Art History 101--Class 3: Eighteenth-Century Art

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Although we tend to think of him in his later years as an overweight caricature of a greedy monarch who made life miserable for his six wives, Henry the Eighth, on the left, was just as much of a Renaissance man as Leonardo da Vinci in his own way. He was a scholar, a composer, an author, a sportsman, an amateur theologian, and an enthusiastic patron of the arts and architecture. Despite the disruptions of the Reformation and Henry's conversion to Protestantism, England remained economically and politically stable during the period, and the arts flourished—in a secular context, at least. Unfortunately, many Catholic churches and monasteries were stripped of their icons and treasures under Tudor rule, and there was virtually no demand for religious painting. But the Tudors left a remarkable legacy of portraiture, most of it painted by foreign artists working in England, particular German and Netherlandish artists.

The best known is Hans Holbein, a Flemish artist who held the title of King's Painter in the early sixteenth century. He flattered Henry's huge frame in official portraits like the one of the left, using his girth as a backdrop for rich textiles, fur, and jewels, and allowing the king to fill the entire canvas in an indelible image of power. In this portrait he is dressed for his wedding to his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, in 1540.

The portrait of Henry's daughter Queen Elizabeth the first on the right by Marcus Gheeraerts presents a similar visual metaphor for absolute power; the Queen stands on

the globe, with her feet planted in Oxfordshire. This five by eight foot canvas is known as the Ditchley portrait after the Oxfordshire house of the courtier who commissioned it. Although Elizabeth was not obese like her father, her enormous ruff, hanging sleeves, and farthingale skirt make her just as physically imposing, and her clothes and jewels are equally rich. Not since Roman times had portraiture been so imbued with political propaganda.

Elizabeth reigned for 45 years before dying childless, ending the Tudor monarchy. The throne passed to James the Sixth of Scotland, who inaugurated the Stuart dynasty as James the First of England. James's son and successor, Charles the first, was an important collector and patron of the arts, famous for his good taste and elegance. Here he is painted by Van Dyck on the left and Mytens on the right. Charles was extremely short, and it was a great challenge for artists to give him an imposing figure suitable for a king, the way Holbein had for Henry the Eighth. Van Dyck has succeeded by contriving to make him taller than the other figures in the portrait, including the horse, and by placing him on a bluff overlooking a distant view, a favorite setting for Van Dyck. In gratitude for his service, Charles knighted Van Dyck and granted him property and a large income.

Charles's personal style, with a high lace collar and a long curls called a lovelock hanging down on his left shoulder, was widely imitated by young cavaliers of the early 1600s, including the Huntington's *Man with a Lovelock* by Cornelius Johnson on the left. In the previous century men had worn their hair short like Henry the Eighth, but the

seventeenth century would be characterized by longer and longer hair for men. The longer the fashionable hair length became, the more men had to resort to false hair and wigs, which would become the quintessential male accessory of the eighteenth century.

James the First had presided over what is known as the Jacobean era; Charles's was known as the Caroline era. It came to a premature end when Charles was beheaded in 1649, at the end of the English Civil War—the only English monarch ever to have been executed.

After the Civil War, England entered the Commonwealth or Interregnum, meaning "between reigns," an 11-year period in which England had no king but was ruled a Puritan government headed by a Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. In the unfinished miniature on the left, Cromwell is literally portrayed warts and all, with none of the flattering refinements typically seen in royal or aristocratic portraiture. He wears his own thinning, graying hair, a simple linen shirt with no lace, and a metal breastplate; he was often portrayed in armor, reinforcing his claim to be a soldier of God. The arts languished under Cromwell, particularly the theater, which he banned on the grounds of immorality. After Cromwell's death in 1658, his son Richard took over as Lord Protector, but he was not as effective at balancing the country's divided religious and political loyalties, particularly when it came to the longstanding tensions between Parliament and the army, and it soon became clear that only the restoration of the monarchy could bring stability.

