Wagner Bequest Fund, William A. Stimson, Friends of Ian White Endowment Income Fund, Unrestricted Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Volunteer Council Art Acquisition Fund, Ancient Art Trust Fund and Auction Proceeds, Mrs. John N. Rosekrans Jr., Sande Schlumberger, Endowment Fund in Honor of Francesca and Thomas Carr Howe, Walter H. and Phyllis J. Shorestein Foundation Fund, Tish and James Brown, and various tribute funds, 2008.1.

This relief comes from Persepolis, ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire that flourished in present-day Iran from 550 to 330 BC, when the empire was destroyed by Alexander the Great. The architecture of the magnificent palaces that were built here was decorated with sculpted reliefs in stone. This exquisitely carved example shows a Persian gift bearer in profile, with curls of his beard, moustache and hair peeking out from under his *bashlyk* headdress.

remains largely unchanged today, a multi-year refurbishment and expansion were completed in November 1995.

The Museums' holdings at the Legion of Honor include European painting, sculpture and decorative arts; ancient art from the Mediterranean basin; and the most extensive collection of works on paper in the American West, the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, which contains more than 90,000 objects.

Access to the collections is constantly improving. 'Explore the Art', an online search tool, recently has been launched. At the Legion of Honor, the unveiling of the restored eighteenth-century Salon Doré from the Hôtel de La Trémoille – a Parisian Neo-classical period room – and reinstallations of French and British eighteenth-century galleries are imminent. At the de Young in May 2014, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco celebrate a gift of 185 objects of native North American art from the Thomas W. Weisel family, which adds a significant collection, of a range and quality hitherto unrepresented, to the department of the arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas.

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Director, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



II. (Upper left). *Saint Julian*, by Carlo Dolci (1616–87). c.1640s. Oil on panel, oval, 29.8 by 21.9 cm. Gift of Phoebe Cowles and Robert Girard, 2014.10. Carlo Dolci probably based this image on a figure in a large and well-known processional panel by Cristofano Allori (1608; Seminario Maggiore, Florence). However, given its scale and intimate tone, Dolci's painting was almost certainly intended for private devotion in a domestic setting. The modelling of the ear and hands is carefully rendered, and the curving lines of the figure and drapery folds echo the work's oval format.

III. (Lower left). *Ruins with Sybil*, by Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691–1765). 1731. Oil on canvas, 64.8 by 49.5 cm. Signed lower right: 'I.P. Panini'. Bequest of Diana Dollar Knowles, 2013.45.2.

This composition is one of a pair (its companion is *Ruins with Prophet*) of *capricci*, architectural fantasies that portray classical ruins embellished with figures and animals. Dated in the year that Panini was elected to the French Academy in Rome, these pendants reflect the eighteenth-century taste for antiquity and picturesque ruins.

IV. (Below). *Sunflowers along the Seine*, by Gustave Caillebotte (1848–94). c.1885–86. Oil on canvas, 90.2 by 71.1 cm. Bequest of Diana Dollar Knowles, 2013.45.3.

In this composition, a frieze of golden sunflowers dwarfs the view of the river, whose surface is conveyed through rhythmic brushwork. An accomplished sailor and boat designer, Gustave Caillebotte purchased a home on the Seine at Petit-Gennevilliers, near Argenteuil, which was a popular site for regattas. The prominently featured flowers and lively colour palette suggest a passion for the garden that Caillebotte cultivated at Petit-Gennevilliers, where he often painted *en plein air*.



V. (Right). *The Absinthe Drinkers (Les déclassés)*, by Jean-François Raffaëlli (1850–1924). 1881. Oil on canvas, 108 by 108 cm. Signed lower right: 'J.F. RAFFAËLLI'. Museum purchase, Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Income Fund, Jay D. and Clare C. McEvoy Endowment Fund, tribute funds, Friends of Ian White Endowment Fund, Unrestricted Art Acquisition Endowment Income Fund, Grover A. Magnin Bequest Fund, and the Yvonne Cappeller Trust, 2010.16. *The Absinthe Drinkers* caused a sensation when it was exhibited in 1881 at the sixth Impressionist group show. Jean-François Raffaëlli's focus on contemporary subject-matter – ordinary people caught in everyday activities of modern urban life – is characteristic of the 'New Painting'. Raffaëlli's frank portrayal of two idle men as they drink absinthe captures the dispiriting quality of the Parisian *banlieue*, the marginal areas beyond the city then being transformed by industrialisation and urban sprawl.



