



GREENWICH
Decorative Arts
SOCIETY

Fall Newsletter 2019

The GDAS Board looks forward to a special year of learning about the decorative arts and sharing our interests. We appreciate our enthusiastic and discerning members!

I would like to highlight the members of the Program Committee, who put together our lectures. These members pool a lot of knowledge, experience and connections. They start early in the fall discussing the programs for the following year. They are already at work on 2020-2021, which will be our thirty-fifth anniversary.

The Program Committee seeks to bring world-class scholars, writers and curators who can connect with us. They try to cover a varied representation of the decorative and fine arts - painting, drawing, photography, interior design, fashion, costumes, porcelain, furniture, silver, sculpture and architecture.



Our 2019-2020 Program Committee members are Chair Betty Johnson, Cyndy Anderson, Cynthia Herbert, Helen Kippax, Adele Raspe, Barbara Reibel, Natalie Robinson, Eleanor Sabo, Barbara Freeman emeritus, and myself, Karen Handal.

I reached out to them to share with us "what art they enjoyed this summer."
Here are some of the responses.



Adele went to see "Bruegel Rediscovered" at the Kasteel Van Gaasbeek (Gaasbeek Castle) in Belgium.

The exhibition explored the way in which modern artists handled Bruegel's artistic legacy in the period between and after the wars. The castle, now a national museum, contains a collection of many objects from Bruegel's time.

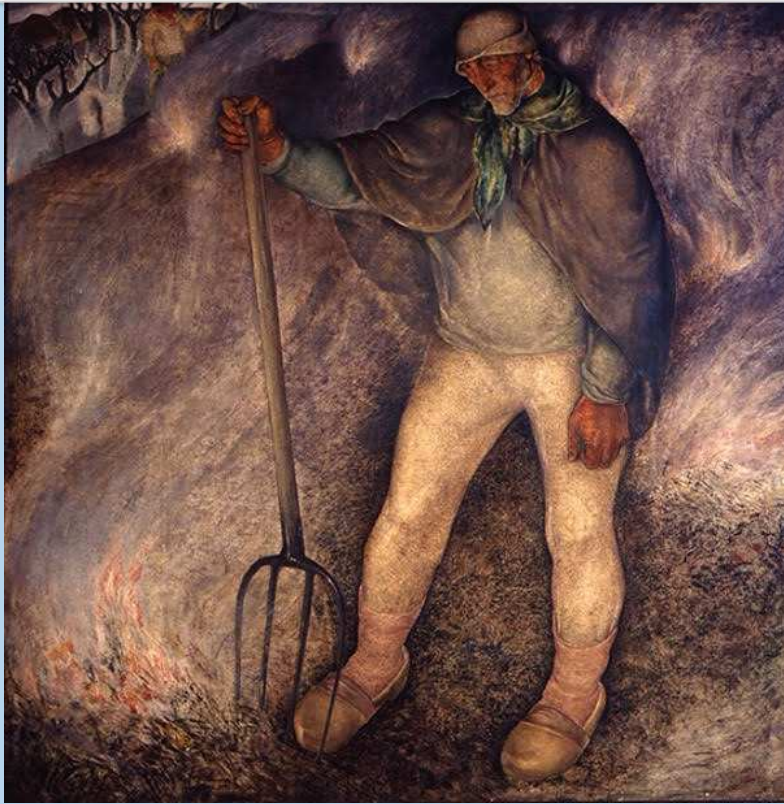


[Gaasbeek Castle](#) sits in a magnificent landscape.



The castle is located in a lush park of over 123 acres, with a beautiful chapel (above), charming parks, a lake and a museum garden which provides an overview of forgotten vegetables, fruit and pruning techniques. It's known as the most romantic castle in Flanders.

Isn't it enchanting?