Charles the First's son Charles the Second, on the right, arrived in London to claim the throne in 1660, having spent most of his 30 years in France and Holland. In welcome contrast to the Puritans, Charles loved spectacle, pageantry, art, fashion, and women. Peter Lely was a Dutch-born and trained artist who succeeded Van Dyck as the most fashionable portrait painter in London when he settled there in 1647. He managed to prosper even during the Commonwealth, when many portrait artists went out of business, and upon the Restoration of the monarchy he was named Principal Painter to Charles the Second, painting the official portrait on the right.

Lely was best known for painting a series of portraits of women of the court, commissioned by Charles' younger brother James, Duke of York, known as the Windsor Beauties. His portraits of women, in particular, conform to a generic standard of ideal beauty and romanticized dress: red, full lips, bulging, half-asleep eyes, loose drapery and hair, combined with the overt sensuality of a come-hither gaze and bare arms and neckline. Freed from the stiff ruffs and farthingales of the Renaissance, female posture changed dramatically, assuming a more languorous, sensual attitude.

Due to huge demand for his work, Lely relied on a team of assistants to complete his paintings and stuck to stock poses and drapery. As a result, there is a sameness to them. The portrait of Lady Essex Finch on the left from the Huntington collection bears a strong resemblance to Lely's contemporary portrait of Nell Gwyn, on the right. Gwyn was one of the first comic actresses on the English stage and one of the king's many mistresses. Both women wear fanciful, pseudo-classical robes, which were becoming

common in portraiture at this time but rarely worn except at court masques and balls, where the allusion to classical antiquity implied both intellectual and aesthetic sophistication. It was becoming fashionable for women to have their portraits painted as nymphs, mythological goddesses, saints, or shepherdesses, all guises that justified near-nudity. The bronze color and scalloped edging of Finch's drapery, with the blue silk cloak fastened at one shoulder, deliberately evoke Roman armor, an explicitly classical touch. Like ceremonial dress or uniform, amorphous drapery and vaguely historical details did not go out of style like fashionable dress inevitably did. Considering that even the very wealthy only had their portraits painted a few times in their lives, it was important that these portraits did not look dated after a few years, and that they blended in with the other ancestral portraits from previous centuries displayed in the sitter's stately home.

Despite many mistresses and illegitimate children, Charles the Second failed to produce a legitimate heir to the throne, so when he died in 1685 it passed in quick succession it passed to his Catholic brother James and then to Protestant William of Orange and his wife, Mary, James's daughter. After their deaths, James's younger daughter Anne became queen. When Anne died childless, in order to maintain Protestant power, the throne went to a distant German cousin who could hardly speak English, George the First, inaugurating the Hanoverian dynasty. Art historians call this the Georgian period, named for the four successive German King Georges who ruled England from 1714 to 1830; here they are in all their glory. All four Georges were either father and son or father and grandson, and they all hated each other. But the long Hanoverian reign created

relative stability after the religious upheavals and frequent regime changes of the previous century.

The Georgian period coincided with the pan-European intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. Building on classical democracy and Renaissance humanism, the Enlightenment philosophers believed that all men, or at least all white men, deserved equal rights. The declaration of independence is a classic Enlightenment mission statement—declaring that all men are created equal and calling for the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Enlightenment thinkers sought to redefine the purpose of humanity, government, and religion. They revered knowledge and saw the natural world as something to be studied and mastered. Like humanism, the Enlightenment is a broad and rather vague concept that is difficult to define; it is easier to point to its effects. What may have started as an abstract debate would lead to two revolutions by the end of the eighteenth century, one in America and one in France.

These two portraits of noted Enlightenment figures highlight the high value they placed on classical learning and communion with nature. On the left, the German author Goethe relaxes in the Roman countryside, wearing what he considered to be authentic classical dress. On the right, Sir Brook Boothby, a Derbyshire landowner and intellectual, poses in an untamed landscape. In a visual pun, he is reclining beside a brook—a daring posture that rejects the conventions of society portraiture and proclaims his oneness with nature. Boothby had met the influential French Enlightenment *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued for a return to nature and the simple life in his writings. Boothby

even published one of Rousseau's books, probably the one he is reading in this portrait. Some of you may remember that this portrait was on loan to the Huntington a few years ago and hung in the main portrait gallery; it belongs to the Tate Gallery.