VI. (Below). *Sewing Party at Loctudy*, by Édouard Vuillard (1868–1940). 1912. Distemper on paper, mounted on canvas, 110 by 158 cm. Signed lower right: 'E Vuillard'. Gift of Diane B. Wilsey, 2013.68. This view of Édouard Vuillard's inner circle on the terrace of a house in Loctudy, in the south of Brittany, is one of leisurely companionship. The gathering includes the actress Marthe Mellot and her husband, Alfred Natanson, publisher of *Revue blanche*, who holds their daughter Denise. Vuillard's muse Lucy Hessel is bent over her sewing, and the family dog, 'Loc' (Loctudy), is depicted in the foreground.





VII. *Migration*, by Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000). 1947. Egg tempera on board, 50.8 by 61 cm. Museum purchase, American Art Trust Fund, and Dr. Leland A. and Gladys K. Barber Fund, 2010.1. (© 2014 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York).

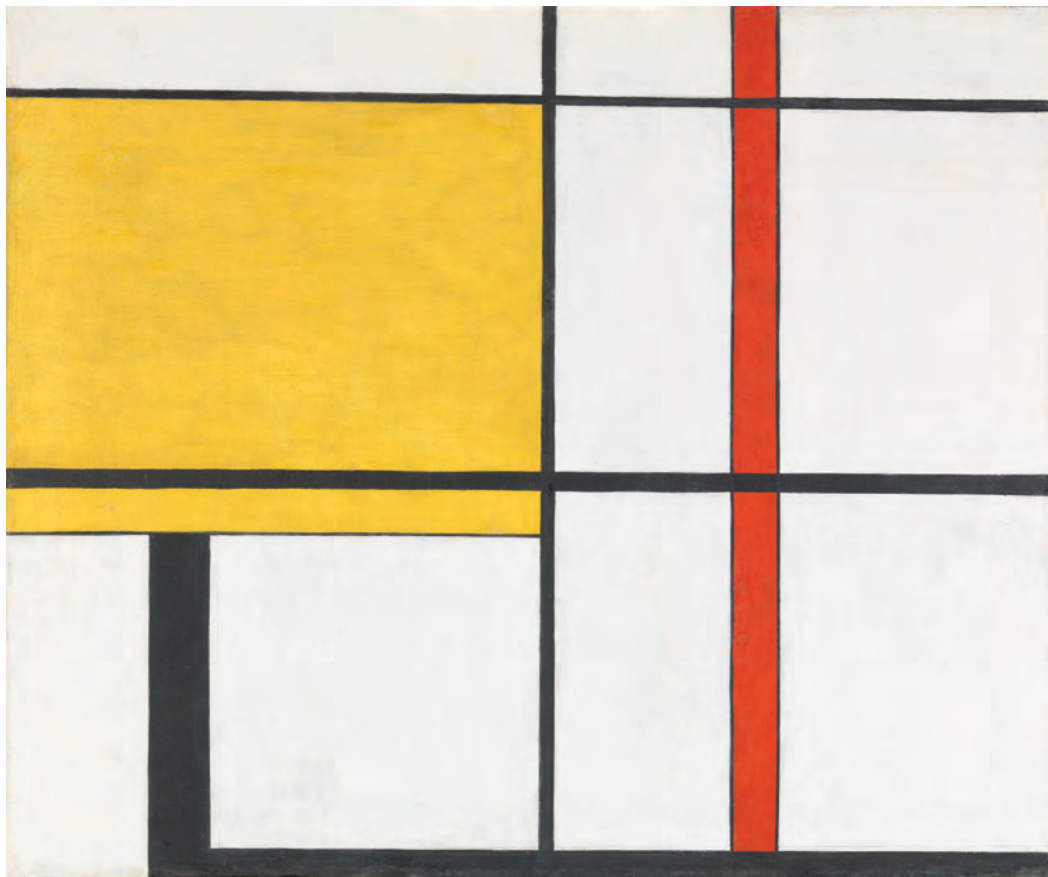
Migration is one of ten paintings commissioned by the photographer Walker Evans for a 1948 article in *Fortune* magazine titled 'In the Heart of the Black Belt'. Jacob Lawrence's scene of Southerners waiting on a train platform reprises the theme of his sixty-panel narrative cycle of paintings *Migration of the Negro* (1941), in which he explored the subject of the northward exodus between the World Wars of nearly two million African Americans.