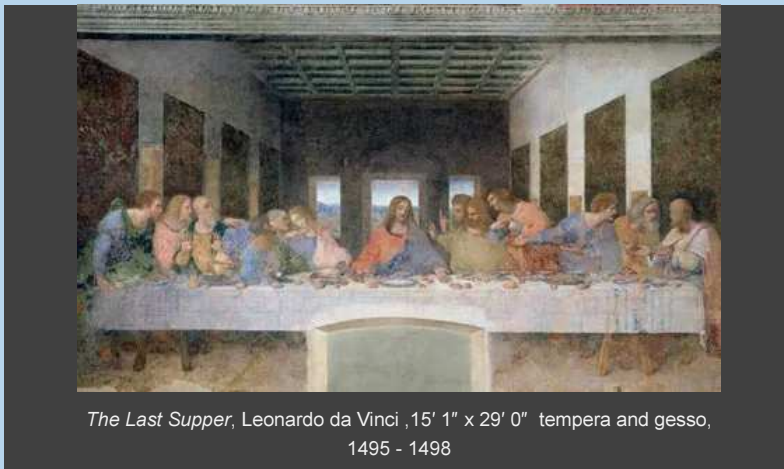
Anto Carte, *L'Homme à la fourche* (1924)
("Man with a Pitchfork")

Collection de la Province de Hainaut - Dépôt au BPS22, Charleroi (B)

Above is one of Adele's favorite paintings in the exhibition,
by expressionist Belgian painter Anto Carte (1886 - 1954)



*From Belgium with Adele
we travel to Italy with Nancy.*



The Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci, '15' 1" x 29' 0" tempera and gesso,
1495 - 1498

Nancy writes:

"In June, I went to Milan. It is, of course, a city mostly known as the financial and

fashion capital of Italy, but it does have some 'most see's' for those of us interested in art. Of course, the premier artwork is Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, painted on a wall in the large refectory of the convent attached to the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. I remember when people were discouraged from visiting it, as it had deteriorated so much that it bore little resemblance to the original.

Now it is again a masterpiece as it underwent a 20 year renovation, which ended in 1999. Pinin Brambilla Barcilon, an art restorer and her team, removed centuries of damage and with exhaustive research reproduced, as best they could, the colors, perspective and key features that were in the original painting."



"The result is a startlingly luminous mural, showcasing the facial expressions of the apostles in the moment when they first heard from Jesus that one of them would betray him. Only about 20 people are allowed in the room every 15 minutes and reservations have to be made well in advance of your visit."

Nancy continues:

"The Duomo di Milano must have one of most striking facades of any cathedral in the world: a massive glowing pink-tinged white marble Gothic building sitting on the side of an equally large square. The best part is that one is also able to see this beautiful building from its roof. (I took a small elevator to the top!)

I don't know of another cathedral that allows people to clamber over its rooftops, but it is an excellent way to see the hundreds of statues, gargoyles and spires that cover its facade. ...and to think about the talented (and brave!) artisans who created them centuries before the invention of modern machinery."



"Here is picture I took while up on Duomo roof!"

"Milan's most important museum is the Pinacoteca di Brera. It is in a lovely 17th century former Jesuit convent, which also houses other small cultural organizations. It is fun to go to a museum that one has never been to before and discover some admired paintings that we remember from distant art history classes."



"Here I rediscovered Carravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*, (above)
Bellini's *Pieta* and Mantegna's *Lamentation Over the Dead Christ*."



"I also saw an unfamiliar painting: *The Kiss* by Francesco Hayez, which, I learned, is one of the most romantic paintings in Italy and also has a hidden patriotic meaning, which made it an icon of the unification of Italy in the mid 19th century."





