

# Comments on the Art Market

B Y R E H S G A L L E R I E S

## Volume 294

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### Upcoming Fairs – This July

#### SEATTLE ART FAIR

The show will highlight many of our contemporary artist.

##### Select VIP Preview

Thursday, July 17, 2025: 5— 6pm  
Exclusive Entry for Select VIPs

##### Opening Night presented by RBC Wealth Management

Thursday, July 17: 6— 9pm  
Exclusive Entry for Fair Pass Holders and Select VIPs

##### Public Hours

Friday, July 18: 11am — 7pm  
Saturday, July 19: 11am — 7pm  
Sunday, July 20: 11am — 6pm

#### THE NEWPORT SHOW

At this show we will highlight 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> century works of art in two booths.  
In addition, Stuart Dunkel will be at the show!

##### Preview Party

Friday, July 25, 2025 - 6pm to 9pm

##### General Show Dates

Saturday, July 26: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sunday, July 27: 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

We will let you know when we receive our complimentary tickets.

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## Stocks & Crypto

Hard to believe we're almost halfway through the year already... and fortunately, we're looking at some positive numbers this month! There was some uncertainty heading into May, but it didn't take long for Trump to pause his tariffs again which sent the market on a tear. In fact, the Nasdaq and S&P posted their best month since 2023. Look, we're coming off three consecutive months of losses, so I'll take the gains however they come, even if that's in the midst of significant volatility... nevertheless, I think it sends a strong message that the stock market doesn't view tariffs in a positive light. There were also some rumors that Trump was pressuring Apple to make their iPhones domestically... I'm sure we all dreamed of our children working in factories assembling electronics, right? RIGHT?!

Anyway, as mentioned, the major indexes saw some sizable gains this month... the Dow popped nearly 4%, while the S&P saw its best May performance since 1990 with a 6+% gain. Nasdaq skyrocketed nearly 10% - again, that's largely attributed to a rollback of tariffs, as Nasdaq is tech heavy and much of the tech components are produced overseas. Now, while the numbers look good, things still don't feel great. Some economists think there's a significant possibility of a recession in the near future, especially when we examine the economic policies that are being proposed... that's on top of persistent inflation that erodes consumer spending, not to mention geopolitical uncertainty like ongoing tension between Russia and Ukraine, as well as between Israel and Palestinians. Genuine question... and please, you're welcome to reply to the email, but has anyone experienced a true benefit from the economic policies we've seen rolled out over the last few months? We have a lot of liberal and conservative clients, and the story seems to be the same regardless of political affiliation – things have been difficult.

Turning to currencies and commodities... the Pound and Euro were mixed – the Pound slightly strengthened, while the Euro slightly weakened relative to the dollar. Interestingly, this is the fourth consecutive month the Pound gained against the dollar – take what you will from that. Crude crossed back into the 60s – good for a 4.5% gain this month. And gold suffered its first monthly loss of 2025... as I've been highlighting, in times of economic uncertainty, gold is a refuge. But as soon as the tariffs were walked back, gold dipped back below \$3,200... it's worth noting that gold is still way up from the start of the year, and it's probably a good idea to hold while things shake out in the next few months (wishful thinking).

In the crypto world, we saw some sizable gains... Bitcoin is back above the \$100K threshold, and in fact, it set a new all-time high last week at \$111,999. Litecoin saw a modest gain of about 4.5%, but the real star was Ethereum, which popped more than 43% in the past month!

Look, the month was good – a reprieve from the losses we've been seeing... but as I point out, the volatility is the problem and that was just as evident this month, even if it was in the form of gains. With trade tensions still ever present, the uncertainty will continue to put downward pressure on the market as a whole... but hopefully, I'm stupid and wrong and we'll be winning bigly again soon.

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# Tales From The Dark Side

## The Hohenzollern Family Treasures: Compromise Achieved



*Portrait of Elector Joachim  
I Nestor of Brandenburg  
by Lucas Cranach the Elder*

After over a hundred years, the German government has struck a deal with the descendants of the family that ruled the country for centuries regarding their former properties and art collection.

The Hohenzollerns were one of the most powerful noble families on the European continent for centuries. They ruled over the territories of Brandenburg and Prussia, first as dukes, then as kings. During the eighteenth century, the Kingdom of Prussia became a power player due to a combination of territorial expansion and patronage of the arts and sciences. During German unification in the nineteenth century, Otto von Bismarck ensured the new country would form around Prussia. After their victory in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, the king of Prussia was declared the German Emperor. The Empire would last until the First World War, after Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and fled to the Netherlands, allowing for a republic to be established. But even after the Empire crumbled, the Hohenzollerns continued to serve as influential figures in German high society and the political realm. And this is why many Germans do not have

a particularly good opinion of the family. Many members of the former imperial family openly supported Hitler and the Nazis. Several of the Kaiser's grandsons enlisted in the German army and fought during the Second World War. After the defeat of the Nazis in 1945, many agreed that the militaristic and imperialist attitudes the family fostered and perpetuated among Germans of both aristocratic and common birth were significant factors that led to the rise of the Nazis in the first place. In particular, the Soviet-backed East German government confiscated many properties and works of art. However, since the reunification of Germany in 1990, the current head of the family has made a name for himself, petitioning the government to return much of these treasures.

Georg Friedrich has been head of the Hohenzollern family since 1994. As the great-great-grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm, he goes by the title Prince of Prussia. His efforts to return the former imperial properties to his family began in 2014 in the Netherlands. That year, he claimed that the Huis Doorn, the Dutch countryside estate where Kaiser Wilhelm spent his last twenty years, should be transferred from Dutch government control to his family. The Dutch government subsequently rejected these claims. Also, that same year, he asked the German government to allow his family to take up residency at the Cecilienhof Palace in Potsdam, the last palace constructed for the imperial family and the location of the famous 1945 Potsdam Conference. For over a decade, the prince has been persistent about restoring the properties and works of art that were lost or confiscated during and after the Second World War to his family. The negotiations between the government and the Hohenzollerns were kept a secret for several years, for good reason.

Many Germans were outraged when news leaked that these talks were in progress. The political party Die Linke, a small leftist party with a few dozen seats in Germany's parliament, started a petition opposing the return of the imperial family treasures. Jan Böhmermann, a prominent German satirist, commented that these artworks should not be Georg Friedrich's to claim, since German peoples' ancestors paid for it all with their taxes as subjects. He argued that these palaces and paintings are now common property for everyone to enjoy, and now the prince wants to hoard it all. "Does Friedrich think that these are for him?" He also pointed out that while many prominent families had their properties returned to them after 1990, the Hohenzollerns and some other former landowners offered considerable support to the Nazis and therefore had their right to compensation withdrawn. During this debate, images spread of the prince's great-grandfather, the Crown Prince Wilhelm, dressed in a stormtrooper uniform. There was also another photo, this one of the crown prince's brother August saluting in a Nazi uniform a year before he was elected to parliament as a member of the Nazi Party. Many say that the former imperial family's support for the Nazis attracted many millions of monarchist and traditional conservative voters to Hitler. Others have disputed the extent of their support's effect

on the German electorate, but none can deny that they threw in their lot with Hitler. However, the new government under Chancellor Friedrich Merz has come to a compromise.

