

# ABOUT THE ART

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Art from  
the Ancient  
Mediterranean  
and Europe  
before 1850

Gallery 15

ACKLAND

## QUESTIONS?

Contact us at [acklandlearn@unc.edu](mailto:acklandlearn@unc.edu)

## ACKLAND ART MUSEUM

The University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill  
101 S. Columbia Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
Phone: 919-966-5736

## MUSEUM HOURS

Wed – Sat 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Sun 1 – 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.

Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve,  
Christmas Day, & New Year's Day.

## About About the Art

The Ackland's *About the Art* guides offer information about every work of art from the Museum's collection that is on view in galleries 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. All of these galleries are marked on the Gallery Map available at the desk in the Lobby. In the bottom right corner of the label beside each object, there is an open book symbol with a number. You can find the same symbol and number on the top of the corresponding page in *About the Art*.

Within each entry, you can find the following information:

- At the top of the page, you'll see a thumbnail image, the title of the object, who made it and with what materials, and where and when it was made
- Next, you'll see bullet points with information or observations about the object (more or fewer, depending on how much we know about the object so far). There is no standard formula for what kinds of information appears, but you will often find comments on historical context, style, and materials.
- In keeping with the Ackland's tagline, "Look Close, Think Far," the first bullet point will often highlight something visible in the work of art itself.
- You will find names, phrases, and concepts that could be good internet search terms for those who want to learn more
- When specialized terms are used, you'll see a definition, helpful contextual information, or language suitable for an internet search.
- Whenever we know the artist's name, there will be some details about the artist's life, often under the heading "About the Artist," but sometimes as one of the bullet points.

For those visitors who want to engage further with an object, we also suggest other resources to investigate on our website: [ackland.org/education/learning-resources](http://ackland.org/education/learning-resources).

The authors of *About the Art* include Ackland curators and educators who use a variety of sources. They consult museum records, art historical research, comments from outside specialists, and more.

## About Gallery 15: Art from the Ancient Mediterranean and Europe before 1850

The art in this gallery, like that in Gallery 13, focuses on the artistic traditions established in the ancient Mediterranean that continued through subsequent centuries in Europe and the United States. This gallery picks up chronologically where Gallery 13 ends and includes about two dozen objects from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. They include paintings and sculpture associated with the Christian faith, subjects inspired by ancient Greek and Roman literature, landscapes, and portraits. One wall features a changing display that highlights the Dutch and Flemish drawings given to the Ackland by Drs. Sheldon and Leena Peck.



Domenichino  
Italian, 1581 – 1641  
**Landscape with Fishermen,  
Hunters, and Washerwomen**, c. 1604  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 66.18.1

## About the Art

- Italian art criticism of Domenichino's era describes the concept of variety, in which paintings include multiple kinds of everything. Here we see people of all ages, nude and clothed, performing varied activities in numerous poses, all in a setting that includes different bodies of water, types of architecture, land forms, and animals.
- Wealthy Roman patrons liked landscapes like this one, combining natural and human-made elements in an orderly structure. Rather than emphasizing the vast distance between foreground and horizon with a sweeping view, Domenichino placed boundaries between the foreground (the shoreline), middle ground (architecture), and distance. Viewers can then experience the scene's depth in a more measured way.
- For many years, scholars thought this was a copy of a painting by Domenichino, but recently it has been argued that it is an original. The argument is based on careful comparison of many of the picture's stylistic characteristics, and on the presence of so many figures in complex poses. At this point in Domenichino's career he wanted more commissions for narrative scenes and knew he needed to demonstrate his skill in depicting human action.

## About the Artist

1581: Born Domenico Zampieri in October in Bologna, Italy  
c. 1595: Studied in Bologna in the famous academy run by Agostino, Annibale, and Ludovico Carracci  
1602: Moved to Rome, Italy  
c. 1604: Painted the Ackland's *Landscape*  
1614: Became known as Domenichino  
1621: Appointed Papal Architect by Pope Gregory XV  
1631: Worked in Naples, Italy, on a difficult project to decorate the Cathedral  
1641: Died April 6 in Naples, possibly by poisoning according to some accounts



Vicente Carducho

Italian, active in Spain, c. 1576 – 1638

**The Stigmatization of Saint Francis**, c. 1610–30

oil on canvas

The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 95.3

## About the Art

- Saint Bonaventure's *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi* (1263) describes the event depicted here. While praying in the mountains with a companion, Francis had a vision of a winged seraph carrying the image of the Crucifixion, seen in the top left corner of the painting. From that moment on, he was marked with stigmata — wounds on his hands, feet, and side like the ones Jesus received at his crucifixion.
- The painting was intended to convey Saint Francis' humility, so the artist positioned him kneeling and emphasized his coarse, patched robe.
- Although Vicente Carducho lived centuries after Saint Francis' death in 1226, he portrayed the saint as a recognizable individual. In doing so, he was following the guidance of medieval descriptions, which described him as thin (even gaunt), with a prominent nose.

