

Art Acquisitions

May 2011

Purchases

1. Erastus Salisbury Field (American, 1805–1900), *Portrait of a Girl*, ca. 1835, oil on canvas, 62 x 41½". J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art and partial gift of Barbara L. Gordon and W. Stephen Cannon in celebration of VMFA's 75th anniversary, 2011.23.



An important partial gift/partial purchase marking VMFA's 75th anniversary is *Portrait of a Girl*, ca. 1835, by Erastus Salisbury Field (American, 1805–1900). This commanding yet endearing “folk” portrait of a young girl holding her *Juvenile Petrarch*, a moral guide popular among the middle-classes, makes a striking statement about American portraiture, “high” and vernacular styles, and social history, while filling a significant gap in the museum's overall paintings holdings.

Erastus Salisbury Field is regarded among the finest of 19th-century America's essentially self-taught painters. Born in Leverett, Massachusetts, an agrarian community in the Connecticut River Valley, he became one of the most successful and prolific artists in that part of New England. Field's distinctive style was inspired by both trained and untrained portraitists like Samuel F. B. Morse (with whom he studied briefly in 1824) and Ammi Phillips, another important New England folk painter.

Field's work was a great favorite of leading early 20th-century folk-art collectors, including Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Mrs. John Hay Whitney, who once owned *Portrait of a Girl*. Comprehensively catalogued nearly 50 years ago by Mary Black, a former director of the Rockefeller Folk Art Center at Colonial Williamsburg, some 400 canvases by Field have been identified, but works of this quality and scale are extremely rare.

Dr. Sylvia Yount
Chief Curator and Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator of
American Art

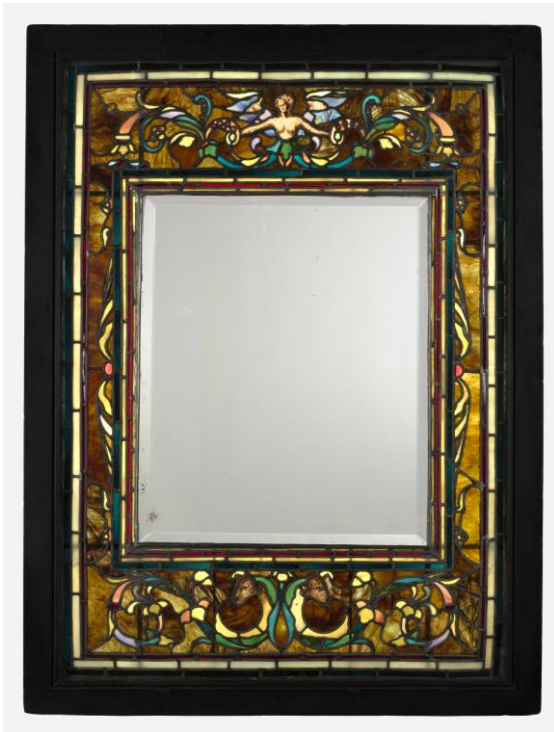
2. Stanton MacDonald-Wright (American, 1890-1973), *Chinese Pipe and Tulips*, 1926, oil on canvas, 20¼ x 16". J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2011.24.



In May, the museum purchased the vibrant, modernist still life, *Chinese Pipe and Tulips*, 1926—the first work by the Charlottesville-born Stanton Macdonald-Wright (American, 1890-1973) to enter VMFA’s collection. A multifaceted artist credited with co-founding Synchronism (meaning “with color”), an international movement inspired by late nineteenth-century color theories and a close study of Paul Cezanne, Macdonald-Wright moved from playing a substantive role in New York’s modernist circles to becoming a leading representative of West Coast modernism.

Dr. Sylvia Yount
Chief Curator and Louise B. and J. Harwood
Cochrane Curator of American Art

3. John La Farge (American, 1835-1910), *Mirror Frame*, ca. 1885, leaded glass, mirror, painted wood frame, 38 x 28¹/₄". J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2011.25.



In May, the museum purchased an intricate *Mirror Frame* by John La Farge (American 1835-1910) through the J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art. Made about 1885 of myriad pieces of carefully matched stained-glass surrounding a period mirror, it features motifs of classical acanthus garlands and arabesques. La Farge rose to high artistic ranks in the second half of the 19th century as a talented painter, muralist, interior designer and art theorist associated with both the American Aesthetic movement and the so-called American Renaissance. Among La Farge's most important achievements, however, are his works in stained glass following his breakthrough development in the production of opalescent glass.

Dr. Elizabeth L. O'Leary
Associate Curator of American Art

4. Unknown artisan (British, for an American market), *Pitcher*, ca. 1790s, probably Liverpool creamware, approx. 9”h. American Dec Arts Deaccessioning Funds, 2011.42.