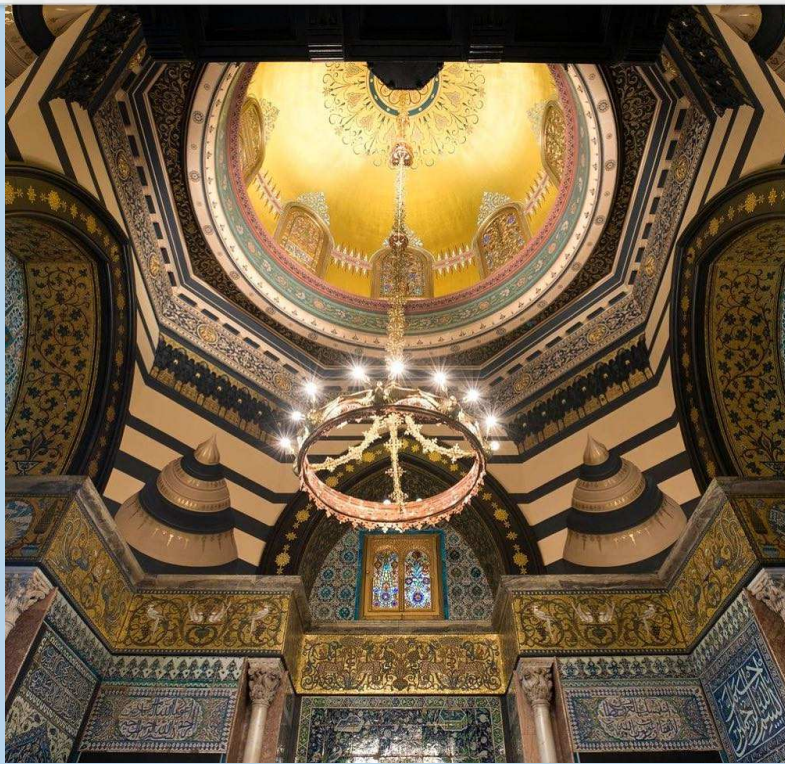
*From Italy with Nancy
we travel to London with Cyndy.*



Is this perhaps the most jaw-dropping room in London?
Leighton House Museum in London, The Arab Hall



The hall was based on the reception room at the twelfth-century palace of La Zisa at Palermo in Sicily. It was built to showcase Leighton's collection of 16th and 17th century Islamic tiles. Every inch of the walls, floor and ceiling contribute to the wonderful ambience, with mosaic floors, a gold mosaic frieze running around the walls, elaborate alcoves with views over the garden and, in the centre, a small floor-level fountain trickling into a yard-wide pool



Our First Vice President Cyndy Anderson lived in London and sends friends to her favorite places, one of which is Leighton House. A number of Program Committee members have made the pilgrimage to see this unique mansion inspired by the journeys of Sir Frederic Leighton (yes, painter of the famous *Flaming June* which I described in a former newsletter) and containing his collected works of over 700 frescoes, drawings and paintings.



As well as his own paintings, it has paintings of his contemporaries, including Millais,

Watts and Sargent, adorning the walls.

Even Queen Victoria stopped by for a visit in 1869! She wanted to see this glamorous and elegant home which epitomized art for art's sake. Leighton said he had built it "for the sake of looking at something beautiful once in a while."



Some of you may know I am a "more is more" person. Not a minimalist.
This house gave me serious house envy!
It's crammed to the rafters with paintings, sculptures and treasures.
Wouldn't this be an atmospheric setting for a GDAS gathering?
Cyndy always sends me to places I am just going to love.



*From London with Cyndy
we travel to Jordan with Helen.*

Helen writes:

"A theme I often reflect on in the decorative arts is how many of the symbols, designs and motifs we continue to live with today are so ancient. Jordan proved to have many seeds of modern design."