## About the Artist

c. 1576: Born in Florence, Italy

1585: Moved to Spain with his brother, Bartolomé, who became a painter at the court of King Philip II

1601: Documented working for the Spanish court at Valladolid, then at Lerma

1609: Became an official Painter to the King

c. 1610–30: Painted the Ackland's *Stigmatization of St. Francis*

1632: Completed a cycle of fifty-six paintings for a Spanish Carthusian monastery

1633: Published an art treatise, the *Diálogos de la Pintura*, or *Dialogues on Painting*

1638: Died in Madrid, Spain

Chat with this work of art using ARTBOT. Instructions available in the Museum lobby.



Valentin de Boulogne  
French, 1591 – 1632  
**Saint John the Evangelist,**  
c. 1622–23  
oil on canvas  
The William A. Whitaker  
Foundation Art Fund, 63.4.1

## About the Art

- Saint John the Evangelist is known as the author of the Gospel of John. Valentin de Boulogne shows him transcribing text from the scroll in his left hand to the bound book at his right, pausing momentarily to look in the viewer's direction. The eagle is the traditional emblem of Saint John.
- The contrast between the deep shadows and the brilliant highlights (which cause John to squint) coordinate well with a line from the opening passages of the Gospel of John: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." Latin writing on the scroll he holds also refers to this passage.
- Valentin emulated the style of the Italian artist Caravaggio, using dramatic effects of light and shadow (known in Italian as *chiaroscuro*) and showing his figures as ordinary people rather than idealized figures. These choices contribute to the profound sense of immediacy in this painting.
- This painting might have been one of a set of four depicting the evangelists: Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. King Louis XIV of France owned a similar, later set by Valentin.

## About the Artist

1592: Baptized January 3 in Coulommiers, France

1620: Documented in Rome, Italy (may have moved to Rome several years earlier)

c. 1622–23: Painted the Ackland's *St. John the Evangelist*

1627: Began to receive commissions from Cardinal Francesco Barberini

1629: Received a commission for an altarpiece in St. Peter's Basilica

1632: Died August 18 or 19 in Rome as a result of bathing in a cold fountain, according to one account



Guercino  
Italian, 1591 – 1666  
**Assumption of the Virgin**, 1655  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 82.12.1

## About the Art

- Even with very few figures and details of the setting, viewers can tell that something important is taking place. Mary's gaze beyond the picture's frame, her slightly parted lips, and outstretched arms suggest her dramatic reaction to whatever it is. Her toes peeking out from beneath her robe, the swirling folds in her blue mantle, and the loose strands of her hair suggest that she is moving upward.
- The Assumption of the Virgin is a subject that depicts Mary being summoned to heaven. The angels, clouds, and golden background indicate that she is already in a heavenly sphere, but Guercino allows us glimpses of blue sky through the parted clouds behind the angel at right and at the lower corners of the canvas, and by implication, the earthly realm below.
- A note in Guercino's account book lists the patron, price, and payment date for this painting: a man named Padre Abbate Ducino paid him 50 ducats on April 22, 1655.

## About the Artist

1591: Born February 2 in Cento, Italy, named Giovanni Francesco Barbieri; as a child he was given the nickname Guercino, or "little squinter."

