Paintings

Acquaint yourself with the MIA’s impressive collection of European and American painting from the Renaissance to the present day, with opportunities to gain insights from leading experts and scholars.

During the 1920s and ‘30s, American painting enjoyed a surprising renaissance. Galleries, collectors, and even the U.S. government rushed to fund American art, especially if it portrayed American life. This period was unique in the nation’s artistic history because of an unprecedented rejection of foreign influence. American artists began to turn inward, painting scenes of American landscapes, characters, and ways of life.

Using artworks from the MIA’s collection, this lecture will offer an introduction to so-called American Scene Painting during the interwar period, and consider why American artists—and so long enamored of Paris—left “bohemia” for home.

Titian and His Followers: From Sacred to Profane

Sunday, February 6
2 to 3 p.m.
Pillsbury Auditorium
Paul Joannides

Like many great painters, Titian changed his creative approach toward both subject and medium over his lifetime. This talk will place his great cycle of paintings, the poesie (c. 1553–62), within the context of his life's work and compare it to his contemporaries. Joannides will trace Titian's initial variety in color and handling in his early work and the effect it had on his contemporaries; his transition to a more restrained style and emphasis on narrative within apparently iconic compositions; and his move towards mythological subject matter from the 1520s and on.

Paul Joannides, Ph.D., is a professor of art history at Cambridge University, where he also earned his doctoral degree. He has published many articles, essays, catalogues, and books, including The Drawings of Raphael (1983), Masaccio and Masolino (1993), and Titian to 1518: The Assumption of Genius (2003).
Leo & His Circle: The Life of Leo Castelli

Saturday, February 19
2 to 3 p.m.
Pillsbury Auditorium
Annie Cohen-Solal

Leo Castelli reigned for decades as America’s most influential art dealer. Castelli was the first to exhibit artists now considered 20th-century masters, such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, and Cy Twombly. Annie Cohen-Solal’s latest book, Leo and His Circle, narrates the course of Castelli’s power and influence, as well as his life as an Italian Jew. Drawing on her friendship with the subject, as well as a knack for archival excavation, Cohen-Solal presents the elegant, shrewd, irresistible, and enigmatic figure at the very center of postwar American art, bringing a new understanding of its evolution.

Born in pre-independence Algeria, Annie Cohen-Solal is a French academic, writer, historian, and biographer. Her most famous work is a biography of Jean-Paul Sartre, Sartre: A Life, which has been translated into 16 languages. Other titles include Painting American (Random House, 2001), about the rise of American artists from the 19th to the 20th century, and Leo and His Circle: The Life of Leo Castelli (Random House, 2010).

She has taught at New York University, the University of Berlin, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Université de Paris XIII. Currently she is Visiting Arts Professor at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. In 2009 she was presented with the Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honor, the highest decoration in France.
Throughout the 18th century, there existed in England a widespread belief that the greatest painters of the High Renaissance in Venice, above all Titian, exploited some ingenious but long-forgotten “system” of painting, and that such glorious effects of color and light could only have been attained using some technical “process” that surely awaited rediscovery. In 1796–97, the London fraudster Thomas Provis and his artist daughter, Jemima Ann, exploited that conviction with spectacular success by peddling a fake manuscript that purported to describe that process. They called it “the Venetian Secret,” and charged handsomely for access to it.

In this illustrated lecture, Angus Trumble recounts the whole scam, which ended badly for Benjamin West, the American expatriate painter and successor to Sir Joshua Reynolds as president of the Royal Academy, who became its most prominent victim.

Angus Trumble is Senior Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut. He is the author of A Brief History of the Smile (2005) and the recently published The Finger: A Handbook.
Titian’s *Poesie* for Philip II: The Triumph of the Brush

Thursday, March 3
6 to 7 p.m.
Pillsbury Auditorium
Steven F. Ostrow

Between about 1553 and 1562, the great Venetian painter Tiziano Vecellio executed a series of six highly erotic, mythological paintings for King Philip II of Spain—*Danae* and *Venus and Adonis* (Prado), *Perseus and Andromeda* (Wallace Collection), *Rape of Europa* (Gardener Museum), and *Diana and Actaeon* and *Diana and Callisto* (National Gallery of Scotland). Drawn largely from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the painter himself referred to them as *poesie*, essays in visual poetry, which he intended to elicit passion, marvel, pity, and fear. This lecture will present Titian’s extraordinary cycle of *poesie*, with special consideration given to their thematic, theoretical, and technical complexities.

