

Abstracts

An Early Sixteenth-Century Flemish Chasuble at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

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Among the many wonderful artworks accessioned by the MFAH in 2018 is a magnificent Flemish chasuble made in the early sixteenth century. Considering its age and delicate material, the chasuble is in exceptionally good condition. Its rich, shimmering Italian brocade is made with pile-on-pile velvet, which is decorated with elaborate artichoke patterns and enriched with gold *bouclé* loops. The cross orphrey on the back and pillar orphrey on the front feature stories from the lives of Christ and the Virgin, which are embroidered with the celebrated *or nué* (shaded gold) technique that was characteristic of contemporary Burgundian-Netherlandish embroidery. Lavishly used gold and silver threads glow underneath silk threads and result in an iridescent vibrancy. A variety of stitches have been used to render different textures and effects. In this article, I first offer a thorough analysis of the sophisticated brocade and embroidery techniques used to make the chasuble. I then trace the artistic sources of the biblical scenes on the orphreys and examine the liturgical significance of the chasuble's iconographic program. I argue that the chasuble was most likely worn by a priest during one of the feasts dedicated to the Virgin Mary. When enacted by the priest's body, the chasuble could enhance the otherworldly experience of the Eucharistic rite and facilitate viewers' perception of the transubstantiation miracle.

The Erotics of the Axillary Pose

James Clifton, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston

Perseus's rescue of the princess Andromeda from a sea monster was a popular subject in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century visual arts, both south and north of the Alps. The narrative, told most influentially by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, hinges on Andromeda's beauty: it was the subject of her mother's boast that angered Neptune and led to his demand for her sacrifice, and it was what drew Perseus's attention and provoked his difficult battle with the monster. Andromeda's parents subsequently offered her to Perseus as bride; thus, as Ovid put it, she was both cause and reward of all his labor. The artist's task, then, was to present Andromeda as exceedingly beautiful and enticing, to both Perseus and the viewer of the artwork. She was almost always depicted nude and facing the viewer, her hands chained to a seaside cliff or large rock behind her. Many artists, however, chose to enhance the erotic nature of the

figure by positioning one of her arms above her head, thereby exaggerating her usual contrapposto stance and exposing her armpit (axilla)—what I refer to as the axillary pose. Adducing well-known examples in various media—by Giorgio Vasari, Hendrick Goltzius, Agostino Carracci, Joachim Wtewael, and Guido Reni—this article considers the affective qualities of the pose within the context of early modern notions of the erotic possibilities of the armpit.

Naturalism and Archaism in Hendrick ter Brugghen's *Crucifixion* and *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene*

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Ter Brugghen's *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene* was painted the same year as his *Crucifixion*, and in both works, the artist evokes sixteenth-century northern painting. The *Saint Sebastian*, however, approaches the past differently. In the *Crucifixion*, the figure of Christ appears as a re-creation if not direct quotation from sixteenth-century works, inserted between the defiantly seventeenth-century Mary and John. Blood drips from Christ's wounds apparently onto the surface of the painting, accentuating the picture plane and thus the work's materiality, a quality uncommon in seventeenth-century works. In the *Saint Sebastian*, the sixteenth-century elements are reduced to details (the historic Cope of David on which Sebastian sits or the gruesome treatment of Sebastian's upper wrist) and the blood that appears drips onto the fictive surfaces, not in free fall. With this work, ter Brugghen moves toward a new phase in his painting in which light effects prevail over effects of materiality, and beauty prevails over the ugliness which was so often present in his earlier paintings. The martyred body of Sebastian can be read as a figure of Christ, but also as a figure of ter Brugghen's release of his art from the complexities and miseries of art during the Reformation.

"As I Was Perpetually Haunted by These Ideas": Fuseli's *The Nightmare* and Its Influence on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda*

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Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781, Detroit Institute of Arts), inspired in part by Anna Landolt's rejection of the artist, connected sexual desire and frustration with the occult and the loss of will and potency. Fuseli expressed similar views in *The Mandrake: A Charm* (1785), *The Night-Hag Visiting Lapland Witches* (ca. 1794-96), and *Brunhild Watching Gunther Suspended from the Ceiling on their Wedding Night* (1807, inspired by the *Nibelungenlied*). Since Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, Fuseli's intimate friend, it is not surprising that she was able to demonstrate a profound

understanding of Fuseli's interpretations in her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and her unpublished novella *Mathilda* (written 1819). In these works, Mary Shelley's analyses of birth and parenthood; domination, especially relating to incest; and the link between orgasmic release and destruction demonstrate Fuseli's influence while revising his misogynistic viewpoint to direct blame at non-nurturant parents and generative authorities.

Is Matisse's *Bathers with a Turtle* a Cubist Painting?

John Klein, Washington University in St. Louis

Matisse's enigmatic composition has resoundingly defied interpretation. What appears to show an easily understood action does not resolve into a coherent story. Did Matisse deliberately thwart his viewers' anticipated satisfaction? By subverting expectations Matisse may have been exploring an alternative to modernist primitivism, which similarly challenged European art's traditions of making meaning. For Matisse ambiguity may have been an instrument in the service of his broader goal, which was to create a modernist decoration.

American Couturier Elizabeth Hawes and the Feminine Mystique

Cynthia Amnéus, Cincinnati Art Museum

Known by few, Elizabeth Hawes (1903–71) is generally regarded among fashion scholars as one of the very first American couturiers. She opened her salon in New York in 1928 with designs that were well ahead of their time—an indication of everything she thought and did throughout her life. Hawes approached clothing design by delving into the psyche of the client—whether a wealthy socialite or the common man or woman. For Hawes, clothing was a direct expression of one's self. She believed that one should have control over the style of clothing one wore, that it did not have to follow or be dictated by the fashion industry. In the 1930s, she forecasted styles that were not realized until the 1960s.

Hawes's *Anything but Love* (1948) was a diatribe against the "happy housewife" role that women were expected to fulfill. Hawes examines how the media, the male patriarchal system, and women themselves eagerly indoctrinated the next generation to accept a proscribed role as homemakers and mothers. Written fifteen years before Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), *Anything but Love* debunked some of the most basic myths about American women's lives. Like her fashion designs, Hawes's ideas about women's roles were far ahead of her time. This article explores Hawes's avant-garde ideas within the realms of fashion, politics, and female roles in the United States.