After centuries of employing foreign artists like Holbein and Van Dyck, eighteenth century patrons and artists were anxious to establish a British school of painting, with uniquely British genres. You could make a good argument for the conversation piece being a quintessential British genre. Conversation pieces were group portraits depicting families or friends in some leisure activity. Because they were intended to show off one's home and possessions as well as one's likeness, they are often set outdoors, against a view of a grand country house or extensive grounds. Having a large group pose for long periods in outdoor settings in rainy England was obviously impractical, so the figures were often completed in studio or using dolls called lay figures; Arthur Devis, who painted the Huntington conversation piece on the right, relied on dolls and his figures are often very stiff and doll-like. The piece on the left is an early Gainsborough, and it too is stiff and small-scale compared to his later work, but by emphasizing the background he is able to show off his talent for naturalistic landscape.

The figures in conversation pieces were supposed to be holding a conversation, looking up as if the artist had just interrupted them. Subtle gestures like outstretched hands indicated that someone was speaking or elucidated family relationships or social status. By the end of the century, conversation pieces had grown remarkably large and complex; This is the *Sharp Family Musical Party on the Thames* by Johann Zoffany.

William Hogarth specialized in what he called “modern moral subjects”—moralizing but also amusing satirical stories of human folly. This is a scene from his *Marriage a la Mode*, a series of 6 paintings depicting the unraveling of an arranged marriage between an impoverished aristocrat and a wealthy merchant’s daughter. Hogarth’s modern moral subjects are more like novels than paintings, and every inch is packed with details that tell a story; notice, for example, how the two dogs chained together echo the unhappy betrothed couple. Even the paintings on the wall comment on the action.

Hogarth dismissed portraiture as a deplorable form of vanity, but still managed to paint one of the finest large-scale English portraits of the eighteenth century, on the left. Captain Coram was a successful shipping merchant and a great philanthropist, who established London’s Founding Hospital, a cause Hogarth himself supported. To his credit, Coram spent his money on charitable endeavors rather than luxurious accoutrements; so it is fitting that he is portrayed wearing his own hair, a plain black suit and linen shirt, practical black stockings, and a long greatcoat, that humble but typically English garment worn for protection in the damp British weather, which Hogarth has painted with the same care and panache as peer’s robes. The somewhat clichéd grand manner touches like the huge marble pillar and the draperies are balanced out by the captain’s solid, no-nonsense character. Hogarth used the same template for his portrait of Bishop Hoadly, a small version of which is in the Huntington collection, on the right. Once again Hogarth had a personal connection with the sitter; he was good friends with Hoadly’s sons. Hoadly was crippled by smallpox, which is why it made sense to portray

him seated; you can just make out the end of his cane on the table. Although these are both portraits, they achieve Hogarth's goals of creating a distinctly English style of painting, free from obscure mythological references, and encouraging self-improvement through examples of how or how not to live.

From the late 1600s right through the 19th century, most aristocratic men—particularly Englishmen--completed their education by taking a Grand Tour of the major cultural sites of southern Europe, which could last several years. The tour typically began in Paris then moved south through the well preserved Roman ruins of Provence and into Italy, usually stopping in Rome, Florence, Naples, before ending up in Venice right around carnival time. Here, a group of foreign connoisseurs admire the collections of the Uffizi Museum in Florence, including Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. Exposure to the major collections of Renaissance and classical art provided inspiration for the most characteristic style of art and architecture of the eighteenth century, neoclassicism. Neoclassicism means "new classicism" and it describes classical subject matter, whether mythological or historical, presented in a style derived from classical Greek and Roman sources. While it was largely inspired by these fresh interactions with Italy, it also arose partly in reaction to the frivolity and excess of the French rococo style, which we'll discuss after the break, and it had a didactic component that was used to teach Enlightenment ideals like courage and patriotism, particularly through history painting.