1621: Went to Rome, Italy, to work for Pope Gregory XV

1623–42: Worked primarily in Cento, but also worked for patrons in France

1646: Moved to Bologna, Italy

1655: Painted the Ackland's *Assumption*; Queen Christina of Sweden visited his studio

1666: Died December 22 in Bologna





Klaes Molenaer  
Dutch, 1626/1629 - 1676  
**The Beach at Zandvoort with  
Fishermen Unloading their Catch,**  
ca. 1655-65  
oil on canvas  
Promised Gift of Richard Pardue,  
L2023.3

## About the Art

- Under a cloud-filled sky, men, women, and children assemble along the beach to gather and process the day's catch of fish for the market. A lighthouse may have helped guide the distant fishing boats to shore, though the tall wooden beacon situated on the large dune at the center may have served a similar function.
- The small village in the distance has been identified as Zandvoort. Located along the coast of the North Sea about five miles west of Haarlem, the village was once a busy fishing center. Today, Zandvoort is a major beach resort in the Netherlands, attracting tourists, vacationers, and motor racing enthusiasts.
- Herring was an especially profitable commodity at the time and formed an important part of the Dutch economy until about the mid-eighteenth century. The large fish in this painting, especially those in the lower left foreground, however, appear to be cod.
- The horseback rider at the center of the composition looks somewhat out of place amid the laborers, especially due to his finer clothing and sword. Perhaps he is financially invested in the outcome of the daily catch or is simply enjoying a morning ride.
- Although he worked in Amsterdam for nearly ten years, Klaes Molenaer spent most of his life in Haarlem. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Haarlem enjoyed widespread economic success as a hub for the beer-brewing trade, shipbuilding, and textile manufacturing, and attracted many talented artists due to the beauty of the surrounding Dutch countryside and its proximity to the sea.

## About the Artist

1626/1629: Born in Haarlem, The Netherlands

1637-1648: Lived in Amsterdam and likely studied painting with his brother Jan Miense Molenaer (1610/1611-1668)

1651: Enrolled in the Haarlem painting guild

c. 1655-65: Painted this composition

1676: Died in Haarlem, The Netherlands





Gaspard Dughet  
French, active in Italy, 1615 – 1675

**Landscape with Figures,**  
c. 1665

oil on canvas

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Richard W. Levy in honor of the Ackland Art Museum's 40th Anniversary, 98.21

## About the Art

- This painting is composed to represent receding space (from the vegetation in the foreground to the mountains in the distance) within a carefully balanced frame. At the right edge, the trees create a boundary to the scene and direct viewers' attention back to the center. At the left, in the middle distance, the buildings on the hill perform a similar function.
- While Gaspard Dughet's landscape evokes the countryside of central Italy, with certain characteristic geography, vegetation, and architecture, it does not represent a specific location.
- The lounging figures in the sunshine at the center of the scene wear clothing meant to look like that of classical Rome. For seventeenth-century viewers, they suggested an idealized notion of the long history of civilizations in Italy.
- This painting was engraved in 1828 by an artist named Adolf Heydeck, making the composition more widely available for people to see. An inscription on the engraving indicates that the painting belonged at that time to Baron Liersdorff in Brunswick.



Adolf von Heydeck, *Landscape with Fisherman in a Rocky Landscape*, 1828. Engraving. 19.9 x 27.4 cm. Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark

## About the Artist

1615: Born June 15 to French parents in Rome, Italy

1635: Apprenticed to Nicolas Poussin

1649-53: Painted works commissioned by Pope Innocent X

1657: Elected to the artists' academy in Rome, the Accademia di San Luca

c. 1665: Painted the Ackland's *Landscape with Figures*

1675: Died May 25 in Rome



Jan Weenix  
Dutch, 1642 – 1719  
**Still Life with Hunting Trophies,**  
1680s–90s?  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 84.43.1

## About the Art

- Jan Weenix's painting depicts both an aristocratic hunting scene (in the middle ground) and its aftermath, the trophies strewn across the foreground. The awkward poses of the dead deer and heron form a large triangle at the composition's center, flanked by two living animals — a hunting dog at left and a monkey at the right.
- Throughout the painting Weenix carefully depicts different textures, such as fur, feathers, polished metal and wood, tassels, as well as living and wilting vegetation. Not only did this captivate viewers' senses, but it also functioned as a reminder of life's transitory nature. Flowers fade, fruit rots, the sun sets, and animals and humans live and die.
- In the seventeenth century hunting large game was restricted to royalty and the aristocratic class. Even though members of the middle class could not hunt animals like deer, many could afford large hunting paintings like this one. Owning one demonstrated the spending power they had acquired and, perhaps, the social status to which they aspired.