The German government will not return the collections to the Hohenzollerns outright. They will instead turn over the items in question to a new state-run charity called the Stiftung Hohenzollernscher Kunstbesitz (Hohenzollern Art Collection Foundation). This group will oversee the government cultural entities like the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, the Prussian Palaces & Gardens Foundation, and the German Historical Museum. The foundation will be run by nine board members, three of which will be members or representatives of the Hohenzollern family. The collection includes furniture, dinnerware, sculptures, and paintings. A comprehensive catalogue of the items being transferred to the foundation is not available yet. However, one of the most prominent works we know about is the portrait of Joachim I of Brandenburg by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

### **Klimt Portrait Subject Of Smuggling Accusations**

Earlier this year, a rare portrait by Gustav Klimt made headlines and is now under scrutiny due to a provenance hiccup. And this is not the portrait of Fräulein Lieser. This is the Austrian master's Portrait of Prince William Nii Nortey Dowuona, exhibited at this year's TEFAF Maastricht.

This year at the prestigious Dutch art fair, the Viennese gallery Wienerrothier & Kohlbacher (W&K) exhibited the portrait of the African prince with a price tag of €15 million. The painting was believed to have been lost during the Second World War and has been highly sought after by experts and collectors alike. The subject was a prince and ambassador of the Ga people of what is now the Greater Accra region of Ghana. In 1897, he traveled to Vienna to participate in an exhibition focusing on the people and customs of the West African people. However, the show mistakenly identified the prince as a member of the Ashanti rather than the Ga. This is an example of a rather strange and insensitive practice in Europe where colonized people would become the focus of "human zoos". This was a disturbingly common practice at international gatherings like world's fairs. The 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris, for example, had a "Negro Village", where organizers brought four hundred African people to France to live in a model village. Regardless, the African visitors to Vienna became the talk of the town, invited to all sorts of social events. Both Klimt and his friend Franz Matsch painted portraits of the prince, with the Matsch painting now on display at Luxembourg's National Museum of Archaeology, History & Art. According to art historian Alfred Weidinger, Klimt's portrait marks a turning point in his style. The portrait's background features floral motifs, indicating that the artist was on his way toward embracing decorative elements in his portraiture, culminating in his Golden Phase.



*Portrait of Prince William Nii  
Nortey Dowuona  
by Gustav Klimt*

W&K acquired the Klimt portrait in 2023 when a collector from Austria brought it to them from Hungary. The work was in terrible condition, but gallery specialists eventually spotted the Klimt estate stamp. The gallery acquired the painting and performed extensive restoration before its Maastricht appearance. They also reached out to the descendants of the last known owner before its disappearance. Ernestine Klein purchased the painting after the artist's estate was auctioned off in 1923. Being Jewish, Klein escaped Vienna for Monaco in 1938 following Germany's annexation of Austria. After that, there is little information about the painting's whereabouts. However, W&K set up a restitution deal with the Klein descendants before bringing it to Maastricht, ensuring they would get a portion of the profits should the painting sell. But months after it first became newsworthy, the portrait is now the subject of extensive debates over how W&K acquired it.

This past weekend, the Hungarian weekly newspaper *Heti Világgazdaság* (HVG) claimed that the painting was previously in Hungary before W&K acquired it and that it was smuggled out of the country to bring it to Austria. However, the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* published a rebuttal, claiming that the painting did receive approval from the relevant authorities to be exported. W&K also commented, dismissing HVG's claims as nothing but "an insinuation". The HVG article indicates that

after Ernestine Klein escaped to Monaco, the portrait found its way to Hungary, where it remained in a private collection between the 1950s and 2021. However, the reports that the Klimt was smuggled out of Hungary can only be traced to a Facebook post from Hungarian art researcher Péter Molnos. Perhaps jumping the gun a bit, Molnos expressed his suspicion that a rare Klimt portrait could simply turn up again, leading him to suspect that someone illegally took the painting out of the country. Yes, it would normally take more time for cultural authorities to examine a painting of such significance before granting an export license. However, the Klimt portrait was in such poor condition that specialists likely could not make out the estate stamp.

W&K stated that while they have not yet sold the painting, they are in negotiations with an unnamed museum.

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## The Art Market

### Sotheby's Modern Evening Sale



*Grande tête mince*  
by Alberto Giacometti

This past week, the New York auction houses hosted their May Marquee sales. Normally, this is the time of year when the major auction houses can flex and show off their most impressive consignments. However, that did not happen at Sotheby's during their Modern Evening sale on Tuesday night. It was, yet again, another example of how a single lot can make or break an auction. In this case, that lot was the painted bronze bust *Grande tête mince* by the Italian sculptor Alberto Giacometti.

The work is a bust of the artist's brother Diego and was used by Sotheby's as the sale's premium lot. Sotheby's extensively used images of the sculpture as promotional material and even made an in-depth video on the work.

There, Sotheby's specialist referred to it as "monumental", a "magnum opus", "the pinnacle of his work", and "one of the defining images of the twentieth century". The bust was being offered at Sotheby's by the Soloviev

Foundation. The work is substantial in terms of Giacometti's influence on

sculpture. Many say that it drastically changed how sculptors and artists in general chose to represent the human form in a post-war world. Despite the work's significance and estimated value, perhaps Sotheby's was a bit too overconfident. The lot had no third-party guarantor. So when bidding stalled at \$64.25 million, Oliver Barker brought the hammer down and announced that the work had not met its reserve and would remain unsold. Sotheby's did not livestream the auction through YouTube but later released a video the next day of the entire sale with all unsold lots edited out, including the Giacometti.

Other than that one noticeable disappointment 45 minutes into the sale, the remainder of the modern evening sale went relatively well. With the Giacometti out of the picture, it was Picasso's 1969 painting *Homme assis* that took the top spot. The painting is considered part of the artist's *Mousquetaires* series, consisting mainly of abstract portraits of mustachioed men. The painting was last sold at Sotheby's in November 2014 for \$11.37 million w/p. It did better this time, selling for slightly above its \$12 million low estimate at \$12.6 million (or \$15.1 million w/p). Coming up closely behind the Picasso was a 1942 oil painting by Georgia O'Keeffe. As a vividly-colored close-up view of a plant, the work is very typical of the artist's most well-known work. O'Keeffe was originally commissioned to go to Hawaii in 1939 to paint local flora for Dole advertisements (known at the time as the Hawaiian Pineapple Company). *Leaves of a Plant* is not one of the two commissioned



*Homme assis*  
by Pablo Picasso



paintings but one of the paintings she created based on Hawaiian plant life after her return to New Mexico. Having been in the same private collection since 1978, buyers were anxious to get their hands on this rather unique O'Keeffe. The hammer eventually came down nicely in between its pre-sale estimate range of \$8 million to \$12 million, selling for \$10.75 million (or \$12.97 million w/p).