VIII. *The Last Civil War Veteran*, by Larry Rivers (1923–2002). 1961. Oil on canvas, 209.6 by 163.8 cm. Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Acquisitions, 2009.13. (Art © Estate of Larry Rivers / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY). Larry Rivers was one of several Pop artists whose work blurred the line between fine art and popular culture. This painting was inspired by a photograph published in a 1959 article in *LIFE* magazine titled 'The Last Survivor of the Civil War'. The Confederate and Union flags, once carried by opposing armies, are here symbolically united in the context of the modern civil rights era.

IX. *Second Theme #272*, by Burgoyne Diller (1906–65). c.1934–36. Oil and water-based media on canvas, 50.8 by 61 cm. Gift of David L. Davies and John D. Weeden, 2013.21.10. (Art © Estate of Burgoyne Diller / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY).

The participants in the American Abstract Artists group, founded in 1936, many of whom lived or studied abroad, were deeply influenced by European modernists such as Juan Gris, Wassily Kandinsky, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. This is particularly evident in the work of Burgoyne Diller, whose *Second Theme #272* incorporates a palette of primary colours and a grid-like composition inspired by the De Stijl artists Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg and the Russian Constructivist Kazimir Malevich.



X. *Lettre sur les aveugles II*, by Frank Stella (b. 1936). 1974. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 361 by 361 cm. Museum purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions, 2013.1. (© Frank Stella / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York).

Frank Stella famously banished illusionistic space and pictorial or narrative allusions in his early *Black Paintings*, asserting that a painting was 'a flat surface with paint on it – nothing more'. Indeed, the square format of this later piece, from his *Concentric Square* series, avoids any association with landscapes (horizontal) or figures (vertical). However, its colour spectrum and grey scale lend some spatial extent to the work, resonating with the three-dimensional relief paintings that the artist also began to make in the 1970s.





XI. (Left). *Akonkromfi* (royal chair). Ghana, Akan people, nineteenth/early twentieth century. Wood, leather and brass, 101.6 by 71.1 by 73.7 cm. Museum purchase, Robert T. Wall and Margaret Rinkevich, 2013.15. (Photograph by John Westhafer).

Akonkromfi from the Asante subgroup of the Akan in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are a prestigious part of chiefly regalia. This rare example has a back of elaborately carved openwork and is richly studded with brass tacks, sheets and finials. The 'knots of wisdom' (*nyansapo*) motif along the front and back struts expresses the importance of this quality in Asante leadership, while the numerous animals, including leopards and snakes, reflect Asante proverbs conveying personal advice, popular wisdom or moral conduct.

XII. (Lower left). Lidded vessel in the form of a turtle shell. Mexico or Guatemala, Central Lowlands, Maya, 350–450 AD. Earthenware, 19.1 by 39.7 by 39.7 cm. Gift of Gail and J. Alec Merriam in memory of Merle Greene Robertson, 2011.55.4a–b.