## About the Artist

1642: Born in June in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

1664: Became a member of the artists' guild, the Guild of St. Luke in Utrecht, the Netherlands

1675: Moved to Amsterdam

1680: Began to paint still life hunting scenes

1680s–90s: Painted the Ackland's *Still Life with Hunting Trophies*

c. 1702–14: Worked as court painter to Elector Palatinate John William of Düsseldorf, Germany

1719: Buried September 19 in Amsterdam



Jan Boeckhorst  
German, 1605 – 1668  
**The Triumphant Christ Forgiving Repentant Sinners,**  
c. 1660  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 72.1.1

## About the Art

- Jesus receives a group of figures from the Bible who are famous for having sinned and then repented: King David, the Repentant Thief (kneeling on his cross in the foreground), Mary Magdalene, the Prodigal Son, and Saint Peter (weeping in the background at the right).
- The cross represents Jesus's sacrifice while the serpent beneath his right foot symbolizes original sin. The globe encircled by a snake under his left foot is the earth while the skull to its side signifies death, over which Jesus is victorious.
- A preparatory study for this painting made in watercolor shows the complete composition of the finished painting and is now housed at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.
- Boeckhorst was one of many Flemish artists who worked as an assistant in Peter Paul Rubens' studio and later exemplified his style, as seen here, in his use of a vibrant palette and fluid brushwork.

## About the Artist

1605: Born in Münster, Germany or Rees, Belgium  
1626: Moved to Antwerp  
1633: Made a free master in the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp  
1635–37: Toured Italy  
1639: Visited Rome  
c. 1660: Created the Ackland's painting  
1668: Died in Antwerp



Unidentified artist

Flemish, Antwerp

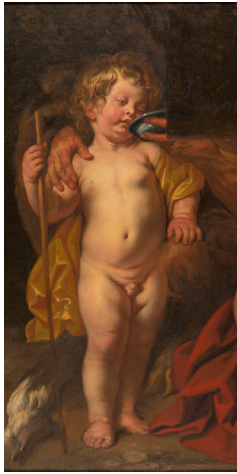
**Pair of Angels**, c. 1700

linden wood

Gift of the Tyche Foundation, 2010.31.1 and  
2010.31.2

## About the Art

- These angels appear to float through the clouds, held aloft by winged infants, also known as putti. With great technical skill and intricacy, the artist carved the angels' delicate, emotive features, graceful forms, and dramatic swirling drapery, creating a sense of movement and vitality.
- Although the Dutch Republic in the northern Netherlands had adopted Protestantism by the seventeenth century, the southern Netherlands, which was under Spanish rule, remained Catholic. The Church continued to commission religious art, including painted altarpieces and large-scale sculptural plans to aid the faithful during worship. These sculptures likely once belonged to a large altarpiece, possibly depicting the Adoration or Lamentation, subjects from the beginning and end of Jesus' life.
- They are sculpted from the wood of a linden tree, or lime tree, a deciduous species found throughout Europe and North America that has been prized by sculptors for centuries for its fine grain and ease of carving.
- The name of the artist who created these works remains unknown. The drapery and facial expressions, however, are reminiscent of the work of Willem Ignatius Kerricx, a prominent artist whose sculptures adorned many churches in Flanders.



Jacob Jordaens  
Flemish, 1593 – 1678

**The Child Jupiter, Fragment from the Nurture of Jupiter,**

late 1630s

oil on canvas

Ackland Fund, 79.13.1

Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 1991, was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## About the Art

- A young boy drinks milk from a shallow bowl that is held by a figure behind him. Although that figure's torso and face have been lost, the hairy legs and hooves indicate he is a satyr, a mythological spirit of the woods and mountains.
- This fragment was originally part of a larger painting that depicted the childhood of the god Jupiter. As told in Greek and Roman accounts, Jupiter's father Saturn devoured all of his children at birth to prevent the prophecy that he would be overthrown by one of them. To save Jupiter, Saturn's wife duped her husband into swallowing a rock wrapped in swaddling clothes and hid the child on the island of Crete where he was cared for by devoted nymphs and satyrs.
- Jacob Jordaens' rich, saturated palette and fluent brushwork show the influence of Peter Paul Rubens, an internationally renowned artist whom Jordaens assisted on several painting projects.