*Leaves of a Plant*  
by Georgia O'Keeffe

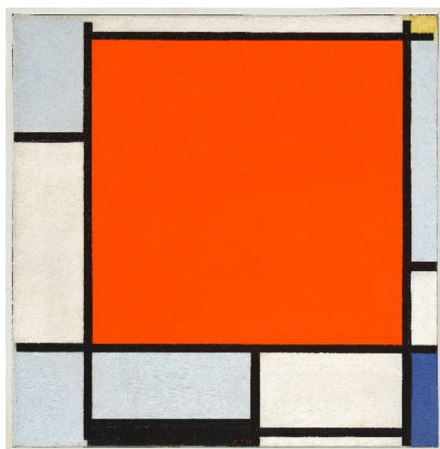
And finally, it wouldn't be a major sale without something by the Belgian surrealist René Magritte. Like the other top lots, the painting *La Traversée difficile* has been in the same private collection for decades. Magritte created the work in 1963, and it is one of several renditions of the same theme. Meaning *The Difficult Crossing*, the title refers to the ship on stormy seas in the background. The suited man, one of Magritte's favorite motifs, appears in this painting, representing the common individual. However, their head has been replaced by an enormous eyeball. Some interpret the cyclopean figure as a stand-in for a lighthouse, guiding the distressed ship to safety. It also comments on the power of perception, vision, and the everyday. Though it is a striking work, it is not as iconic of a subject as, say, the *L'Empire des lumières* series. Estimated to sell for at least \$10 million, the Magritte fell slightly short, hammering at \$8.2 million (or \$10.04 million w/p).

In terms of the total amount of money the sale made, the failure of the Giacometti made the auction look like a complete disappointment. In total, the sixty available lots brought in \$151.7 million (or \$186.4 million w/p), reaching only 65% of the way to its \$230.2 million low estimate. Even if the Giacometti had reached \$70 million as Sotheby's specialists had predicted, the sale as a whole would have, regardless, fallen slightly short. This is mostly due to a few other high-value lots going unsold that evening. These include Théo van Rysselberghe's *Flottille d'Arnemuiden* (est. \$5 million to \$7 million), *Le Bras* by Henri Matisse (est. \$4 million to \$6 million), and *Peinture 92 x 73 cm, 30 juin 59* by Pierre Soulages (est. \$3 million to \$5 million). Another group of numbers, however, tells a slightly more optimistic story. Of the sixty lots available that evening, twenty-two sold within their estimates, giving Sotheby's specialist a 37% accuracy rate. Twenty-one (35%) sold below their estimates, while five (8%) sold above. This left twelve lots unsold, giving Sotheby's an 80% sell-through rate. While those numbers are quite good, they aren't exactly typical of one of the May Marquee evening sales.



*La Traversée difficile*  
by René Magritte

## The 2025 May Marquee Sales



*Composition with Large Red Plane, Bluish Gray, Yellow, Black, and Blue*

The May Marquee sales at the major New York auction houses have concluded, with Christie's coming out on top in nearly every sense.

Christie's hosted six sales during the week: two modern, two Impressionist, and two contemporary. It all started with the Riggio collection. Leonard Riggio was the chairman of the bookstore chain Barnes & Noble, acquiring the business in 1971. He is credited with transforming Barnes & Noble from a single store on Fifth Avenue to a prolific chain with hundreds of locations. He passed away in August 2024, and his widow, Louise, made headlines in February when she consigned their art collection to Christie's. The relatively small auction of thirty-eight lots comprised a significant piece of Christie's revenue that week. It also featured the most expensive lot sold during the Marquee sales, Piet Mondrian's 1922 painting *Composition with Large Red Plane, Bluish Gray, Yellow, Black, and Blue*. The work is very

typical of the artist's "revolutionary mature aesthetic" and his exploration of neo-plasticism. This style is characterized by his use of straight lines and primary colors to create "an idealized pictorial form of

pure equilibrium that would reintegrate a fundamental sense of beauty into life.” While it fell short of its \$50 million pre-sale estimate, it sold for \$41 million (or \$47.56 million w/p), making it the third most expensive Mondrian painting ever sold at auction.

Of the twelve lots that sold for over \$10 million at both Christie’s and Sotheby’s, four came from the Riggio collection, including Alberto Giacometti’s *Femme de Venise I* (\$15 million hammer) and one of René Magritte’s *L’empire des lumières* paintings (\$30 million hammer). With the Mondrian painting selling for under estimate and a Julio Gonzalez sculpture failing to sell, the Riggio collection fell slightly short of expectations. It brought in \$228.6 million against a pre-sale total estimate of \$245.5 million. Of course, Christie was able to make up this difference with fees and premiums, bringing the total up to \$271.9 million. The Riggio collection made up 39.8% of the combined total hammer prices of all six May Marquee sales hosted at Christie’s New York that week. Adding the \$181.2 million from the 20th Century evening sale immediately following the Riggio collection increases that percentage to 71.3%.

For Sotheby’s, the Modern Evening sale on May 13th was somewhat disappointing given the failure of the Alberto Giacometti sculpture *Grande tête mince*, which specialists expected would sell for \$70 million. This brought the sales total from its \$230.2 million total minimum estimate down to \$151.7 million. The most valuable lot to cross the block at Sotheby’s that week would not appear until a couple of days later at their contemporary evening auction. There, an untitled 1981 work by Jean-Michel Basquiat sold for \$13.7 million (or \$16.4 million w/p).



*Grande tête mince*  
by Alberto Giacometti

The four Marquee sales Sotheby’s hosted that week were expected to bring in a total of \$422.1 million. However, because of the initial shortcomings with the Giacometti debacle, Sotheby’s fell short at \$355.2 million. This is not the only area where Sotheby’s fell slightly short. Christie’s specialists achieved a somewhat higher accuracy rate, with two hundred six of the five hundred sixty-four lots available across the six sales selling within their estimates, giving Christie a 36.5% accuracy rate. On the other hand, Sotheby’s ended up with 33.7% having sold two hundred two of the five hundred ninety-nine lots within their estimates. Christie’s also achieved a slightly higher sell-through rate of 87.1% compared to 84.3% at Sotheby’s. At the end of the week, with fees and premiums included, Christie’s made off with a monumental \$693.1 million. In comparison, Sotheby’s made \$411.2 million, an equally impressive number, especially since they hosted two fewer sales in the same amount of time. Regardless, this was an 18% decrease from last year’s May Marquee sales for Sotheby’s, while Christie’s saw a 23% increase.