This Early Classic blackware lidded vessel is a prime example of how Maya artists created sophisticated works that retold religious narratives and served to connect the realms of art, iconography and written language. Its domed lid evokes the form of a turtle shell, which in Maya cosmology represented the surface of the earth. The small effigy heads can be read as birds, a macaw and a quetzal, perhaps metaphorically referring to the sacred 'Macaw Mountain' known from hieroglyphic texts.

XIII. (Below). Vessel. Mimbres (New Mexico, United States), c.1000–1150. Earthenware with pigment, 11.4 by 27.9 cm. Gift of the Thomas W. Weisel Family to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2013.76.168.

In the eleventh century a group of potters and painters created the distinctive Mimbres style, now recognised as one of the most innovative artistic traditions of the ancient Americas. The vessels are typically painted in black against a white background, with images ranging from geometric designs to multi-figure compositions. This example combines both, using the edge of a geometric pattern to define a horizon line for the animal above.





XIV. (Left). Figure. Old Bering Sea I (Alaska), Siberian Yupik, Okvik period, third century BC–second century AD. Walrus tusk, 15.2 by 4.5 by 2.9 cm. Bequest of Thomas G. Fowler, 2007.21.208.

Ancient ivory figures from Punuk Island, just off Saint Lawrence Island, are among the most important surviving works of art from the ancient Arctic. The focus of this enigmatic figure is on the face, with its carved eyes, nose and mouth. Other incisions on the face may signify tattoos, while the engravings around the neck and crown might indicate garments. The body forms a compressed, inverted triangle without articulated limbs, and may have been made in this shape to be staked into the ground.

XV. (Centre). Male figure. New Guinea, East Sepik Province, lower Sepik River, middle Yuat River, Biwat village, Biwat people, fifteenth century or later. Wood and pigment, 170.2 by 40.6 by 38.1 cm. Museum purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions, L05.1.15. (Photograph © 2006 by John Bigelow Taylor and Dianne Dubler; www.johnbigelowtaylor.com).

This commanding male figure represents a mythical giant and served as a protective guardian for a family group of the Biwat people from New Guinea, who, along with adorning and worshipping the sculpture, used it to bring success in hunting and gathering. Carbon-14 testing indicates that this and other Biwat artworks could date to the fifteenth century. These pieces were unknown in the West until the 1950s.

XVI. (Right). *Efomba* (commemorative figure). Congo, Nkundu (formerly Ngata) people, early twentieth century. Wood, pigment and fibre, 102.4 by 24.1 by 21 cm. Gift of Richard Scheller, 2013.78.5. (Photograph by Robert Kato).

Burial practices among the Nkundu people during the early twentieth century included the creation and use of elongated and decorated figurative coffins that memorialised important men and women. Among the very small corpus of related works from the same period are commemorative figures in the same form that may have been placed above graves or kept in houses. Female figures are exceedingly rare. This example has distinctive geometric designs painted on her body and a coiffure of fibres.



XVII. House altar. Germany, Munich, c.1760. Workshop of Jacob and Alois Wolfgang Gerstens (active mid-eighteenth century). Painted and gilded wood, 225 by 102 by 63 cm. Crucifixion group. Germany, Nymphenburg, c.1756–61. Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory (est. 1747); Franz Anton Bustelli (1723–63), modeller. Skull impressed with initials: *FB*. Hard-paste porcelain, overall: 225 by 102 by 63 cm. European Decorative Arts Fund, 2013.30. (Photograph by Matthew Hollow).

The crucifixion group in this house altar is a masterpiece by Franz Anton Bustelli, one of Europe's greatest porcelain modellers. Bustelli rose to prominence in 1754 at the Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory, which, under the influence of the Bavarian court, strove to raise the artistry of ceramic sculpture to the level of marble and bronze. This example is the only crucifixion group of this model still housed in its original cabinet. Such altars were made for the private devotions of high-ranking ecclesiastics or princes.