## About the Artist

1593: Born May 20 in Antwerp

1621: Appointed the dean of the Guild of Saint Luke, but only held the post for a year

1630s: Created the large painting, now lost, from which the Ackland's fragment originates

1640: Became the most prominent artist in the southern Netherlands after Rubens' death

1656: Joined the Dutch Reformed Church

1678: Died October 18 in Antwerp of an illness that also took the life of his daughter Elizabeth





Nicolas Chaperon  
French, active in Rome, 1612 – 1656  
**The Nurture of Jupiter**, c. 1645  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 68.40.1

## About the Art

- A young child crowned with a wreath of vine leaves heartily drinks milk from a goat while a goatherd, with some difficulty, steadies the animal. Women enjoy the musical accompaniment of the pipes, played by the figure in the foreground, as they gather honey and grapes to add to the baby's nourishment.
- This work depicts the childhood of the Roman god Jupiter who was raised on the island of Crete by nymphs. As recounted in Hesiod's *Theogony*, after Jupiter's father Saturn was told that one of his children would usurp him, he swallowed each of them at birth. To save Jupiter, Saturn's wife tricked her husband into swallowing a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes instead. Raised in this idyllic setting, Jupiter eventually became the ruler of all the gods.
- The subject of Jupiter's childhood was popular in Chaperon's time, perhaps because it shared parallels with the newly crowned Louis XIV. Made king at the tender age of five, Louis was raised in a protected environment and was likewise destined to rule.

## About the Artist

1612: Born

1640-1642: Traveled to Rome and worked under Nicolas Poussin

c. 1645: Created the Ackland's painting, which was later engraved by Poussin

1649: Published 52 engravings after Raphael's Vatican Old Testament frescoes

1651: Mentioned in the literature for the last time as being in Rome

1656: Died around this time, possibly in Rome



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Unidentified artist, French, 18th century  
Etienne-Maurice Falconet, French, 1716 – 1791,  
designer

For Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, French,  
founded 1740

**Pygmalion and Galatea**, c. 1780

hard-paste biscuit porcelain

Gift of Richard D. Pardue in loving tribute to his  
mother, 2020.19ab

## About the Art

- A classical beauty bends slightly forward with her face lowered to meet a kneeling man who appears elated with mouth agape and hands clenched together.
- This sculpture grouping depicts the story of Pygmalion and Galatea, recounted by the first century Roman poet Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. After carving the most beautiful figure of a woman out of ivory, the sculptor Pygmalion fell in love with his creation and in desperation, beseeched the goddess Venus to bring his masterpiece to life. Galatea, as she was later called, was thus transformed from sculpture to living being.
- Made of unglazed hard-paste porcelain and produced by the Royal Manufactory of Sèvres, this work is based on a marble sculpture by Etienne-Maurice Falconet, one of the great French sculptors of the rococo period.
- The socle, or base, is produced with soft-paste porcelain, or imitation porcelain, and is glazed with a brilliant turquoise enamel called *bleu céleste*. The gilt inscription extolls the life-giving power of love and has been credited to the poet and playwright Voltaire (1694-1778).

## About the Artist

1716: Born December 1 in Paris

1754: Accepted into the Académie Royale

1757: Appointed the director of sculpture production at the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory

1761: Made professor at the Académie Royale

1763: Exhibited his large marble sculpture of *Pygmalion and Galatea* at the Paris Salon

1766-1778: Lived in Russia

1791: Died January 24 in Paris





## 14

Johann Joachim Kändler, German, 1706 – 1775  
for Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, German, active  
from 1710 to the present  
**Apollo**, from a *Bath of Apollo* centerpiece, c. 1748  
porcelain with clear glaze  
Gift of the William E. Shipp Estate, by exchange, 2012.7

### About the Art

- Originally, this sculpture was part of a large group of porcelain figures that showed the god Apollo attended by six nymphs. His left foot extended forward, he is about to step down into a bath from the rock where he sits.
- Sculptural groups like this were made to decorate banquet tables in royal palaces and residences of the very wealthy. On the base of the Ackland's figure are the letters (H and I/J), which would have guided servants when matching up the other pieces of the group when it was put on display.
- The porcelain factory in Meissen, Germany, where Johann Joachim Kändler worked as a modeler, was the first in Europe to successfully produce hard-paste porcelain. Before that, Europeans had to import porcelain from China. Collectors loved porcelain's delicacy, durability, and white – even translucent – color.