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## Deeper Thoughts

### Record-Breaking Klimt Falls Through

A long-lost painting by Gustav Klimt that sold in Vienna last year for \$32 million is back in the news after the restitution settlement between the winning bidder, the seller, and the subject’s descendants fell through.



Portrait of Fräulein  
Lieser

In 2024, one of the top moments in art world news was the sale of Klimt's *Portrait of Fräulein Lieser* at the im Kinsky auction house in Vienna. The portrait was presumed lost for close to a century, being one of the last works Klimt began before his death in 1918. The subject is unknown, but the auction house concluded that it is most likely Margarethe Lieser, the daughter of a wealthy Jewish family in Vienna. Even though the family was persecuted at the hands of the Nazis, the auction house, itself headed by a former art law expert, said that there was no evidence to suggest the painting itself had been stolen or looted during the Second World War. Initially, the sellers agreed to jointly consign the painting with the Lieser family's descendants, which seemed rather reasonable should new evidence later suggest that the work's provenance was, in fact, tainted. The Klimt ended up selling for €30 million, making it the sixth most expensive painting sold at auction in 2024 and the most expensive sold in Austria. Some commentators have noted that the auction house specialists initially predicted that the painting could sell for as much as €50 million. Still, many potential buyers were likely scared away because of the gaps in the provenance.

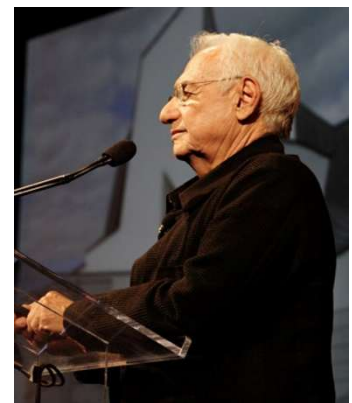
After further investigations, a theory emerged to fill in some of the gaps in the painting's history. It alleges that the portrait's subject is not Margarethe Lieser, but her cousin Helene. Furthermore, Helene's mother, Henriette, likely sold the Klimt out of desperation after the Nazis froze or confiscated many of her assets. It found its way into the hands of Adolf Hagenauer, whose father-in-law worked as a butler in the Lieser household. Hagenauer gave the painting to his daughter, whose children consigned the work to im Kinsky following her death in 2022. There are still many unanswered questions about how much the Hagenauer family knew about the history of the painting and the circumstances around how the work came to be in their possession.

Shortly after the sale concluded, several alleged descendants came forward to contest the agreement with the initial group of heirs. The family descendants who initially consigned the work to im Kinsky did so on behalf of themselves as well as all potential heirs, opening the door for these claimants. Several claimants came forth, all of whom became parties to the indemnification agreement. However, after months of negotiations, one of the family's descendants continued to contest the conditions of the contract. After over a year of talks, the Hong Kong-based buyer eventually got fed up and backed out, causing the deal to fall apart in March 2025. Der Standard estimates that the painting eventually failing to sell cost im Kinsky around €1.5 million. Im Kinsky is not as large of an organization as Christie's or Sotheby's. In 2022, they reported €27 million in revenue against the billions that major auction houses often bring in. €1.5 million will surely be a significant blow to them.

### First Major Gehry Structure In East Asia

Pritzker Prize-winning architect Frank Gehry's first major building in East Asia has just broken ground in Taiwan.

Gehry is often called one of the world's premier deconstructivist architects. However, he has frequently rebuffed such titles, not wanting to be stuck into one category or another. He does have a distinct style, though, giving his own flair to things as small as a new Hennessy decanter, as mundane as school office buildings in Australia, and as iconic as the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Over the last decade, he has also taken on new projects in Asia. The first of these structures was a residential building at 53 Stubbs Road in Hong Kong. This was followed by another project in Hong Kong and another in South Korea. Gehry has also been asked to design the Guggenheim's new location in Abu Dhabi. But now, in what some publications call the architect's first major building in East Asia, construction has begun at the China Medical University (CMU) in Taichung, Taiwan, on the university's Museum of Fine Arts.



Frank Gehry (photo courtesy of  
[Paul Morigi](#))



The concept art gives you a good idea of who designed the building. The planned work screams Gehry, with the architect taking inspiration from natural elements like water and sky. The rippling, reflective exterior is meant to be surrounded by trees, plants, and water features. In an interview with the New York Times, Gehry said the design “is inspired by reflections of buildings, trees, and the sky on pools of water and mirrored steel. Using softer stainless steel, we crafted a fluid form through precise folds and curves. The building will shimmer gently, breathing with light, like a watercolor in motion.” The museum is the centerpiece of the CMU’s new campus in Shuinan, which has been in the planning stages since 2014. Since Gehry no longer submits to architecture competitions, the university invited him to design the museum. The CMU has long been a prominent institution in the fields of medicine and biotechnology. Still, it has been making an effort over the past decade to become a better space for arts education. The new museum, scheduled to be completed in 2028, is meant to be a sort of epicenter of artistic creation and education. It will also be a new nexus for collaboration with other prominent educational institutions worldwide. Furthermore, the museum will also serve as a creative hub for the city of Taichung.

### Leaky Louvre Roof Nearly Damages Paintings



The Louvre Maestà  
by Cimabue

Recent hailstorms in Paris allowed water to leak into the Louvre, coming close to damaging several proto-Renaissance paintings and sculptures.

In any decent introduction to art history class, before you learn anything about the Italian Renaissance, you must first look at the works of Giotto. Giotto is more well-known for helping reintroduce realism in perspective and proportion to European painting. However, his teacher Cimabue created work that shows a transitory phase between Giotto’s naturalism and the older Byzantine style of painting that had been popular among European artists for several centuries. The exhibition at the Louvre Revoir Cimabue takes a closer look at the thirteenth-century master’s work and his contributions to later developments in Italian Renaissance painting. The Louvre decided to curate an exhibition focusing on Cimabue because of their recent restoration of the 1280 painting Maestà, which has been in the Louvre collection since 1813.