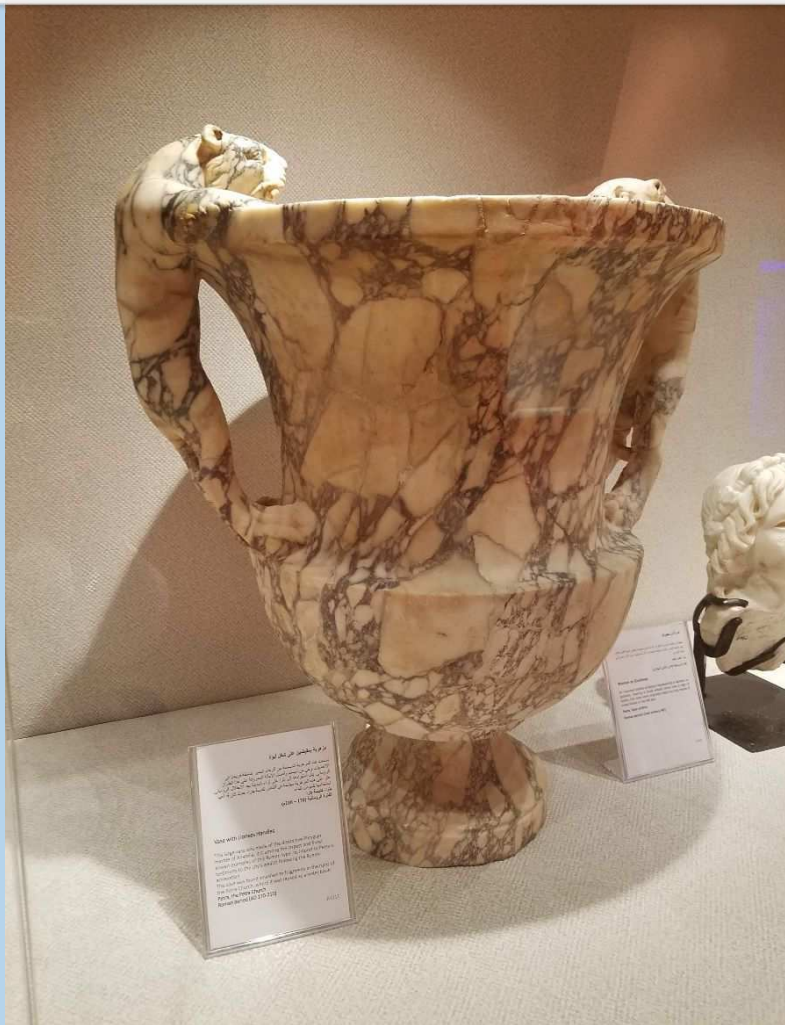
"In this magnificent sandstone carving from a Umayyad period (c 730-749 AD) Palace in Jericho we see what I think of as 'Celtic' inspired interlocking circles that revive in the American Aesthetic Movement embraced by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

Once this imposing element stood high in the wall of the palace allowing light to filter inside. Traveling pilgrims may have seen it and inspired the rosary windows in European cathedrals and Ireland."



Helen continues:

"The intricately patterned Byzantine mosaic floors from Madaba look like a modern day 'Fields' carpet! Pick your colors border and all!"



"The Nabatean tribe created the prosperous city of Petra that was an important stop on the middle eastern trade route. The Nabataeans rivaled the Romans with their outstanding engineering skills in water capture and urban planning. Their wealth and the flow of rich trade allowed them to obtain this Anatolian marble vase found in a church in Petra dating to 170-210 BC. Looks like a Cartier panther to me!"

"Before the introduction of Christianity the Nabateans worshiped symbols like this geometric face of a 'goddess'.... aptly described on the catalog card "Eye Dol".... Picasso-esque!"





*From Jordan with Helen
we travel to Russia with Betty.*



Betty visited the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg which houses the Hermitage.





Highlights range from a unique collection of seventh-century BC Scythian gold to some of Picasso's great Blue Period paintings, and include an astonishing collection of Rembrandts, Titian, Giorgione and Leonardo and the best collection of English art in Continental Europe .



Woman Holding Fruit, Paul Gauguin, Hermitage



The art in the Hermitage represents the former imperial collection of the tsars, which began some 300 years ago, and continues through a rich collection of Impressionist and modernist art amassed after the Revolution. It includes many works by Monet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Bonnard and Matisse.