### About the Artist

1706: Born June 15 in Arnsdorf, Germany  
1723: Worked in Dresden, Germany  
1730: Court sculptor to Frederick-Augustus I, Elector of Saxony  
1731: Began working at the Meissen Porcelain Factory  
c. 1748: Made the Ackland's *Apollo*  
1775: Died May 17 in Meissen, Germany



Angelica Kauffmann  
Swiss, active in England, 1741-1807  
**Portrait of Mary Pocklington of Winthorpe Hall,**  
c. 1774  
oil on canvas  
The Peck Collection, 2022.17.2

## About the Art

- Mary Pocklington stands in a wooded landscape wearing a white dress with a red sash. Leaning on a plinth bearing an urn, she holds a book in her right hand, her index finger placed between the pages. Her gaze and gesture at something beyond the picture plane to the right suggest she may have been interrupted from her reading.
- Among the most accomplished painters of the eighteenth century, Angelica Kauffmann likely painted Mary Pocklington's portrait shortly before her marriage to banker Roger Pocklington in 1774.
- This portrait epitomizes the Grand Manner style of painting promoted by Kauffmann's colleague and the first president of the Royal Academy in London, Joshua Reynolds. Based on the tenets of Classical antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, the Grand Manner was meant to engage the viewer's intellect through esteemed subject matter.
- Portraits, despite being considered low on the hierarchy of subjects in painting at the time, could be elevated to a higher status by incorporating references to the Classical past. Kauffmann depicts Mary Pocklington in an antique-style costume standing next to a potted urn based on Classical models, thus combining the likeness of the sitter with the prestige of a history painting.

## About the Artist

1741: Born October 30 in Chur, Switzerland

1754-57: Traveled to Italy for the first time

1762: Became a member of the Accademia di Disegno in Florence, Italy

1765: Elected as a member of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, Italy

1766-81: Opened a studio in London, England

1768: Became a founding member of the Royal Academy in London, one of only two women to do so

c. 1774: Painted the Ackland's portrait

1781: Returned to Italy

1807: Died November 5 in Rome, Italy



Gilbert Stuart  
American, 1755 – 1828  
**Mrs. Daniel Denison Rogers, 1811**  
oil on panel  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Cabot Sedgwick, 80.65.1

## About the Art

- The wall behind Elizabeth Denison Rogers makes the space seem quite shallow, but by tilting her chair toward the viewer, Gilbert Stuart suggests that she projects forward into the viewer's space.
- This portrait was painted during a period when President Thomas Jefferson restricted the import of European goods, making it difficult for Stuart to acquire canvas. A Boston woodworker treated the smooth surface of wood panels to imitate the texture of canvas so Stuart could achieve the illusion of oil on canvas.
- Elizabeth Bromfield (1763-1833) married Daniel Denison Rogers, the widower of her older half-sister, in 1796. In 1811 Stuart painted her portrait along with her husband's, which is now in a private collection. Until 1980, when this painting was given to the Ackland, it belonged to the Rogers' heirs.

## About the Artist

1755: Born in Kingstown, Rhode Island

1775: Studied in London, England, with the painter Benjamin West

1787: Exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London; left London for Dublin, Ireland

1793: Returned to America

1795-96: Painted portraits of George Washington

1803: Worked in Washington, the new capital of the United States

1805: Settled in Boston, Massachusetts

1811: Painted the Ackland's *Mrs. Daniel Denison Rogers*

1828: Died in Boston



Richard Westall  
British, 1765 – 1836  
**The Sword of Damocles**, 1812  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 79.10.1

## About the Art

- This dramatic scene from ancient Greek and Roman accounts tells the story of Dionysius (the tyrant of Syracuse) and the young courtier Damocles, who envied the ruler's wealth and power. When Damocles accepted Dionysius' offer to change places for a day, he was terrified to see a sword dangling by a single horse hair over his head – a symbol of the dangers that accompanied Dionysius' position.
- The principal action takes place in the center of the painting, around Dionysius' throne and Damocles' startled expression. Behind the wall draped in pink, curious onlookers lean in to watch; at the painting's very foreground, the kneeling woman offering a wine glass occupies the space closest to viewers, signaling to us where to direct our attention.
- The profusion of ancient Greek and Roman ornaments – in the architecture, the table setting, the furniture, and the costumes – attest to Richard Westall's careful study of Classical culture.
- Westall signed and dated this painting on a low upholstered stool placed at the very bottom of the picture.