The painting shows a Madonna and Child enthroned surrounded by angels. It is an earlier work from the artist’s career, especially compared to his later painting of a similar subject known as the Santa Trinita Maestà, showing a greater sense of depth, perspective, and realism. The differences in the Madonna’s clothing are probably the best examples, as they seem tight and rigid in the Louvre Maestà, while the Santa Trinita Maestà is looser, flowing, and more naturalistic. Louvre curators call the Maestà “the founding act of Western painting”. The recent restoration has made the nuances in color easier to perceive and shows influence from both Byzantine and Islamic art. Another Cimabue work in the Louvre collection that recently had its restoration completed was The Mocking of Christ. The work is one of eight segments in a diptych Cimabue created in the 1280s. Only three have been recovered, with The Mocking of Christ rediscovered in 2019 in the kitchen of an elderly woman in northern France. After its rediscovery, it sold at auction for €24 million w/p before being acquired by the Louvre in 2023.

The Cimabue exhibition is scheduled to close on May 12th. However, last Saturday, May 3rd, hailstorms in Paris damaged the Louvre roof enough to allow water to drip into the galleries. Some water drops came near several works, including Cimabue’s Maestà as well as Madonna of the Franciscans by Cimabue’s student Duccio di Buoninsegna. While the Duccio work is rather small and protected by a glass case, the Maestà is incredibly large, measuring close to 14 feet tall. It was displayed in the middle of one of the galleries on its own, mounted on a pedestal. The panel and the frame are made of wood, so they are very susceptible to water damage. Some water fell onto the stone base of Nicola Pisano’s sculpture, Three Acolytes. An image of Louvre staff protecting the work by holding a sheet over the sculpture began circulating online shortly after the incident. The exhibition closed after half an hour of dripping, with the Louvre bringing in firefighters to inspect the roof. They determined that a piece of hail had damaged a seal in a section of the glass roof.

This latest incident underscores the urgent need for extensive renovations at the Louvre. A visitor cap in 2023 has tried to relieve some of the stress placed on museum staff and the structure itself. French President Emmanuel Macron announced earlier this year that the Louvre must be renovated to handle the millions of visitors it receives yearly. Estimates place the total cost of these renovations at around €500 million, but some say it may cost as much as €800 million.

## **NEA-Funded Programs Receive Donations After Trump's Cuts**

Private foundations and organizations are stepping up to fill in the funding gaps caused by recent cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts and other government-run cultural organizations.

Cultural organizations across the United States have had to adjust to a new, turbulent reality. Despite accounting for only 0.003% of the federal government's budget, the Trump administration has focused itself on gutting the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and other state-funded cultural services. The administration's attempts at dismantling these nonpartisan and nonprofit organizations appear in poor taste. This seems especially true since some of the money will be diverted towards the administration's proposed National Garden of American Heroes project. The garden, which has been one of Trump's cultural policy goals since 2020, will consist of a sculpture garden featuring two hundred fifty statues of prominent Americans. Some see it as a benign monument, while others see it as a needless, jingoistic endeavor. Many have been paying more attention to Trump's cultural policy, especially following executive orders targeting the Smithsonian Institution.



The funding cuts included cutting the NEA's Challenge America grants, which provided money for small to mid-size cultural programs in underserved communities. The beneficiaries are often in rural areas and/or provide arts programs by and for children, the elderly, women, people of color, queer people, and other vulnerable groups. After the administration made these cuts in February, the Andy Warhol Foundation and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation have pledged \$800,000 to compensate. In a statement, Warhol Foundation president Joel Wachs remarked that "we see the extremely difficult circumstances under which they are operating and we value and appreciate their work. We are committed to providing some semblance of stability and continuity during this time of unprecedented upheaval." The Warhol-Frankenthaler joint donation comes about a week after an even more significant move by the Mellon Foundation.

The Mellon Foundation is the single largest non-governmental source of arts funding in the United States. At the end of April, the foundation announced it would donate \$15 million to the Federation of State Humanities Councils, which had much of its funding cut by the controversial Department of Government Efficiency. This significant donation will provide a substantial boost to the humanities councils of all fifty states and six territories, including Washington DC, Puerto Rico, and others, each of which will receive \$200,000. The remaining \$2.8 million is being withheld as challenge grants. This is where the money will only be dispersed to match \$50,000 in other donations that these councils can raise by themselves. For some of these organizations, the money they receive from the Mellon Foundation will not be as much as expected from the NEA, but it's not nothing, either. However, foundation president Phoebe Stein describes this money as "a lifeline for communities across the country who rely on their humanities councils' programs and grants to fill critical needs and enrich their lives." Before the Mellon donations, about 40% of state humanities councils had less than six months of funding in their reserves. The money from these private foundations can prove useful in extending these groups' funding until they can formulate a more long-term solution.

## Export Ban For British Botticelli



*Virgin & Child  
Enthroned by Botticelli*

The British government has placed an export ban on a rare masterpiece by Botticelli that sold last year for over £9 million.

On December 4, 2024, the Botticelli painting *Virgin & Child Enthroned* sold at Sotheby's London during their Old Master & 19th Century evening sale for £9.96 million w/p. Although the identity of the Botticelli's buyer has not been publicly disclosed, the fact that the British government has placed a temporary export ban on the painting indicates that the buyer is likely not British. According to the export ban, any British collector, dealer, gallery, or museum can purchase the work for themselves as long as they can put together £10.2 million. Only a handful of verified Botticelli paintings are on display at museums in the United Kingdom. Of the over two hundred paintings by the master still existing today, thirteen are held by museums in Britain. The National Gallery in London has eight, including *Venus & Mars* and *The Mystical Nativity*. On the other hand, the Uffizi Gallery alone has thirty Botticelli paintings, including many of his most famous works like *Primavera*, *Adoration of the Magi*, and *The Birth of Venus*.

*Virgin & Child Enthroned* spent most of its life in Italy before being purchased in 1904 by Baroness Wantage, a prominent British aristocrat and art collector. She kept it at her home at Lockinge House and then later at Betterton House, both in Berkshire. Sotheby's specialists indicate that Botticelli likely created this particular Madonna relatively early in his artistic career, around the early 1470s. He would not establish a studio and take on apprentices until 1472. Therefore, *Virgin & Child Enthroned* likely has more components done by the artist's hand than similar paintings of a later period. *Virgin & Child Enthroned* was predicted to sell at Sotheby's for no more than £3 million. However, a verified Botticelli painting is always an exciting find at auction. Since most of his paintings are in prominent museum collections, there are so few of the master's works to be bought and sold on the secondary market. The Botticelli finally sold for £8.6 million / \$10.9 million (or £9.96 million / \$12.6 million w/p).

An export ban can sometimes help provide an opportunity for domestic buyers to come in and keep an artwork in the country. However, that is not always the case. I commented on this reality when writing about the 2023 export ban on Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Portrait of Omai*. "Though the export bar is a useful tool many governments use to keep national treasures in the country, export bars in Britain are only used successfully once in every three times. Furthermore, the export bar is most useful when there is widespread public support to have the work remain in the country, which was, unfortunately, lacking in Britain." Eventually, the export ban on the Reynolds portrait was successful, to an extent. The National Portrait Gallery purchased the painting jointly with the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. While some in British connoisseurship or art historical circles may have been unsatisfied with the outcome of sharing a British national treasure with an American cultural institution, it will also create new possibilities for shared ownership and joint exhibition of prominent artworks.