XVIII. Coventry *secrétaire à abattant* (fall-front writing desk). France, Paris, 1763. Bernard II Vanrisamburgh (known as B.V.R.B.; after 1696–c.1766), *ébéniste* (cabinetmaker). Stamped: *B.V.R.B.* and *JME*. Marquetry of tulipwood, kingwood and *bois satiné* (bloodwood) on an oak carcase, gilt bronze, silvered bronze, steel, red griotte marble and silk, 131 by 104 by 44 cm. Museum purchase, European Art Trust Fund and gift of Mrs. Margaret G. Hindes Molarsky in memory of Barrett G. Hindes, by exchange, 2010.35.

This *secrétaire à abattant* was one in a series by Bernard II Vanrisamburgh, perhaps the greatest *ébéniste* under Louis XV. Designed in the mid-century Rococo style, it is decorated with lively floral marquetry and framed with intricate gilt-bronze mounts. From inscriptions under the drawers, we know it was made by the order of the Paris dealer Simon-Philippe Poirier and sold to the 6th Earl of Coventry, whose country house was Croome Court, Worcestershire.



XIX. *Déjeuner chinois réticulé* (tea and coffee service). France, Sèvres Manufactory (est. 1756), marks for 1839 and 1842. Pierre Huard (active 1811–47), decorator; Jacinthe Régnier (active 1825–63), designer. Hard-paste porcelain, enamel colours and gilding, overall: 27.3 by 50.2 by 50.2 cm. Museum purchase, European Art Trust Fund, K. Hart Smith Bequest, Ruth L. and Alfred B. Koch Trust, Hildegard Seidel Bequest, European Decorative Arts Council, San Francisco Ceramic Circle, various tribute funds, Mrs. Clarence Sterling Postley, funds in memory of Nini Tobin Martin, Loretta Beckman-Carr Bequest, and Fine Arts Museums Foundation Auction Proceeds, 2009.11.1–10.

Made to the order of King Louis-Philippe as a present for Jean-Jacques-Régis de Cambacérès, an eminent French lawyer and peer, this elaborate breakfast set is connected with the French royal tradition of sumptuous diplomatic gifts. Inspired by examples of Chinese porcelain, the decoration of this service is characterised by reticulation – a complex piercing of delicate patterns into the porcelain's outer shell – and equally intricate painted decoration showing various motifs modelled after Chinese precedents.



XX. *Salt Flats at Le Croisic*, by Lambert Doomer (1624–1700). c.1671–73. Brown ink and brown and grey washes on ledger paper, mounted on cream laid paper, 24 by 41 cm. Museum purchase, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts Endowment Fund and gift of the Graphic Arts Council, 2012.8.

Lambert Doomer documented his many travels with topographically accurate sketches that he later turned into finished watercolours. This view represents the salt flats in the Breton fishing town of Le Croisic, where he spent time in 1645. Nearly thirty years later, he produced this watercolour on a sheet of ruled ledger paper, showing the evaporation ponds where sea salt was crystallised and a sky filled with subtle washes evoking the changeable light and atmosphere.

