

The
Decorator

*Journal of The Historical Society
of Early American Decoration*



Spring 2024 Vol. 80



The Historical Society of Early American Decoration

A Society with affiliated chapters was organized to carry on the work and honor the memory of Esther Stevens Brazer, pioneer in the perpetuation of Early American Decoration as an art; promote continued research in that field; record and preserve examples of early American decoration; maintain exhibits and publish works on the subject of early American decoration and its history to further the appreciation of this art and the elevation of the standards of its reproduction and utilization; assist in public and private efforts in locating and preserving material pertinent to the Society's work and to cooperate with other societies in the accomplishment of purposes of mutual concern.

Vision: The Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD) perpetuates and expands the unique skills and knowledge of early American decoration.

Mission: HSEAD will develop new ways of growing and sharing its art and expertise, of expanding its membership and collaborative relationships and of awakening appreciation of early American decoration among new audiences.

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Portrait of A Young Girl, mid to late 1800s, artist of original, unknown.

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Spring 2024

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Editor's Letter

The Historical Society of Early American Decoration held its 78th Annual Conference & Exhibition in May 2024 in Southbury, Connecticut. The Spring Meeting's theme and Program "Small Folk: A Celebration of Childhood in Art & Culture," were prepared by the Convention Planner, Officers and Trustees. A special selection of decorative pieces came from the Research Center for the Raffle, and the proceeds were designated to the Education Fund.

As always, tables displayed members' artwork, capturing the Society's historical roots, decorative categories from its earliest, Country Painted tinware, to the latest, Women's Painted Furniture. Bouquets of fresh flowers and their counterparts in Theorem Painting, brought springtime indoors.

Several portraits of children echoed the meeting's theme, "Small Folk: A Celebration of Childhood in Art & Culture," and several pieces painted by members, for the "In Our Own Time" display, reflected the costuming, interests and toys enjoyed by children in the 1800s.

The Program began with the Meeting's keynote speaker, William Stollo, Curator of Exhibitions at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Museum. Stollo complimented his talk, "Don't Grow-up Too Fast: The Evolution of Portraits and Children in Early America," and slide presentation with a variety of portraits of children from the DAR as well as from other museums. Among those shown, were one of John Freake and accompanying it, his wife, Elizabeth Clarke Freake, holding their infant daughter, Mary, (1671-1674). The costumes of John, Elizabeth and their baby reflect their social position and affluence; John was an attorney and ship merchant in 17th Century America. His coat featured numerous silver buttons, and with gloves in hand, he leads our eye to a fancy broach. Elizabeth directs our attention to her gold embroidered silk petticoat and wears a lace collar and pearls while baby Mary is also beautifully adorned with lace on her cap and collar. These portraits, highlights at the Worcester Art Museum, are considered to be among the earliest important portraits painted in America by the itinerant painter, dubbed the Freake Limner or Freake-Gibbs painter. The skillful Elizabethan style and the detailed attention to the decorative elements, convey that the artist was likely trained in England. The descendants of baby Mary gifted the portraits to the Worcester Art Museum.

Saturday's program offered a series of talks, slides and demonstrations. William Stollo presented "Caring for Oil Paintings" and began by sharing his professional advice for preserving our works of art on canvas, explaining the importance of our paintings' environment, framing and cleaning. Direct sunlight, temperature, moisture and the daily accumulation of dust will take their toll. However, owners can prevent some problems by keeping their paintings

properly framed and clean. Professional care for some issues should always be an option.

The following members and teachers shared their expertise in categories and techniques gained through years of experience.

Linda Brubaker, demonstrated “Tortoiseshell Finishes,” techniques for creating a tortoise shell background and a tortoise shell finish. Her presentation was detailed with recipes and demonstrations for 1) Asphaltum; 2) Scumble, (refers to a 16th century technique and, according to Websters Dictionary, was a derivative of the verb, scum). The technique is used “to make (something, such as color or a painting) less brilliant by covering with a thin coat of opaque or semi-opaque color applied with a nearly dry brush;” 3) Tortoiseshell. Throughout her presentation, she reiterated the importance of brush care as well as maintaining a safe working environment while working with some of the necessary, but none the less, toxic mediums.