The British government has given potential buyers until August 8th to make their offer.

## Lilo & Stitch & Michelangelo: Neurodiversity Among Artists

To promote the new live-action adaptation of *Lilo & Stitch*, Disney Italia has created a new video where the titular alien spends some time at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Florence. Perhaps unintentionally, Disney has highlighted one of the themes of the original film: neurodiversity.

In the new promotional video, the alien Stitch crashes his spacecraft in Florence and darts into the Gallerie dell'Accademia, causing chaos for staff and visitors alike. However, he comes across a hallway, at the end of which is Michelangelo's *David*, the museum's star attraction. He becomes calm and contemplative in admiring the work and then gains inspiration. He approaches



Michelangelo

a block of marble, climbing all over it to bite off pieces to sculpt his own masterpiece. This sculpture, showing Stitch in Greco-Roman robes, now sits at the Gallerie dell'Accademia to promote the film and the museum. It will remain there until June 20th. The intent, it seems, is to highlight the new film to museum visitors and promote Italian culture to the movie's younger audience. However, there's a connection between Stitch and Michelangelo's David that the museum and Disney may not have considered when they pitched the video idea.

Disney originally released Lilo & Stitch in 2002. This was immediately after the great success of the 1990s Disney Renaissance. However, following the release of Tarzan in 1999, Disney animated films went off in a new direction. For the next decade, Disney would put out films featuring experimental combinations of 2D and 3D animation. The screenplays were also completely original for the most part. This broke from Disney's normal practice of retelling popular stories and folk tales. In my opinion, the holy trinity from this era is Treasure Planet, Atlantis: The Lost Empire, and Lilo & Stitch. These were movies that I watched endlessly, enjoying what they had to offer even before they were considered cult classics decades later. However, it wasn't until a year ago that I gained a far more robust appreciation for Lilo & Stitch. This is when I learned that while the film might be about the unlikely friendship between a Hawaiian girl and a lab-grown chaos gremlin, it is also about the struggles of living with neurodiversity and the importance of found family.



The sculpture of Stitch at the Gallerie dell'Accademia

Nowadays, the character of Lilo is recognized as exhibiting characteristics of high-functioning autism. These include her difficulty making friends, her fixation on special interests like photography and the music of Elvis Presley, and her blunt forms of communication, specifically her inability to understand or employ sarcasm or euphemistic language when a delicate situation would call for it. While Lilo is a direct example of neurodivergent representation, Stitch serves the same purpose more metaphorically. Stitch often scares people away because of his impulses to destroy and cause chaos. However, Lilo's ability to see good in him conveys a far more profound message than expected from a children's movie. Lilo & Stitch teaches us that you are more than just a diagnosis. Even if you are characterized by a list of symptoms from a medical or psychological perspective, that doesn't define who you are, nor is it a predictor of one's ability to make friends, lead a robust social life, and engage in creative activities. For a real-life example, I could talk about myself and my own experiences as a neurodivergent person. I could

also talk about the many people I know who live very full, vibrant lives with high-functioning autism. But the new Disney promotional video has already highlighted one of the greatest neurodivergent icons of the past millennium: Michelangelo.

The arts seem like a natural place for a neurodivergent person. A strict routine, attention to detail, and a hyperfixation of special interests all work towards the makings of a great artist. Some have theorized that painters like Georgia O'Keeffe, Edvard Munch, and Vincent van Gogh may have had autism to certain degrees. It is now somewhat accepted that Michelangelo Buonarroti was neurodivergent based on descriptions from his contemporaries. In 2004, psychologists and autism specialists Muhammad Arshad and Michael Fitzgerald co-authored a short paper discussing how Michelangelo displayed signs of having high-functioning autism. They list these signs as including a "single-minded work routine, unusual lifestyle, limited interests, poor social and communication skills, and various issues of life control". They compare his behavior to other prominent artistic and intellectual figures believed to be neurodivergent, such as Isaac Newton and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Michelangelo's contemporaries describe him as somewhat of an antisocial loner. However, in his Lives of the Artists, Giorgio Vasari remarks that this aversion to social interaction was not because of a dislike of others. Instead, Vasari wrote that Michelangelo preferred to focus on his work, and that to be as great an artist as Michelangelo, one "must shun the society of others. In fact, a man who gives his time to the problems of art is never alone and never lacks food for thought, and those who attribute an artist's love of solitude to outlandish and eccentricity are mistaken". This very closely describes a neurodivergent person's preoccupation with a particular interest, which for Michelangelo was sculpture. He also developed a strict routine and engaged in somewhat unusual habits. His hyperfixation would be so strong that he would often go without bathing or changing his clothes for



days while working on a project. One of his biographers, Ascanio Condivi, wrote that he would wear his boots continuously, even to bed, to the point that “subsequently along with his boots, he sloughed off his skin, like a snake’s.”

Today, neurodiversity has become more and more accepted by the broader public. People with different manners of perception and expression often produce imaginative new ideas and enrich fields like science, technology, and the arts. Efforts to understand the ways neurodivergent people operate, whether through the disability rights movement or representation in popular media, have led to greater humanization and acceptance. However, many still hold harmful, outdated views. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., an infamous science denier and the current U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, recently made appalling statements about people with autism. He said that autism destroys a person since they “will never pay taxes, they’ll never hold a job, they’ll never play baseball, they’ll never write a poem, they’ll never go out on a date. Many of them will never use a toilet unassisted.” I, and many people I know, are living proof that this is simply not true. Perhaps if Kennedy had gotten his information from real life instead of Rain Man, there would have been a bit more empathy in his approach. Or, even better, he should understand that neurodiversity leads to great contributions to human progress, something he could learn not just through Lilo & Stitch but the work of Michelangelo and all other great neurodivergent artists.

### Scientific Breakthrough Rescues Art Conservators



The Goodyear Polymer Center at the University of Akron

Scientists have now announced the development of a new material intended to replace Beva 371, an adhesive product widely used in the field of art conservation and preservation.

For decades, Berger’s Ethylene Vinyl Acetate 371, popularly abbreviated as Beva 371, was one of the art world’s most popular conservation materials. The Austrian conservator Gustav Berger developed the substance in 1972. It was the preferred adhesive among art conservators and restorers as it was not only stronger than other similar materials but it also did not bleed through and stain canvases. It, therefore, was the preferred tool for relining a canvas, the process of placing a new canvas on the back of the original to reinforce the painting. However, Beva 371 has started to

fall out of use among conservators because manufacturers discontinued two of its main ingredients: Laropal K-80 resin in 2005 and Cellolyn 21E tackifier in 2020. Soon after, researchers at the Conservation Center of New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts partnered with the University of Akron’s School of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. Both institutions received a grant from the Getty Foundation’s Conserving Canvas, a project that provides funding to advance research for art conservation and preservation.