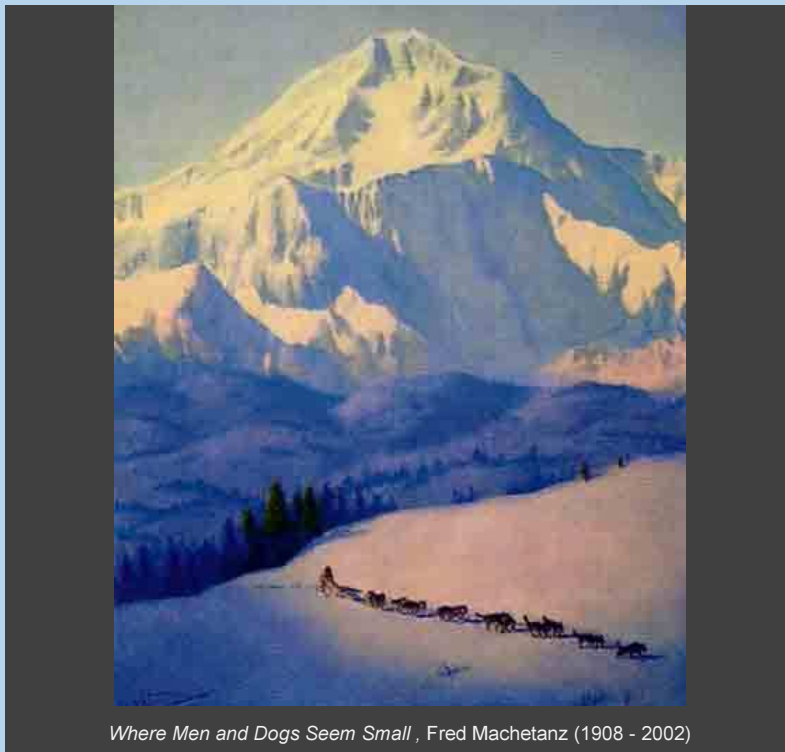
Betty also visited The Grand Palace at Peterhof, designed to be the centerpiece of Peter the Great's "Russian Versailles."



Among many stunning rooms, the magnificent Portrait Hall dates back 200 years. It was beautifully restored after damage in World War II.



*From Russia with Betty
we travel to Alaska with Karen.*



Where Men and Dogs Seem Small , Fred Machetanz (1908 - 2002)

I was honored to be toured through the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center by Cathy Rasmuson, our own member Lile Rasmuson Gibbons' sister-in-law. One goes from gazing at the majestic vistas of Alaskan peaks outside to the staggering paintings of an iconic land in this extraordinary collection.



Mighty Hunter, Fred Machetanz

Cathy has a deep knowledge of the collection and introduced me to painters I had not seen before. Fred Machetanz was an Alaskan painter and illustrator who specialized in scenes from Alaskan life.

“Old Alaska is rapidly disappearing, and I want to preserve what I can before it too is gone,” Fred Machetanz said in 1965. “In a way I want to do for Alaska what Remington did for the Old West.”



Muir Glacier, Thomas Hill, 1889.

Few people know about the writer-naturalist John Muir's passion for glaciers, which began when he realized that Yosemite Valley was formed by the movement of ice-age glaciers.



Muir journeyed to Glacier Bay, Alaska, to observe and describe the glaciers. He discovered and named Muir Glacier in 1879. In 1887, Muir commissioned Thomas Hill (American, 1829–1908) to depict Muir Glacier.

Thomas Hill's glacier paintings are magnificent. He would not have known he was capturing a landscape that would be lost within several decades.



Mount McKinley from the Tokositna River, Sydney Laurence (1865 - 1940)

The museum has a stunning collection of the paintings of Sydney Laurence, "the foremost painter of Alaskan scenes" during the first three decades of the twentieth century. He painted Alaskan landscapes of "romantic and unspoiled Alaska" on such subjects as Mount McKinley (now Denali), rustic cabins, oceans crashing on rocky coasts, and other dramatic scenes.



He painted Denali, ex-Mount McKinley, for many years in all seasons. The most authoritative source on Laurence is the catalog for an Anchorage Museum retrospective exhibit in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Laurence's death in 1990, written by Kesler E. Woodward, *Sydney Laurence, Painter of the North*



Sydney Laurence sought to capture the distinctive northern light as it filtered through the clouds and reflected in the sky, water and mountains of the Alaska landscape.

Laurence's works hang in stunning galleries in the new Rasmuson Wing where the tall ceilings, large expanses of white walls and column-less open space are liberating, echoing the vastness of Alaska.