The Venetian painter Giovanni Antonion Canal, called Canaletto, produced hundreds of meticulously detailed souvenir landscapes of Venice, which were so popular among

English tourists that Stokstad credits them with giving impetus to a school of English topographical painting. He also had several imitators in Italy. The discoveries of the ruins of the ancient Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum near Naples beginning in 1738 offered sensational new material for classical scholars and connoisseurs, and a new destination for Grand Tourists. Illustrated books on the cities published throughout Europe helped to spread the vogue for Neoclassicism and provided artists and architects with information and inspiration. Here is an English interior obviously inspired by classical models.

The Grand Tour was an opportunity for young Englishmen to experiment with colorful, flashy European fashions that would have been considered over the top at home, and that they would probably never wear again once they returned to England a year or two later. Continental artists like the Italians Pompeo Batoni and Rosalba Carriera and the Swiss pastellist Liotard made a good living painting portraits of these tourists in their foreign finery, often posed in front of an iconic Italian view or artifact. On the left, Lord John Mountstuart, portrayed in Italy by Liotard, wears a suit lined in gray squirrel fur. Though England was notoriously damp, its winters were not as harsh as on the Continent, where fur linings were a necessity. On the right, you can see a very similar squirrel-lined suit on the Earl of Huntingdon in our collection; this portrait was actually painted in England but right after the sitter's return from his second Grand Tour, wearing clothes bought on his travels.

Between the early 1760s and the early 1770s, English caricaturists found a new target in the macaroni. A macaroni was a young man who had been on the Grand Tour but continued to spout Italian phrases and enjoy flamboyant continental clothing, food, and mannerisms when he returned to England. This is where we get Yankee Doodle sticking a feather in his hat and calling it macaroni. The caricature on the right could almost be mocking the young man portrayed in the Huntington's Batoni portrait on the left.

The painter Joseph Wright made the Grand Tour in 1773-75, but his experience of Italy was slightly different from other British artists of his age. Instead of classical pastiches or portraits of fellow tourists, he produced a series of at least 30 majestic paintings of the frequent eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, including the one in the Huntington collection, on the left. The subject that was both fashionably classical and entirely modern in its scientific curiosity and fascination with the natural world; Wright described Vesuvius as "the most wonderful sight in nature." This image is a good example of the 18th century's fascination with what was called the sublime—an emotionally compelling blend of beauty and terror, that we'll talk about more when we look at landscape painting next week.

Wright was known as Wright of Darby--Darby spelled "Derby" but pronounced "Darby"— because he was not part of the London art establishment but hailed from the industrial town of Darby in the English Midlands. The Industrial Revolution was in its early days and Darby and nearby Birmingham were at the forefront. By the end of the eighteenth century, Europe had been transformed from an agricultural society to an

industrialized one, with a large middle class and an upper class consisting of some self-made fortunes as well as inherited wealth. Many of Wright's clients and subjects were drawn from this world, including his friend Josiah Wedgwood. Wright of Derby pioneered another uniquely British genre of painting to emerge in the 18th century chronicling the progress if science and industry.

Though entirely modern and entirely British, Wright was at the same time influenced by Caravaggio and the Italian baroque, His tenebrist style heightened the tension and theatricality of subjects such as science experiments, industrial manufacture, and erupting volcanoes and other natural phenomena. On the right, in his famous painting *An experiment on a bird in the air pump*; the influence of Caravaggio can be seen not only in the visual drama but in the way Wright has captured the most emotionally intense moment of the narrative, when the bird hovers between life and death and the spectators are frozen in suspense. The single light source literally and figuratively enlightens the scene, as science and nature shed light on an ignorant world. Wright also painted portraits; that was his portrait of the aristocrat-philosopher Sir Brook Boothby we saw earlier.