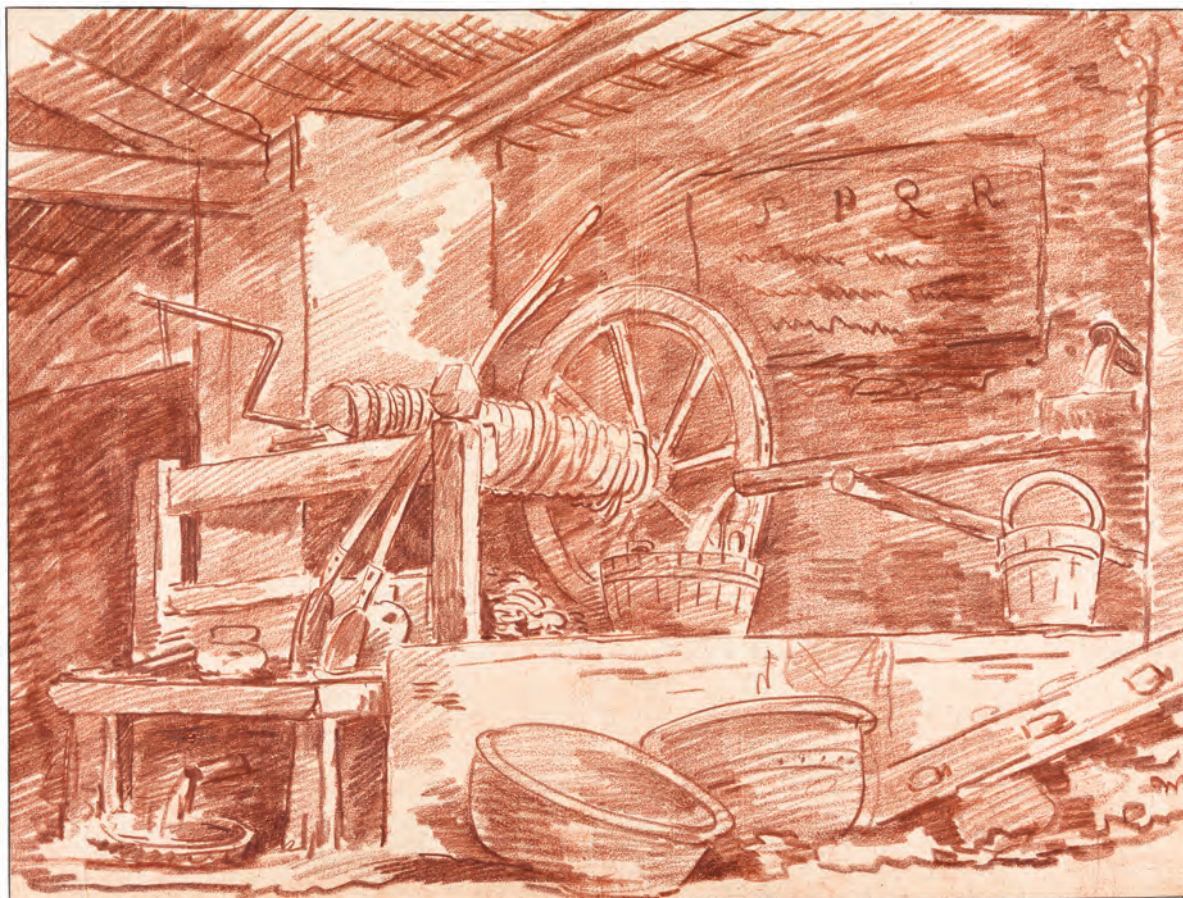
XXI. *Laundry Room Interior*, by Hubert Robert (1733–1808). c.1759–60. Red chalk, 38.8 by 51.3 cm.

Museum purchase, Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Income Fund, 2014.3.

During an extended stay in Rome, Hubert Robert devoted considerable energy to recording his surroundings, often using the medium of red chalk.

Beyond his many representations of gardens and ancient ruins, he produced a small number of drawings of domestic and agricultural machinery.

A study of the laundry facilities in a dark Roman cellar, this drawing once belonged to Louis-Marie-Joseph Morel d'Arleux (1755–1827), the founding curator, from 1797 to 1827, of the Musée du Louvre's Cabinet des dessins.





XXII. (Above). *Gottardo Piazzoni in His Studio*, by Ansel Adams (1902–84). 1932. Gelatin silver print, 17.8 by 23.2 cm. Museum purchase, Pritzker Fund for Photography in memory of John E. Buchanan, Jr., 2012.5. (© 2014 The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust).

Best known for his dramatic photographs of the western American landscape, Ansel Adams also undertook portrait commissions. This photograph shows the Swiss-born painter Gottardo Piazzoni (1872–1945) at work on *The Land*, one of two panoramic five-panel mural suites (the other is *The Sea*) that were created for the San Francisco Public Library and now hang in the de Young.

XXIII. (Opposite page, upper left). *Two Ladies at the Automat N.Y.C.*, by Diane Arbus (1923–71). 1966. Gelatin silver print, 40.3 by 40.3 cm. Gift of David L. Davies and John D. Weeden, 2011.68.1. (© The Estate of Diane Arbus, L.L.C.).