*From Alaska we travel
back to a place near home
with Eleanor.*



Eleanor saw "Renoir - The Body, The Senses" at The Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

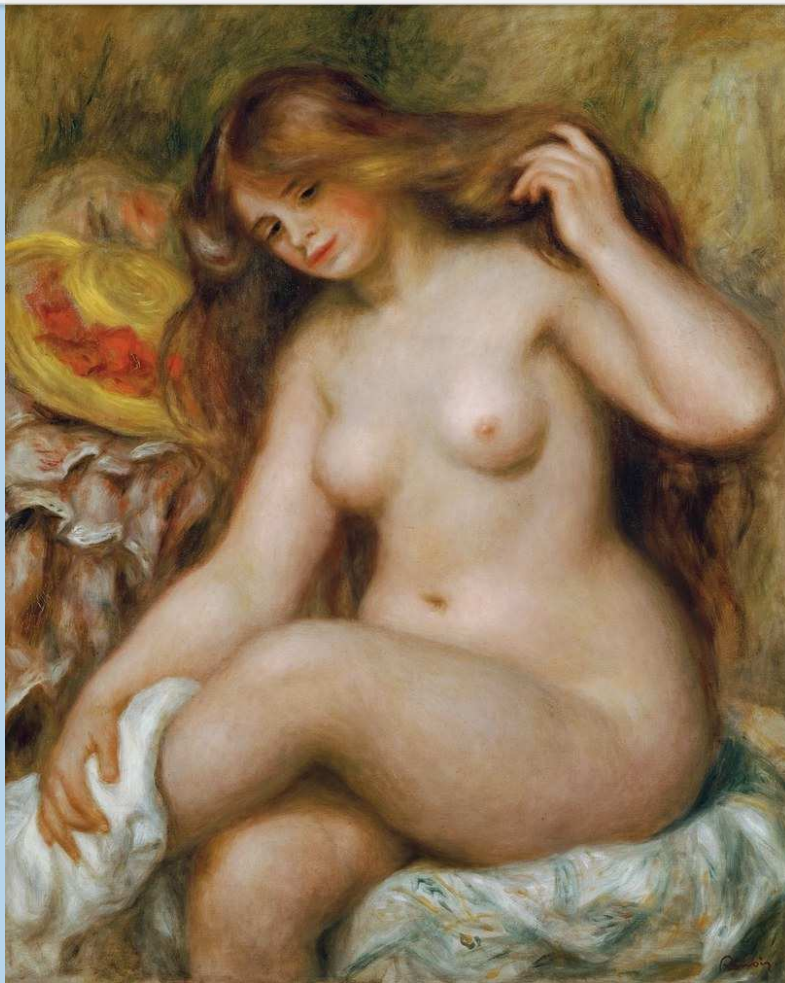
It's a lovely drive to The Clark, through winding scenic roads with beautiful New England vistas.

We can always find treasure in our own backyard.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Blonde Bather* (detail), 1881. Oil on canvas. Clark Art Institute, 1955.609s.