Parma Jewett’s presentation, “Cleaning and Repairing Papier Mache,” included a slide presentation of Papier Mache trays and artifacts. Her slides showed damaged pieces in her collection and how she was able to repair and restore them. Parma emphasized that her approach has been a series of trial, error and success, experimenting with products and techniques. She shared those that she discovered have worked for her on specific projects.

Cora Longobardo’s presentation, “Mother of Pearl As Used on Papier Mache Originals,” included a slide presentation as well as a display of her Collection of originals that included embellishments of Mother of Pearl. She invited members to hold and closely examine her pieces. Cora explained the nature of mother of pearl. She explained how to apply it to one’s design and the importance of protecting the mother of pearl’s surface, while painting the design, to assure its maximum reflection of light.

Anne Dimock’s talk and slide show, “All My Children: A Look at Children and Their World in Reverse Glass Painting,” brought us back to the Meeting’s theme. Images of children, depicted in painting or photography are charming and irresistible; Her slide show and Collection reflected children’s playfulness, whimsy and imaginations well as the relationship between mother and child. Anne’s presentation depicted the times, costuming and sense of life that most often accompany this subject. She displayed many pieces from her Collection, some of them alongside her reproductions.

Sunday morning came all too quickly, as it often does, at this 3-day Spring Meeting. Our breakfast speaker was Richard Benfield, Professor Emeritus of Geography at Central Connecticut State University. This year, Benfield’s delightful delivery, “Into The Throne of The Mountain Gods: A Journey to Mount Everest in Search of Snow Leopards and Adventure at the Roof of The World,” entertained and informed us about the legendary role of the snow leopard. The personal profile of this handsome and illusive cat is unknown to many of us. Photographs are mostly captured from hidden cameras. Benfield’s

talk was often humorous and always enlightening. We didn't realize that snow leopards growl or puff, but can't roar. Living high in the snowy mountains of Central Asia, at 6,000 feet in winter and 18,000 feet in summer, they have wide paws that act like snow shoes. They can leap as far as 50 feet when ambushing prey and use their body length tail like a muff to warm their face when lying down. Sunday morning's table center pieces were member-painted, snow leopard pull toys, one of which was given to Richard Benfield as a souvenir of his presentation to us. Another was auctioned and the proceeds were donated to the Snow Leopard Trust, an organization of citizen scientists, volunteer explorers and researchers. Benfield said that he was also donating his stipend for his presentation.

The meeting concluded on a joyful note, reconnecting with friends and hopeful plans of meeting, again, in the Fall at the HSEAD Fall Folk Art School in Southbury, Connecticut. Too many of our members were unable to attend this meeting, and you were all sorely missed.

The staff of *The Decorator*, Officers and Trustees wish you a happy and healthy summer and look forward to our next national get-together.

Enjoy!

Sandra Cohen



Don't Grow-up Too Fast: The Evolution of Portraits and Children in Early America

by William Strollo

Don't grow up too fast. It's something I tell my girls all the time. I, a well-educated human being, know that my children will, in fact, grow up one day. Until that day, I want them to enjoy being young because it doesn't last forever. I want them to know that it's ok to play in the rain or put together a puzzle, play a game, or read a book. They don't need to worry about the stuff of adulthood, quite yet.

And as I walked down my hall at home recently, I passed by that one wall where we hang all of the family pictures. And there they were, our portraits. The ones the girls sat for like countless kids before them: the school picture. Nothing about these photos hints at the future. While the background of one includes a landscape, this artificial backdrop doesn't hold a secret message about property ownership, future childbearing abilities, or cosmopolitan connections. They are straightforward images of our kids at a moment in time.



Now, while I would love to talk with you tonight about how we got from here to here, by way of this, we are going to narrow it down a little more and look at how portraits of children evolved from the late 17th Century to the early 19th Century. This more focused perspective still takes us on a journey through fashion, commercialism and identity and, honestly, is still a fascinating time.



Let's roll the clock back to the late 17th Century and cross the Atlantic to better understand the origins of American portraiture. Like many things during this time, British North American colonists took a lot of their direction from Europe. Seventeenth Century England was a prolific period for portraiture that would continue to inspire portrait artists and sitters

on both sides of the Atlantic into the next century.