Diane Arbus famously remarked of her photographs: 'For me the subject is always more important than the picture. And more complicated. [. . .] I really believe there are things which nobody would see unless I photographed them'. Arbus was unapologetically attracted to the interior lives and private realities of her subjects, such as those shown here. She added, 'What I'm trying to describe is that it's impossible to get out of your skin and into somebody else's. [. . .] That somebody else's tragedy is not the same as your own'.

XXIV. (Opposite page, upper right). Evening dress, designed by Yves Saint Laurent (1936–2008). Spring/Summer 1967. Beige silk and golden-brown raffia; applied wood and brass beads, 83.8 by 45.7 by 5.1 cm. Gift of Mrs. John N. Rosekrans Jr., 2012.42.138.

Yves Saint Laurent's seminal presentation 'L'Afrique' was the first widely acclaimed haute couture collection to be inspired by Sub-Saharan African art and dress. For this short evening dress, the French atelier Lanel embroidered a lattice of wooden and brass beads trimmed by a raffia fringe. This incorporation of such non-traditional materials in couture craftsmanship achieved a distinctively 'exotic' effect that motivated future designers to follow Saint Laurent's lead by seeking inspiration in foreign cultures.

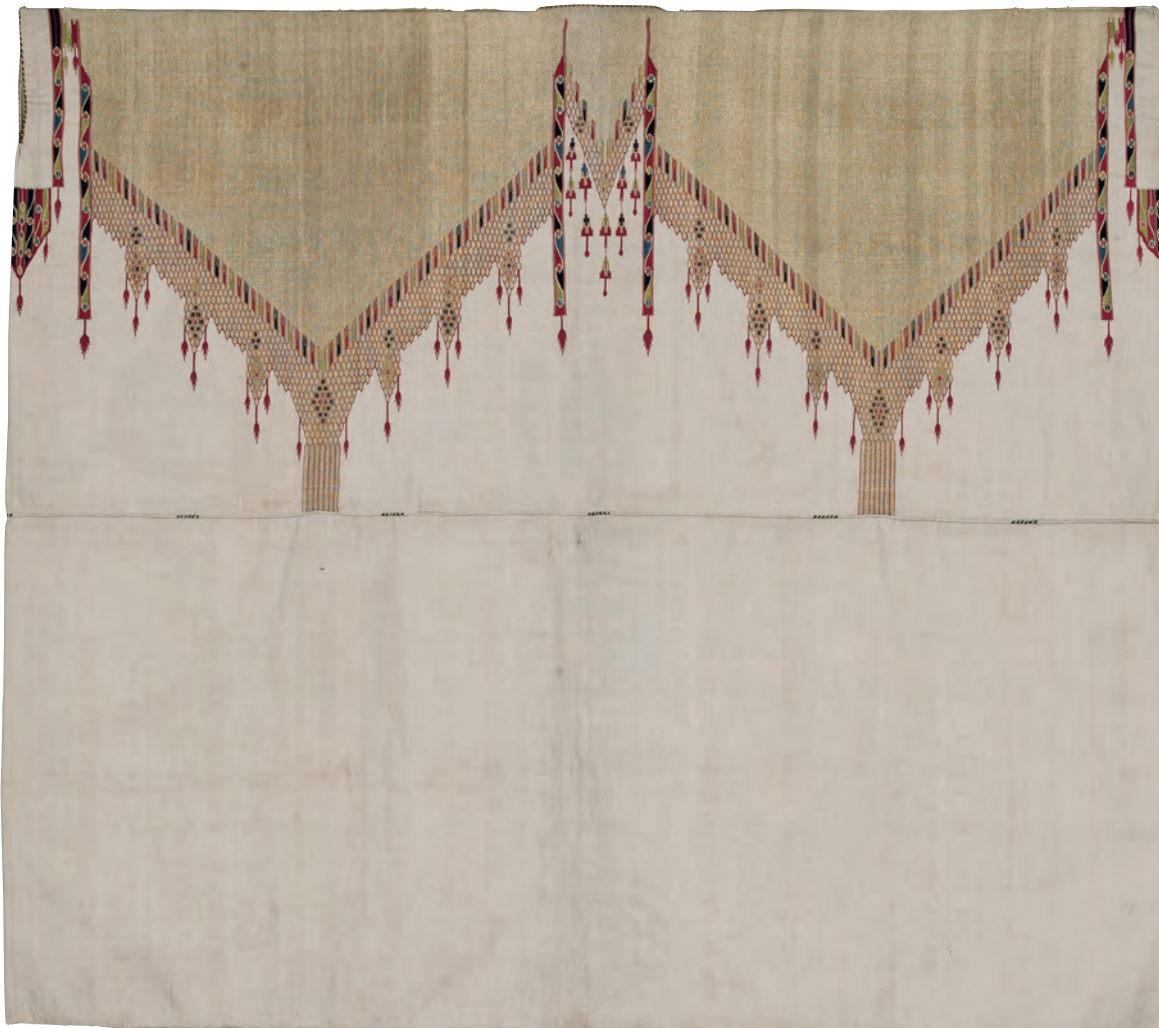
XXV. (Opposite page, lower left). *Untitled (seated woman wearing polka-dot blouse)*, by Richard Diebenkorn (1922–93). 1967. Lithograph, 55.9 by 38.4 cm. Museum purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions, 2014.1.91. (© 2014 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation. All rights reserved).