British art of the later eighteenth century was dominated by two great rivals, both well represented in the Huntington collection: Sir Joshua Reynolds, on the left, and Thomas Gainsborough, on the right. Ironically, although both are remembered for their portraits, they considered portraiture to be a lesser genre. Reynolds felt that history painting was

the highest form of art, and Gainsborough aspired to become famous as a landscape painter.

One of the key steps towards establishing a British school of art was the founding of the Royal Academy of Art in 1768, modeled on similar academies in France and Italy and supported by the king. Although these academies did provide training for artists, they were not schools but rather professional organizations that held exhibitions, awarded prizes, and protected the interest of members. Reynolds became the first president of the Royal Academy, and used the position to promote his views on painting. He hated modern dress and jewels, and promoted a new kind of portraiture, showing "timeless" dress. He believed that artists should turn to the classical tradition and follow the rules laid down by the great masters of the past. By putting his subjects in classical drapery, surrounding them with marble columns and Grecian urns, and lifting poses from classical masterpieces, he hoped to elevate mere portraiture to the level of history painting. In contrast, Gainsborough emulated the more informal style of portraiture Van Dyck had brought to England, with the sitters placed outdoors and preferably in modern dress—something that appealed to Enlightenment patrons, particularly in England, where riding, hunting and other outdoor pursuits were such an important part of the culture.

Gainsborough and Reynolds had many of the same clients, and it is interesting to compare and contrast their very different approaches to the same sitters. We all know Reynold's portrait of Sarah Siddons, on the left, but what about Gainsborough's on the right, from the National Gallery in London? Here, there is nothing to indicate that she's

the most famous tragic actress of her time; she wears fashionable street clothes and is seen in three-quarters length against generic red drapery—a more glamorous, less pretentious portrait of a popular celebrity rather than an artiste, and one that is just as true to her character. Similarly, both artists painted the Duchess of Devonshire. Although she is posed outdoors in both portraits, and although the Gainsborough on the right was originally full-length, they could not be more different. While Reynolds has borrowed a rather stilted pose from VanDyck and dressed her in vaguely Greco-Turkish fancy dress—possibly a studio prop as it is almost identical to the gown worn by Vicountess Crosbie in her portrait in the Huntington—Gainsborough depicts her in her own clothes, looking prettier, more natural, and more approachable; the portrait was so successful and so widely known through engravings that women began to order copies of "the Duchess of Devonshire's picture hat."

Round table discussion: British art at the Huntington

The death of Louis the Fourteenth after 70-plus years on the throne shook up the French establishment and the art world. As if in reaction to the pompous, serious, monumental themes and subjects of the Sun King's reign, art became frivolous, sensual, and lighthearted. People no longer wanted pretentious Biblical subjects or classical allegories or hunting scenes or battles, but picturesque vignettes scaled for smaller, more intimate interiors. The term "rococo" was invented by 19th-century art historians to describe the art and interior design that flourished in France during the reign of Louis XV, seen in these two portraits, 1715 to 1774—a reign almost as long as that of his great-grandfather

the Sun King. The word itself is a derived from *barroco,* the Portuguese word for an irregularly shaped pearl, and *rocaille,* the French word meaning "rockery" or "rubble," which refers to the shell and serpentine patterns that characterize rococo art and design.

The ornate, playful style originated in France but by the mid 1750s, it had spread to England, where it would linger for the next decade or so. In his 1753 "Analysis of Beauty," William Hogarth wrote of the rococo, "the beauty of intricacy lies in contriving winding shapes." These serpentine lines and silhouettes, combined with lighthearted subjects, pastel colors, and sensuality, are the hallmarks of rococo art. It was sometimes criticized as unnatural, frivolous, and morally corrupting. Its supporters were attracted to its escapist sentimentality; rococo artists preached a return to nature, privacy, and intimacy. Rococo painting and interior design went hand in hand: canvases were often custom-shaped to fit into wall or ceiling panels, and paintings celebrated the intimate, intricate new interiors.