The product these scientists created is called Beva 371 Akron, and it has several highlights. Some adhesives are not particularly safe for continuous use over long periods of time. But the NYU and Akron researchers developed Beva 371 Akron to be durable without the use of phthalates, making it safer for people to use. Much of the coverage surrounding Beva 371 Akron’s development describes the new substance as “[spaghetti-like](#)”. However, this is only its solid form, which can be broken into smaller, pellet-like pieces that are easier to transport. It can also be produced in a pre-mixed, heat-seal form, similar to the original Beva 371. A third, solvent-free formula is also currently in the works. Chris McGlinchey, the NYU project director and former senior MoMA conservation scientist, commented on the team’s success, “It’s a big win anytime you enable a conservator to do their work more safely and effectively.”

The research team will present their complete findings at the annual meeting of the American Institute of Conservation being held in Minneapolis from May 29th to May 31<sup>st</sup>.

## The New Frida Kahlo Museum

The family of legendary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo will open a new museum in Mexico City dedicated to the artist's early life.

The main museum dedicated to Frida Kahlo in Mexico City is the Casa Azul, or the Blue House. Located in the city's Coyoacán neighborhood, the Casa Azul had been the artist's childhood home. It is also the house in which she died in 1954; her family established the Museo Frida Kahlo in 1957. The Casa Azul contains work by Kahlo, her husband Diego Rivera, and various other artists. It also displays the couple's collection of Mexican folk art, artifacts, and antiquities, and educates the public on the vibrant artistic and intellectual circle of which Kahlo was a significant part. With nearly 300,000 visitors per year, the Casa Azul is one of the most-visited museums in Mexico City. However, while the Casa Azul focuses on Kahlo as a great artist and as a partner to Diego Rivera, the new museum plans to examine Kahlo both as an individual and as a member of a larger creative family.



The Museo Frida Kahlo "Casa Azul" in Mexico City

The new museum will be located in another repurposed private residence called [the Casa Roja](#), or the Red House, located on Aguayo Street, a few blocks away from the Casa Azul. Kahlo's parents, Guillermo and Matilde originally purchased the property before passing it on to Frida's sister, Cristina. The current owner is Mara Romeo Kahlo, the artist's grand-niece and closest living heir. The Casa Roja Museum plans to focus on Frida's upbringing and her artistic influences, including her father, who worked as an architectural photographer. The Casa Roja, which will be renovated and built out by the New York architectural firm the Rockwell Group, will also dedicate exhibition spaces for showcasing the work of contemporary Latin American and female artists. Mara said that she hopes the new museum will humanize her great-aunt so that the public will come to know "the human being, my aunt." Her daughter, Frida Hentschel Romeo, stated, "This museum isn't just about her work – it's about her world. It's about how the people closest to her shaped who she became." The new museum is set to be headed by Adán García Fajardo, who currently serves as director of Mexico City's Museum of Memory & Tolerance.

The Museo Frida Kahlo plans to expand its activities in several other ways apart from the expansion to the Casa Roja. To oversee the museum, Kahlo's estate, and new projects, the artist's family has established the Fundación Kahlo. It also intends to fund the Kahlo Art Prize, and a series of grants called Las Ayudas, which will honor contemporary artists who embody Frida Kahlo's spirit and work.

The Casa Roja space of the Museo Frida Kahlo will open in Mexico City on September 27th.

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## Featured Artworks

### Finding the Blue Sky by Gail Descoeurs



*Finding the Blue Sky*

Serene, golden, and expansive, *Finding the Blue Sky* by Gail Descoeurs captures a quiet, breathtaking moment in nature. A wide, hilly meadow bathed in soft sunlight is home to golden grasses and gentle white blossoms that sway in the breeze. The eye is drawn to a cluster of lush green trees in the distance. But above all, it's the vast, brilliant blue sky that becomes the emotional center of the painting.

That sky isn't just a visual element; it's a metaphor. It represents possibility, hope, and the calm clarity we seek in life's more turbulent

moments. This piece invites the viewer to breathe deeply, to pause, and to find solace in nature's quiet gifts.

#### About the Artist

"I am drawn to wide open spaces where the earth meets the sky," says Gail Descoeurs, and it's a sentiment that radiates through all her work.

Raised on Île Perrot, a lush island near Montreal, Descoeurs grew up immersed in nature. She often joined her father on weekend "drawing walks," which sparked her lifelong interest in capturing the landscape. Though she pursued a practical path in mechanical drafting—spending over 20 years at Hewitt Caterpillar—her artistic spirit never dimmed.

Descoeurs' painting career blossomed through local art fairs, and by 2006 she left her drafting job to paint full time. Her landscapes, often inspired by the natural beauty of Québec and her global travels, blend technical precision with deep emotional resonance. Her studies with Montreal-based artist Ming Ma helped her loosen her style, resulting in dreamier, more atmospheric compositions. Her work has earned awards and been featured in American Artist Magazine, and she continues to share her knowledge through teaching.

Now based in St. Lazare, Québec, Descoeurs remains deeply connected to the natural world that first inspired her. She creates work that, in her words, "brings viewers to beautiful places of quietude."

### Le Palais de Justice by Constantin Kluge

Constantin Kluge's cityscape, *Le Palais de Justice*, depicts the Place Saint-Michel, a square in Paris located on the left bank of the River Seine. It is formed by the intersection of the Boulevard Saint Michel, the Rue Danton, and the Quai des Grands Augustins. The river lies out of view below the stone embankment. But on the opposite bank, the titular building containing the Paris public prosecutors' offices rises in the background.



*Le Palais de Justice*

*Le Palais de Justice* offers a rich sensory experience. It combines Kluge's typical impressionistic aesthetic with his precision in representing the buildings of Paris, recalling his training as an architect. The faint suggestions of the pedestrians' reflections on the sidewalk indicate recent rainfall in Paris. You then realize that the green tint characterizing most of the work is being created by the trees being reflected in the puddles below. With the smell of old stone quenched by the rain and the aroma of the flowers outside the storefront, any viewer can't help but have their imaginations transported to a rainy day in mid-century Paris.

### Boopsie Daisy by Lucia Heffernan



*Boopsie Daisy*

Stylish, whimsical, and full of character, *Boopsie Daisy* is a delightful new painting by Lucia Heffernan. The piece features a white bunny donning oversized black flower sunglasses and a chic black-and-white bow perched on her head. Set against a stark black background adorned with loose, hand-painted white daisies, the composition is simple yet striking, allowing the subject's personality to shine through.