This lithograph is one of 128 prints recently acquired from the artist's family to form the most complete holdings of Richard Diebenkorn's extensive graphic *œuvre*. One of several unique prints in the acquisition, this impression was probably created by the artist at San Francisco's Collector's Press. Composed almost entirely in rich black lithographic ink washes, it is one of the last figurative prints Diebenkorn completed before he moved to Los Angeles, where he returned to abstraction and began to develop his Ocean Park style.

XXVI. (Opposite page, lower right). *Litho #1 (Waves #1)*, by Willem de Kooning (1904–97). 1960. Lithograph, 116.4 by 80.6 cm. Museum purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions, 2011.12. (© 2014 The Willem de Kooning Foundation / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York).

Willem de Kooning's first lithograph is considered a watershed in the history of American printmaking: it was created at a time when fine-art lithography in the United States was in its nascent stages of development and most of the artist's fellow New York School painters had little interest in the medium. De Kooning was persuaded to produce this print during a visit to the San Francisco Bay Area, marking the beginning of his interest in lithography that continued through the rest of his life.





XXVII. *Aba* or *abaya* (man's robe). Syria, possibly Aleppo region, nineteenth century. Wool, silk and metallic threads; weft-faced plain weave, slit-tapestry weave, 133 by 149 cm. Museum purchase, Textile Arts Council Endowment Fund, 2013.9. The most important garment worn by men among the nomadic Arabs of the Syrian desert, the *aba* (or *abaya*) typifies the use of uncut cloth in dress. The expansive use of luxury materials in this oversized robe – white sheep's wool patterned with silk and metallic threads – signifies the high status of the wearer. Its imagery, which relates to both Coptic tunics and kilims from Anatolia, reflects Syria's historically significant position at the crossroads of central Asia and northern Africa.



XXVIII. Wearing blanket (first-phase chief's blanket). Navajo (Southwestern United States), c.1830. Hand-spun wool; plain weave, tapestry weave, diagonal-join tapestry weave, eccentric weft, twining and tassels, 131.4 by 176.5 cm. The Weisel Family Art Foundation, L12.103.18. This exemplary weaving was acquired by George Horace Lorimer (1867–1937), editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, during one of his frequent visits to the Navajo reservation in the early twentieth century. Blankets of this style are referred to as first-phase chiefs' blankets, but the title is a misnomer: the Navajo had no chiefs. Worn as symbols of power and influence, these textiles were important objects for trade with other Native American tribes.