The rococo can be seen as a watered-down yet playful incarnation of the baroque--the grandiose classical allegories and historical epics of Louis the fourteenth's reign reduced to tarted-up pop mythology and pseudo-pastoralism. To the eighteenth-century eye, the rococo was a deliberate reaction against the stifling spectacle and rigid hierarchy of the Sun King's court. But we can now appreciate how much of the baroque theatricality and love of ornament it actually retained.

Jean-Antointe Watteau invented the genre known as the *fête galante* or "courtship party," depicting elegant ladies and gentlemen socializing in pastoral settings, often wearing theatrical or historicized dress, again aiming for timelessness that enhanced the fantasy element of the painting. As a student, Watteau admired Rubens's Marie de Medici cycle that we looked at last week, and his style incorporated the rich colors and light brushwork characteristic of Rubens. This piece, the *Pilgrimage to the Isle of Cythera*, references the Italian commedia dell'arte theatrical tradition of improvised, outdoor entertainments as well as classical mythology—Cythera was an island sacred to Venus, the Roman goddess of love.

In the *fête galante* in the Huntington collection on the left, a couple dances to the music of a hurdy-gurdy in a forest clearing. Dancing plays a central role in many of Watteau's *fête galante*, as a metaphor for love and courtship. Watteau was a versatile artist who worked across a broad range of fine and decorative arts, painting ceilings, screens, fans, shop signs, and coach doors as well as canvases. Many of his works were later adapted for other uses, sometimes by the artist himself. So it is not surprising to find that this panting on wood panel has been altered several times; it was once round but has been enlarged to a rectangle. Watteau also repeated himself a lot; here, the male dancer in pink is reminiscent of his painting of the commedia dell'arte character Mezzetin on the right.

If Watteau invented the rococo style in painting, François Boucher perfected it. He has been called the quintessential 18th-century artist, and he had an incalculable impact on taste in his own lifetime, 1703 to 1770, as well as a lasting appeal to twentieth century

collectors like the Huntingtons. Boucher is best remembered as a painter; in 1765, he was appointed to the two highest positions in the French arts establishment, first painter to the king and director of the Royal Academy. But his compositions can be found on everything from porcelain vases to tapestries to furniture. You could almost furnish your entire house with Boucher's artworks. He was also a theatrical designer, printmaker, fan painter, and book illustrator. He was remarkably versatile and prolific, finding great success in a wide variety of media, though often by recycling his own images and themes. Furthermore, he was uniquely attuned to the popular taste for sentiment and sensuality in the mid eighteenth century. His pastel-hued depictions of amorous nymphs and shepherds and his lighthearted, scantily clad interpretations of mythological and dramatic subjects made him both hugely successful financially and a major influence on his fellow artists. This pastel portrait of Boucher by his contemporary Gustav Lundberg portrays the native Parisian not as a starving artist or hardworking craftsman, but as a rather louche man of the world, resplendent in fashionable powdered wig, velvet coat, and fine lace.

Boucher painted countless scenes of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, with the infant Cupid, her son; the one on the left is in the National Gallery. The one on the right is here at the Huntington. It is signed and dated in 1769, the year before the artist's death, and must be one of his last works. In many ways, the work is a strictly conventional treatment of one of Boucher's favorite subjects. Venus is shown with her traditional attributes, doves and roses. By this time, Boucher's eyesight was failing, and he may have returned to familiar motifs and figures as a way of compensating for his physical deterioration,

working from memory rather than from models.

Boucher was already well established as a painter, engraver, porcelain designer, and theatrical designer when he turned his prodigious talents to tapestry in the 1730s. He would design a total of six suites of tapestries for the Beauvais tapestry factory; they were so popular that they remained on the looms for decades. The Huntington has examples of two of these suites in its collection—10 complete tapestries.

A fragment of the cartoon for one of them, *The Fountain of Love,* survives in the Getty collection. Boucher was known for his genius for color, and we can appreciate how vibrant the now-faded *Fountain of Love* once looked by comparing it with what's left of its cartoon. *The Fountain of Love* is essentially a fete galante rendered in tapestry, but Boucher's flirtatious scenes are much more explicit than Watteau's wistful fete galantes.