*Steven F. Ostrow is professor and chair of the Department of Art History at the University of Minnesota. A specialist in early modern Italian visual culture, he is the author of* Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome: The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore and the co-editor or and contributor to Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy and Bernini’s Biographies: Critical Essays.*

*This lecture is co-presented by the Center for Early Modern History at the University of Minnesota.*
Titian as a Draftsman

Saturday, March 5
2 to 3 p.m.
Pillsbury Auditorium
Aidan Weston-Lewis

For an artist whose working career spanned some 70 years, Titian left remarkably few surviving drawings that can be attributed to him with any degree of certainty. Also, very little consensus exists among scholars over which drawings are actually by him. This talk will examine some of the issues and problems involved in assessing Titian as a draftsman. It will look at examples of the different types of drawing he produced and at their function in his working procedure. Specific reference will be made to two of the drawings in the exhibition.

Titian (attributed to), A Composition of Three Figures, black and white chalk on blue paper, 11 1/4 in. x 10 in., 05617, National Gallery of Scotland

Aidan Weston-Lewis is chief curator of Italian and Spanish art at the National Gallery of Art, Scotland. He has organized several important exhibitions on Bolognese drawings, Raphael, Goya prints, Bernini and the Roman Baroque, and on the Age of Titian. He has written or contributed to several exhibition catalogues, including The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections (2004), and has authored multiple articles on myriad subjects. In 2005 he was awarded the honor of Cavaliere dell’Ordine della Stella della Solidarietà Italiana by the Italian Republic.
Perfect Deceptions: 17th-century Dutch Still Lifes and Landscapes in the MIA

Saturday, March 26
2 to 3 p.m., Pillsbury Auditorium
Alison Kettering

The MIA’s strong 17th-century Dutch holdings are particularly rich in still lifes and landscapes by important artists such as Claesz, Mignon, Ruysdael, Hobbema, Wouwerman, and van Goyen, as well as those by lesser-known painters such as Delff, who produced the MIA’s fascinating Kitchen Still Life around 1669. This talk will place the MIA pictures in their stylistic and historical contexts, examining their pictorial and iconographical conventions, issues, knowledge, and appeal to viewers. Although realistic in appearance, these paintings often evoke contradictory meanings.

Alison Kettering is Kenan Professor of Art History at Carleton College in Northfield. She is a scholar of 17th-century Dutch art and has published widely on the subject.

Abraham Mignon, Dutch, 1640–79, Still life with fruit, foliage, and insects, ca. 1669, gift of Bruce B. Dayton

Spend the Day at the MIA
Before the lecture, enjoy an opportunity to exercise the right side of your brain with

Seeing through Sketching: Realist Expression,
10:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.
Sculpture & the Sculptural in Renaissance Painting

Thursday, March 31
6 to 7 p.m.
Pillsbury Auditorium
Nicholas Penny

Sculpture and painting have strongly informed and impacted each other since the Renaissance. Nicholas Penny, director of the National Gallery, United Kingdom, will explore this intricate and evolving relationship in this lecture. Penny will begin by looking at the way sculpture appears in painting and was imitated by painters between the late 15th and mid 17th centuries. He will then explore the influence that sculpture had on individual styles of painting between Mantegna and Poussin. Lastly, he will examine the question of the use of sculptural models on painting, with special reference to the cases of Perugino and Pontormo.

Nicholas Penny, Ph.D., is the director of the National Gallery, UK, and was previously the senior curator of sculpture at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He received his doctorate at the Courtauld Institute of Art, taught art history at the University of Manchester and Oxford University, and was the Andrew W. Mellon Professor at the National Gallery of Art (USA) Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. He has published numerous critically acclaimed books, catalogues, articles, and reviews on sculpture and painting.
Titian’s Innovations as a Portraitist

Thursday, April 14
11 a.m. to noon
Pillsbury Auditorium
Joanna Woods-Marsden

Through careful observation, much can be gleaned about a sitter—and the person whose thumb is on the palette. Explore issues of identity and social context in Renaissance portraiture. This lecture complements the special exhibition, “Titian and the Golden Age of Venetian Paintings,” on view in Target Galleries from February 6 through May 1, 2011.

Joanna Woods-Marsden received her M.A. from Trinity College, Dublin University, and her Ph.D. from Harvard University. She is a professor of Italian Renaissance art at University of California, Los Angeles.

*Presented by the Friends of the Institute.*
Paintings

From Optics to Objects: Painting from 1960 to Today

Saturday, May 21
2 to 3 p.m.
Pillsbury Auditorium
Ross Elfline

Over the past 50 years, a profound shift has occurred in how we define painting. Artists once attempted to dazzle the viewer with the unique optical effects that can only occur when oil paint is applied to canvas. But artists from the Minimalist School, such as Frank Stella, Donald Judd, John McCracken, and Robert Mangold, instead treated the surface of the canvas as a discrete object. In recent years, artists such as Takashi Murakami have gone one step further by presenting paintings not only as objects, but also as luxury goods, covering the works’ flat surfaces with commercial logos and copyrighted characters.

This talk will chart painting’s progress from works of optical transcendence to objects of luxury and taste.

Ross Elfline earned a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, and teaches art history at Carleton College. He is an art and architectural historian whose research and course offerings focus on the history, theory, and criticism of art and architecture since 1945.