Artists like Anthony Van Dycke, Sir Godfrey Kneller, Peter Lely, John Riley and others helped to establish a style of portraiture that transcended the centuries, painting some of the most prominent and important people in 17th Century England. What

Kneller and his counterparts did best in creating these likenesses of children and adults is convey a defined sense of gender and status, elements that the patrons viewed as important. Their posture and placement within the canvas are less important than the elements attached to the figures. By looking at these elements we can see that class and gender distinctions have already become clearly defined.

Their work was highly collectible by other Britons in the form of prints. Engravers took the masterpieces created by these artists and reproduced them on copper plates for mass production on paper. These prints, sometimes engravings, sometimes mezzotints and later lithographs, could be purchased by any passerby on the streets of London. These portrait prints grew in popularity, especially in the 18th Century. When John Singleton Copley was painting in the second half of the 18th Century, he was still referencing work done by Lely and Kneller.



Portraits and portrait prints made their way across the Atlantic in the late 17th Century and began their influence on North American colonists. Here, we see Sara de Peyster lavishly dressed and fitted out in jewelry. Executed in the Netherlands and brought with her family to America in

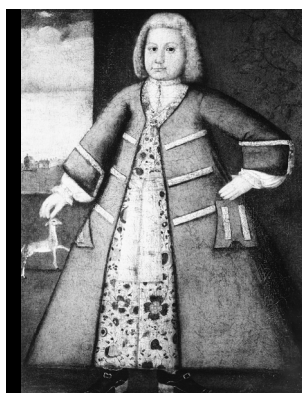
the late 17th Century, Sara's portrait alone is a symbol of her family's status and affluence. The extensive jewelry and silk dress really drive that home and are strikingly similar to the portraits of royalty being executed in Europe.

These detailed elements were the subtle cues that the de Peyster's peers would easily recognize and know the family's wealthy status immediately. Those not already familiar with the family would also know with whom they were dealing upon walking into the de Peyster's home and seeing this portrait hanging on the wall.

The same goes for Worcester Art Museum portrait of Elizabeth Clarke Freake and Baby, Mary, by an unidentified artist. Painted in the early 1670s, the artist pays great attention to the clothing of both mother and child. It is both accurately executed and detailed in its ornamentation. The clothing in this portrait stands out even more than Sara's because of the contrast between the foreground colors and the background. Here, the artist used bright and vivid colors to create the ornately decorated gowns of the subjects and darker tones for the background, making your eye compete for what to look at first. Should you look at their faces or what they are wearing?

Textiles were among the most valuable items of early Americans. They were also one very noticeable way that artists working in North America used repetition and imitation in their portraits. It was not uncommon for a silk dress to be passed down from one generation to the next and for it to be altered and "updated" to the latest style. John Freake, husband and father of our previous subjects, wore a velvet coat for his portrait, which was also listed in his probate inventory after his death in 1675. This "cut velvet coate" survived John and would have been a valuable piece for any family member to inherit. John Freake's coat and Elizabeth and Mary's





with each other. Mrs. Henderson wraps one arm around Tessie and holds the hand of Margaret. The emphasis here remains on the family, the progression or succession of that family, and less on their material possessions.

Increasingly, symbols and props were used by artists within portraits as the 18th Century progressed. More and more, these elements

dresses were just some of the many commodities that the growing mercantile class of 17th Century Boston owned in order to signal their status in society. The Freakes also owned six ships, lands, a house in Boston and a Black man named Coffee.

Until the display of commodities within the canvas would come later, textiles reigned supreme. Here we see yet another young boy, in his embroidered coat. Like the Freakes, the level of detail put into the coat is a clue to us historians of the significance of the piece to the family. This unidentified child was not only viewed by his family as worth a portrait but also the attire to immortalized likeness and status.

Little changed in portrait composition in the early decades of the 18th Century. Changes in fashion can certainly be seen in portraits of both children and adults. However, what becomes more obvious is the shift in portraying children as young or smaller adults and less as children. Here we see a portrait by one of America's first resident artists, Henrietta Johnston, of Francis Moore, drawn in New York City in 1725. This young girl is ten years old but every element of her picture, from the hairstyle and costume to the facial expression and pose, are more typical of an adult.