The 10 tapestry armchairs covers and 2 settee covers in the Large Library are also Boucher designs. The tapestry covers on the backs of the chairs have allegories of the arts and sciences, enacted by children or putti—a favorite Boucher theme, or more accurately a favorite rococo theme. The source painting for *Architecture Personified as a Child* survives in the Museum of Art and History of Geneva.

Boucher's chief supporter was Louis the Fifteenth's longtime mistress Madame de Pompadour. In the mid eighteenth century, she was the arbiter of rococo taste and style, not just in France but across Europe. On the left, in a portrait by Boucher, she wears the

pale pink color she was most associated with; the Vincennes porcelain manufactory, which she patronized, even produced a shade of pink enamel called rose de Pompadour in her honor. The manufactory later moved to Sèvres and produced what is now known as Sèvres porcelain; the collection of Sèvres at the Huntington is from the golden age of about 1740-1760 and has been called the finest west of the Mississippi. Artists loved working for Madame de Pompadour not only for the prestige of working for the king's influential mistress, but also because she paid her bills promptly, unlike most aristocrats.

In the background of the portrait you may be able to make out Pigalle's sculpture *Friendship comforting love*; Friendship is represented by a classical figure based on Pompadour herself, and Love by a winged Cupid, the Roman god of love. Pompadour commissioned the statue for her garden to mark a change in her relationship with the king, when she ceased to be his mistress but remained a close friend and advisor. In 1755, she had ordered another Cupid statue for her garden, Falconet's *Cupid Warning*. When Falconet became director of the Sèvres manufactory two years later, he produced several small-scale copies of *Cupid Warning* in unglazed or biscuit porcelain, including the one on the right in the Huntington's collection. Cupid coyly holds his finger to his lips to urge the viewer to remain silent as he reaches for his arrows with the other hand; the god of love is about to strike. This immensely popular image was widely reproduced and copied and became one of the iconic pieces of the eighteenth century. It is typical of the rococo taste for playful or erotic interpretations of classical themes, produced on an intimate rather than a monumental scale.

Falconet also produced multiple variants of tabletop marbles of nude women, variously identified as bathers, Venus, or Flora, the roman goddess of spring—all very good excuses for nudity. The Huntington has seven of these small marbles in the style of Falconet, including these two that are virtually identical. It's very unusual to find a one-of-a-kind piece of eighteenth-century sculpture. Sculptors showed their best works at the annual Salon exhibition in the hopes of getting commissions for reproductions, and counterfeiting was a major problem as well. Regardless of the degrees of authenticity of these particular pieces, they are another example of the taste for intimate, erotic interpretations of classical subjects.

Pompadour's personal style and artistic taste were hugely influential, even in England. On the right is Allan Ramsay's interpretation of the French rococo, painted just three years after the Boucher portrait on the left. *Baroness Winterton* wears a Pompadour pink robe gown trimmed in ruching in the characteristic rococo serpentine pattern, small ornaments called pompoms after Madame de Pompadour in her hair, the fresh rose in her bodice, lace sleeve ruffles, and a pearl choker. Not just the sitter's outfit but the intimacy of the half-length format, with its plain background, and the artist's meticulous treatment of the dress details betray the influence of the French rococo style.

Jean-Honore Fragonard was the third major French rococo painter after Watteau and Boucher. He was a student of Boucher and inherited many of his clients at his death in 1770. Fragonard actually outlived the vogue for rococo art but continued to produce it for nostalgic patrons. His painting *The Swing* on the left is one of the iconic rococo images,

and it influenced French artists for decades afterwards; the Huntington has swinging scenes by Jean-Baptiste Pater and Marguerite Gerard. For eighteenth century artists the swing was an all-purpose metaphor for female foibles; idleness, inconstancy, and loss of control. It also had an erotic subtext; then as now, singing was a sexual euphemism. Adult-sizes swings in public parks and pleasure grounds permitted grown-up flirtation under the guise of innocent child's play, and often offered an illicit glimpse of female legs, as in the Fragonard. Artists were attracted to the physical and emotional oscillations of this and other disorienting games like blindman's bluff and seesawing. Gerard's swing is a very late example, from the late 1780s, and it strips away the rococo double entendres and reclaims the swing as a child's toy, imbuing it with fashionable Enlightenment principles of virtuous childrearing.