## About the Artist

1765: Born in Hertford, England

1784: Exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, England

1794: Admitted to the Royal Academy as a full member

1811: Painted a first version of the *Sword of Damocles*

1812: Painted the Ackland's *Sword of Damocles*

1836: Died December 4 in London



Hiram Powers  
American, 1805 – 1873  
**Duff Green**, 1834–37  
marble

Transferred from the Art Department Collection, 56.3.1

## About the Art

- Hiram Powers combined characteristics of ancient Roman portraits — bust-length images in pure white marble, eyes without pupils — with some individualized details of Green's appearance. For example, a few strands of hair brush against his ears, and faint lines on his chin denote the particular set of his jaw.
- Green (1791-1875), was a military man, active in Missouri politics, and a prominent newspaper editor in Washington, D.C. He owned slaves, defended slavery, and actively worked on behalf of the Confederacy. After the Civil War, Green was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson for his support of the Confederacy.
- In a letter from Powers to Green about the portrait, which Green commissioned, the artist alluded to some of the steps in the process of creating it. Powers first made a plaster model of it (now in the Smithsonian American Art Museum) and completed the marble version later.
- Powers was the most famous and accomplished American sculptor of the nineteenth century. A bust by Powers of Green's friend John C. Calhoun is on view at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh.

## About the Artist

1805: Born July 29 in Woodstock, Vermont

1819: Moved to Ohio

1834: Moved to Washington

1834–37: Made the Ackland's *Duff Green*

1837: Moved to Florence, Italy

1845: First exhibited his most famous work, the Greek Slave, in London, England

1873: Died June 27 in Florence



## 20

Eugène Delacroix  
French, 1798 – 1863

### **Cleopatra and the Peasant, 1838**

oil on canvas

Ackland Fund, 59.15.1

Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 1990, was made possible by the generous support of the Friends of French Art.

### About the Art

- This painting represents a scene from William Shakespeare's tragic play *Antony and Cleopatra*, which tells the story of the ancient Egyptian queen who committed suicide after her defeat and capture by the Romans. In this scene, a peasant presents her with the poisonous snake he has smuggled into her prison cell, concealed in a basket of figs. Many artists chose to depict the moment the snake is biting, but Eugène Delacroix opted instead for the moment before, when Cleopatra is contemplating her death.
- When this painting was exhibited in Paris at the official Salon of 1839 it received mixed reviews. Several critics assumed Delacroix's source was the ancient Roman historian Plutarch rather than Shakespeare. They thought this representation of Cleopatra was arrogant and imperious, too unlike the dainty queen Plutarch described.
- Delacroix's Cleopatra may be modeled after a famous French actress who went by the name of Rachel.
- One of Delacroix's preparatory drawings for this painting, in which he worked on the placement of the peasant's arm, is also in the Ackland collection.

### About the Artist

1798: Born April 26 in Charenton-Saint-Maurice, France

1822: Exhibited for the first time at the official Salon in Paris, France: *Dante and Virgil in Hell*

1832: Accompanied the Comte de Morny on a diplomatic mission; traveled to Spain, Morocco, and Algeria

1838: Painted the Ackland's *Cleopatra and the Peasant*

1855: Exhibited 35 paintings at the World's Fair in Paris

1863: Died August 13 in Paris



Eugène Delacroix, *Study for Cleopatra and the Peasant*, c. 1838. Graphite on paper. 34 x 22.5 cm.

Ackland Fund and Gift of Leena and Sheldon Peck, 2015.6. Ackland Art Museum.





## 21

Ammi Phillips

American, 1788 – 1865

**Girl in a Red Dress**, c. 1835

oil on canvas

32 3/8 x 27 3/8 in. (82.2 x 69.5 cm)

Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra  
Collection, 1992.57, L2023.2.2

### About the Art

- Seated on an upholstered stool, the unidentified young sitter in *Girl in a Red Dress* holds a sprig from a strawberry plant in one hand and a single ripe berry on its stem in the other. The color of the fruit, her strands of coral beads, and her shoes all complement the red of her dress, which is echoed further in the patterned carpet.
- This painting is one of five portraits of young sitters wearing red dresses, all made during a five-year period, that are attributed to Phillips.
- American portraiture traditions of the time emphasized the symbolic meanings of the accessories included. For instance, in *Girl in a Red Dress*, the dog would symbolize fidelity of character, the coral necklace would identify the wearer as female, and the strawberries would symbolize youthful vitality.

### About the Artist

1788: Born April 24 in Colebrook, Connecticut

1809: Took out advertisements in *The Berkshire Reporter* as a painter of “correct likenesses”

1811: First known signed portraits appear

c. 1835: Painted *Girl in a Red Dress*

1850: Recorded for the first time in a census as “portrait painter”

1865: Died July 11 in Curtisville, Massachusetts