This creamware pitcher represents the type of wares produced by British manufacturers for the American market in the early years of the new Republic. Between the 1780s and the 1820s, English potteries capitalized on American demand for patriotic works by exporting ceramics emblazoned with the heroes and themes of the Revolution. Portraits of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, scenes of rural farming and commercial waterways, together with symbols of Liberty, Justice and Virtue, transformed domestic objects into mediums for the fashioning of a national identity. The details were produced by inking an engraved copper plate and preparing a tissue copy for transfer to the object's surface. A second firing secured the image prior to the application of a transparent glaze.

This pitcher bears a collage of images: a Liberty cap, a republican Eagle, the stars of the thirteen colonies, a portrait of George Washington, a group of Revolutionary soldiers, and a merchant ship. It also hosts a ribbon proudly inscribed: "By Virtue and Valour we have freed our country, extended our commerce, and laid the foundation of a Great Empire." The simple proclamation suggests goals and ideals regarding young America's future.

Dr. Susan J. Rawles
Assistant Curator of American Decorative Art

5. Eugene Alain Séguéy (after) (French, 1889-1985), *Insectes, Vingt Planches en Phototypie Coloriées au Patron Donnant Quatre-Vingts Insects et Seize Compositions Décoratives*, Paris: Editions du Chartre et van Buggenhoudt, ca. 1924, unbound portfolio, 20 pochoir-colored plates, ea: 17½ x 12½". John and Maria Shugars Fund [for Freeman Library's Rare Book Room--not accessioned].

The boldly colored insects from around the world are shown in *pochoir* (stenciled) prints which comprise this rare portfolio. Prints like those produced by eminent French designer and author Eugene Alain Séguéy, provided source material for designers of fabrics, wallpaper, ceramics, book illustrations, posters, and advertisements, and were popular in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Among the insects illustrated are bees, wasps, cicadas, locusts, plant hoppers, grasshoppers, dragonflies, damselflies and beetles such as scarabs and longhorn beetles. The species illustrated are from around the world: Africa, Australia, South America, Borneo, New Guinea and Southeast Asia. Because of the importance of the Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection of Art Nouveau and Art Deco at the VMFA, it is crucial to acquire rare and specialized portfolios such as Séguéy's *Insectes* to strengthen our overall understanding of the period.

Barry Shifman

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator Decorative Arts 1890 to the Present

6. Forty-two European prints:

Wenceslaus Hollar (Bohemian, 1607-1677), *The Dance of Death*, 1651, after Holbein, set of 30 etchings

Félix Bracquemond (French, 1833–1914), *L'Arc-en-ciel* (The Rainbow), 1892-97, lithograph in colors on simili Japon paper resp. etching on wove paper

Edouard Manet (French, 1832-1883), *Les Gitanos* (The Gypsies), 1862, etching

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Italian, 1729-1778), three etchings: *Veduta dell'Arco di Tito*, 1771;

Veduta degli Avanza del Foro di Nerva, n.d.; *Veduta del Ponte Lugano su L'Anione*, 1763

D.Y. Cameron (Scottish, 1865-1945), *Five Sisters, York Minster*, etching and drypoint

Claude Gillot (French, 1673-1722), *The Lives of Satyrs*, set of four etchings

Théodore Géricault (French, 1791–1824), *Jument Egyptienne*, 1822, lithograph

Hans Thoma (German, 1839-1924), *Cupid on a Dolphin, Life's Journey I*, 1908, etching

Funds provided by Frank Raysor, 2011.27.1/30-2011.39.



The museum added a group of 42 European prints purchased using funds donated by Frank Raysor. Artists represented in the group include 17th century Bohemian artist Wenceslaus Hollar's series *The Dance of Death*, a rare color lithograph by Félix Bracquemond, a print of a gypsy subject by Edouard Manet, fantastical views of Rome by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, a print by the Scottish etching revival artist D.Y. Cameron, an equestrian subject by Theodore Gericault, French printmaker Claude Gillot's series *The Lives of Satyrs* and a fantastical print of a Cupid on a dolphin by Hans Thoma. These works will join the promised gift of 10,000 prints pledge to the museum by Mr. Raysor, making VMFA a destination for the study and display of works on paper.

Dr. Mitchell Merling

Paul Mellon Curator/Head of the Department of European Art

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

With a collection of art that spans the globe and more than 5,000 years, plus a wide array of special exhibitions, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) is recognized as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. The museum's permanent collection encompasses more than 23,000 works of art, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside Russia and one of the nation's finest collections of American art, Art Nouveau and Art Deco. VMFA is home to acclaimed collections of English Silver and Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British Sporting and Modern & Contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its 75-year history. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus fun after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. General admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

#

Press Contact:

Suzanne Hall, suzanne.hall@vmfa.museum, 804.204.2704

Pryor Green, pryor.green@vmfa.museum, 804.204.2701

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Boulevard, Richmond VA 23220-4007