Like Hogarth in England, Jean-Baptiste Greuze sought to teach moral lessons through his genre scenes; in this one, a drunken cobbler comes home to his angry wife, having spent the family's grocery money at the pub. The melodramatic gestures and expressions and the placement of the figures close to the picture plane suggest a stage play rather than a scene of everyday life. Given Greuze's moralizing agenda, you may want to reconsider his *Young Knitter Asleep*, one of the stars of the Huntington collection. At first glance, it is a charming and beautifully rendered image of a sleepy peasant child. On closer inspection, though, it invites the viewer to make moral judgments. Are we supposed to condemn the girl for carelessly falling asleep at her chores? Or feel sorry for her because she is worn out by the demands placed on her and unable to enjoy the simple pleasures of childhood? Or is it a Rousseau-inspired critique of child labor? For the stocking she is

knitting is a very high quality, adult stocking—something she is making not for herself or a family member, but to sell.

Along with Venus and Cupid, another rococo theme derived from antiquity was the three Graces. The three Graces were the daughters of Zeus, who represented beauty, charm, and joy in classical mythology. The trio was a perennially popular subject for artists; at the left, a detail from Boticelli's Primavera of about 1482 shows the three Graces dancing. They are always portrayed nude or nearly nude, which may explain their popularity. In the Huntington collection, they can be seen on a French clock of the 1770s and a Sevres vase of about 1780, one that is neoclassical in both its decoration and its shape, with the pedestal foot and those high, flat openwork handles.

In the Huntington collection, the neoclassical influence can best be seen in French furniture and sculpture. On the left, a classically proportioned console table of the 1780s from the Arabella collection, with gilt bronze friezes probably based on architectural engravings after classical models. On the commode from the early 1790s on the right, Sevres plaques imitate English Wedgwood cameos, which were of course based on classical cameos. If you look closely at this piece you can see that the plaques depict mythological scenes and classical emblems of love. The commode's stately, straight lines and gilt-bronze mounts in the shape of griffins and palmettes make it an exemplary model of the neoclassical style.

Houdon studied in Italy and was an early advocate of the neoclassical style. He became the unofficial sculptor of the Enlightenment, immortalizing celebrity authors and intellectuals like Voltaire, on the right; Rousseau, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Lafayette, and George Washington, on the left, even traveling to the US to make a cast of Washington's features. Houdon drew his relaxed poses and serene expressions from classical models, but he was a businessman as well as an idealist, and his studio churned out copies of these celebrity portraits, thus making the heroes of the Enlightenment even more famous across Europe.

Witnesses compared the French Revolution to an earthquake or a hurricane, and without a doubt it was an event of such magnitude and violence that its repercussions were felt around the world. One of the inaugural events of the Revolution was the swearing of the Oath of the Tennis Court on June 20, 1789, depicted here by Jacques-Louis David, in a preparatory drawing for a monumental canvas that he never completed. It would have served as a group portrait of the illustrious men who took the first step toward creating a republican state in France, and a lasting reminder of their political commitment. The astonishing ambition of the project signaled the new opportunities for artists provided by the cultural upheaval of the revolutionary period; the project's collapse reminds us of the enormous strain the revolution placed on French artists and the academic tradition.

Although David never completed the canvas, six oil sketches survive of faces of the Third Estate deputies who congregated in the royal tennis court to take the oath, including the portrait of Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Etienne in the Huntington collection. He

shows us the idealism and excitement of a man who knows he is seeing history in the making, and who has no idea that he will die on the guillotine as a victim of the Revolution he supported a few years later.

Table discussion: Eighteenth-Century French Art at The Huntington