This bunny is more than cute — she's confident. Lucia's signature touch transforms the character into a stand-in for unapologetic self-expression and playful individuality. It's classic Heffernan: technically masterful and emotionally resonant, wrapped in a humorous, fashion-forward package.

## About the Artist

Born in 1966 in Taiwan, Lucia Heffernan immigrated to the U.S. at age 13. With no knowledge of English, she used drawing as a way to communicate and connect—a habit that laid the foundation for her future as a storyteller through art.

After studying Fine Art and Design at Binghamton University, Heffernan enjoyed success in graphic design, co-founding Lead Dog Design during the 1990s tech boom. But painting remained her passion. In the 2000s, she shifted her focus back to fine art, gradually developing her now-iconic style: animals engaging in human activities, captured with classical realism and an imaginative twist.

## Idyll Wise by Amanda Greive

*Idyll Wise* by Amanda Greive invites viewers into a moment of solitude and peace amidst the chaos of the world. In this intimate painting, a woman lies on her floor, armored with flowers, representing her brief escape from the pressures of everyday life. Rather than a physical retreat to a place, the piece explores the idea that a respite can be a state of mind — a fleeting moment of tranquility in a busy world.

The flowers that envelop her act as her personal idyll, offering both protection and comfort. This delicate armor symbolizes peace and contentment, yet it is not without its vulnerabilities. A small cricket in the corner of the composition serves as a reminder that this sense of calm cannot be fully immune to external influence. Despite the cricket's presence, the woman remains undisturbed, at peace in her temporary sanctuary.



*Idyll Wise*

Through *Idyll Wise*, Greive explores themes of self-protection and emotional respite, while highlighting the balance between fragility and strength, qualities that flowers embody as a symbol. This hyper-realistic oil painting seamlessly blends beauty and vulnerability, offering a nuanced reflection on the complexities of inner peace in a world fraught with external pressures.

## About the Artist:

Amanda Greive (b. 1978) is a contemporary artist based in Central Illinois. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in visual arts from the University of Illinois at Springfield in 2008 and has exhibited her work both locally and nationally. Greive's artistry was recognized in 2017 when she was named a finalist in the Figurativas exhibit in Barcelona. She has also won the prestigious Rehs Contemporary Award in the 13th ARC International Salon.

Her work is deeply rooted in hyper-realism, blending classical and contemporary symbolism. Greive's focus is on exploring the complex emotions embedded within the human condition, particularly in response to gender-based stereotypes. Her paintings frequently feature women in surreal poses, often with flowers symbolizing femininity, beauty, fragility, and strength. Greive's work is a conversation on societal pressures, emotional rawness, and the symbolic ambiguity of the images she portrays.

## Peony & Kwannon by Hermann Dudley Murphy

Hermann Dudley Murphy's *Peony & Kwannon* is a thoughtful, mature work that starkly contrasts with the artist's earlier impressionistic work. Murphy, originally celebrated as one of the Boston Impressionists and the proprietor of a frame shop, took a fascinating turn in his career. He abandoned the loose brushwork of his youth to delve into the realm of traditional floral still-life painting. This transition is evident in this painting, dating to 1931. However, it would be a mistake to describe this



elegant work as simple, as not only is its subject beautifully composed, but there is a substantial amount of rich symbolism throughout the work.



*Peony & Kwannon*

The term Kwannon is the Japanese version of the word Guanyin, the figure in Buddhism and Chinese folk religion associated with mercy. This is the figure represented on the textile in the background. Although typically referred to in feminine terms, Guanyin is represented here with her robes open at the front, symbolizing androgyny and conveying that mercy resides in everyone. She carries a vessel of water in one hand and the branch of a willow tree in the other. The water is meant to represent purity, while the Willow branch represents strength and flexibility. The way Murphy has positioned the textile in relation to the flower makes it seem like she is bringing the peony into being with a flick of a wand. The two subjects also represent beauty of two kinds. The white flowers symbolize natural beauty, while Guanyin represents kindness and compassion, embodying inner human beauty.

The meaning behind the painting's subjects and their placement in relation to one another is too complex for it to have been an accident on Murphy's part. It demonstrates that the artist included the Japanese textile not just for its exotic appeal, but because he had a greater understanding of what Guanyin is meant to represent. It shows a level of artistic appreciation and cultural sensitivity not often seen among his contemporaries.

### **Elizabeth by Hiroshi Furuyoshi**

A quiet, contemplative moment unfolds in *Elizabeth*, Hiroshi Furuyoshi's captivating portrait of a young girl seated on a bench, dressed in pure white and gently cradling a bouquet of flowers across her lap. Behind her looms a remarkable backdrop: a fragment of the famed Battle of Roncevaux Pass tapestry, woven in Tournai between 1450 and 1475 and now housed at London's Victoria & Albert Museum. This historic Flemish tapestry, originally part of a grand narrative cycle chronicling the tales of Charlemagne, adds an extraordinary layer of visual and thematic complexity. It juxtaposed the innocence and stillness of childhood with the chaos and heroism of medieval battle.

Furuyoshi's meticulous brushwork and subtle handling of light lend a dreamlike serenity to the composition. Elizabeth's calm expression and delicate posture contrast poignantly with the swirling drama depicted behind her, echoing the timeless dance between youth and history, peace and conflict.



*Elizabeth*

#### **About the Artist**

Born in Hiroshima in 1959, Hiroshi Furuyoshi was raised amid history and tradition. His family's antiques shop served as his first gallery, filled with Japanese paintings, calligraphy, and curiosities that fired his imagination from an early age. As a child, he was equally enchanted by manga and the masterpieces of Western art. He pored over art books and discovered treasures like *The Red Boy* by Sir Thomas Lawrence, an image that ignited his desire to master oil painting.

Though formal art school in Kyoto offered little support for classical realism, Furuyoshi sought out traditional training under realist master Toshiro Aoki, who introduced him to seventeenth-century Dutch techniques. This grounding in Old Master approaches would shape Furuyoshi's distinct blend of Eastern refinement and Western tradition.

Initially exhibiting miniature canvases in Tokyo during the 1980s, Furuyoshi gained early acclaim. But it was his unexpected breakout in the international auction market that brought him to global attention. His painting *Julien*, a cabinet of curiosities rendered in exacting detail, fetched nearly six times its

estimate in London in 2010. Subsequent works, including Maya and Adelaide, followed with even greater success.

Now based in Kyoto, Furuyoshi continues to build an international following for his intimately scaled, richly detailed compositions—each a portal to another world. In Elizabeth, he invites us to consider the elegant tension between past and present, imagination and memory, history and the moment.

The Rehs Family

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