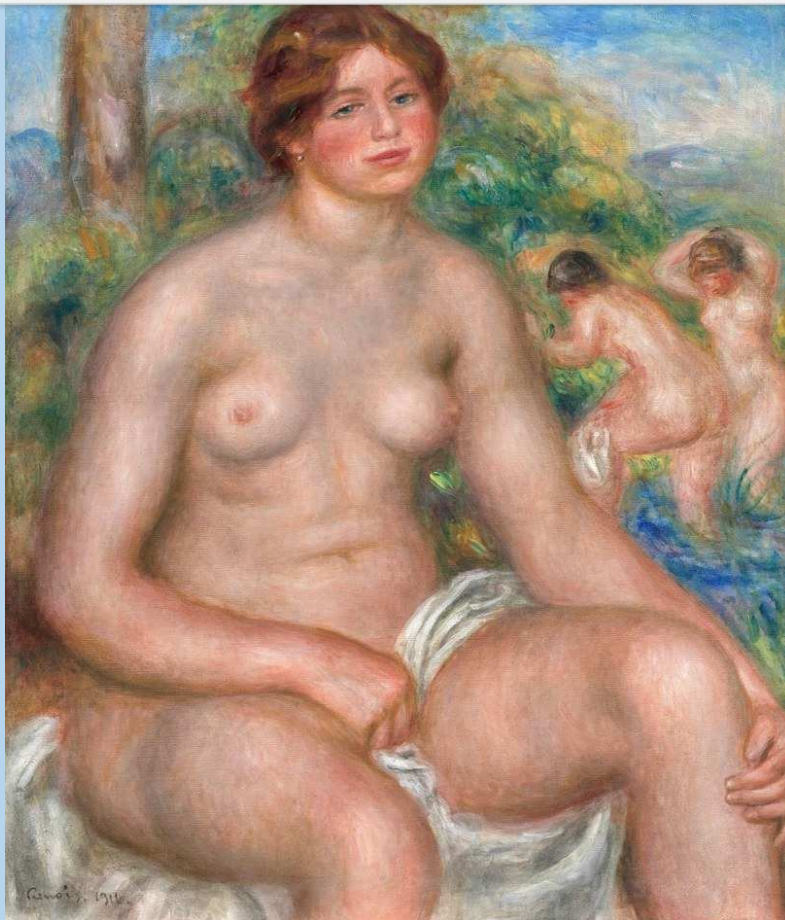
"On the centenary of Renoir's death, this exhibition provides new perspectives about the artist's stylistic trajectory through the lens of a single subject. Renoir's over arching preoccupation was with the nude." As his son Jean Renoir recounted, "He told me one day that he regretted not having painted the same picture—he meant the same subject—all his life."



Bather with Blond Hair, Circa 1903.

Art critic Peter Schjeldahl notes that "The art historian Martha Lucy, writing in the show's gorgeous catalogue, notes that, in contemporary discourse, the name Renoir has come to stand for 'sexist male artist.' "

Another point of view would be that we shouldn't judge the past by the values, the obsessions or preoccupations of the present.



Seated Bather, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, from 1914..

The show contains works by Renoir's predecessors and his contemporaries.
 "Picasso adored and collected Renoir nudes, the more outrageous the better."



The Bathers, by Pablo Picasso, 1920 - 1921.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Boy with a Cat* (detail), 1868. Musée d'Orsay.

I hope you have enjoyed our virtual journey to beautiful places and amazing art.
Thank you to the Program Committee for all you do for our organization.



Ayr Mount, Hillsborough, North Carolina, 1851

GDAS is very excited about our program year which will focus on Americana ~
the decorative arts of the United States.
Though it may have originated abroad, American art developed into its own and thrived
with the energetic craftsmanship and imagination which characterize it from Colonial
times until today. We are going to have a fascinating year looking at
the uniqueness of our artistic heritage.



Double parlor at Millford (1841) in Pinewood, SC with original furniture by Duncan Phyfe & Son.

Our first lecture will be "Classical Americana: the Life and Legacy of Richard Hampton Jenrette" by Peter M. Kenney, Co-President, Classical American Homes Preservation Trust. The lecture will tell the story of Dick Jenrette, his love of beauty, passion for historic preservation, and Kenney's personal relationship with him.



Some of our members joined us a few years ago for the wonderful trip to Edgewater on the Hudson organized by Cindi Treadwell and Priscilla Morphy. We had the honor of meeting Mr. Jenrette.



The Roper House, Charleston, South Carolina

Join us to learn about classical architecture in America and a fascinating journey of collecting and restoring old houses and antiques of the period.

If you haven't renewed your membership there is still plenty of time.
Go to our [website](#) to see the outstanding lectures. Most of them will be sell-outs.
We hope to see you in the coming year.

We will be meeting at the Bruce Museum.
Lecture at 1:15 followed by our traditional tea.



I am looking forward to sharing more adventures in art with you.

Karen Handal, President

Greenwich Decorative Arts Society



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