John Watson's portrait of the Hendersons sees a noticeable shift from the earlier preference of the 17th Century into a more distinctive style for the 18th Century. Here, Mrs. James Henderson is placed at the center of the picture and looks directly out at the viewer, along with the eldest daughter, Margaret. Meanwhile, Tessie and James play



became central features in the portrait composition, whether they were real or stand-ins. The English landscape in the background of this portrait of James de Peyster from around 1730 is used to place James and by association his family, on the same level as the British aristocracy. Owning such expanses of land was a luxury not affordable to the lower classes.

The de Peysters take their social ambitions and signaling even further with James's portrait. Just look at the similarities between the de Peyster portrait and the portrait of Lord Buckhurst and Lady Mary Sackville from 1695. The artist who painted James



in the 18th Century undoubtedly worked from John Smith's engraving after Sir Godfrey Kneller's original painting.

Taking it another step further, portrait artist and dance master, William Dering, expands on the use of the landscape, English connections and additional symbols to convey his subject's status. Young George Booth of Gloucester, Virginia, was painted around 1745 and placed within an ornamental garden. He holds a bow and arrow in one hand while his dog holds a bird shot by one of Booth's arrows. Dering also starts to do something that we will see run throughout the remainder of the 18th Century and that is putting a lot of attention on the subject's posture.



Let's take away the other distractions and look at Booth's posture. This alone would have been enough of a signal to his peers that George and his family were part of the more affluent part of society. Beginning around the age of 9 or 10, boys began their etiquette training. Knowledge of proper deportment was a key lesson for the growing gentry class in North America. Etiquette manuals would have been readily found in shops and homes in early America and directed the reader on how to carry themselves in various situations. The teachers of these lessons, aside from the parent, were often the dance masters, making William Dering the perfect person to direct the posing of a subject for a portrait sitting.

By the middle of the 18th Century, a noticeable shift took place in

Lawrence Kilburn, Limner, just arrived from London with Capt. Miller, hereby acquaints all Gentlemen and Ladies inclined to favour him in having their pictures drawn, that he don't doubt of pleasing them in taking a true Likeness, and finishing the Drapery in a proper Manner, as also in the Choice of Attitudes, suitable to each Person's Age and Sex, and giving agreeable Satisfaction, as he has heretofore done to Gentlemen and Ladies in London. He may at present be apply'd to at his Lodgings, at Mr. Bogart's near the New Printing-Office in Beaver-Street.

*New-York Gazette and
Weekly Post-Boy,
13 May 1754*

how poses, clothing and props were used in portraits. This 1754 advertisement by artist Lawrence Kilburn gives the reader insight into the desired elements of a good mid-18th Century portrait and alludes to Kilburn's target audience. It reads: "Lawrence Kilburn, Limner, just arrived from London with Captain Miller hereby acquaints all Gentlemen and Ladies inclined to favor him in having their pictures drawn, that he don't doubt of pleasing them in taking a true likeness and finishing the drapery in a proper manner as also in the choice of attitudes suitable to each person's age and gender and giving agreeable satisfaction as he has heretofore done to gen-

tlemen and ladies in London. He may at present be applied to at his lodgings, at Mr. Bogart's near the new Printing Office in Beaver Street."

His word choice tells a lot about the clients he hoped to attract: Gentlemen and Ladies. Not just any man or woman, no, Gentlemen and Ladies. He makes this clear by stating it twice. He also references London twice in this ad, a cue that he was advertising to people who saw themselves as part of the fashionable part of society. As was still common in the middle of the 18th Century, American colonists looked to London for the latest fashion trends.



*Portrait of a Lady
Lawrence Kilburn, American
1764, Oil on canvas, 2002.25
Metropolitan Museum of Art*

While Kilburn directed his advertisement to Gentlemen and Ladies, that doesn't mean he didn't paint portraits of children. In fact, his reference to painting the proper attitude suitable to each person's age and gender is evidence enough that he was looking to parents as potential clients. This portrait in the MET's collection of a young lady from 1764 shows just what he was capable of, and is an example of what other artists are doing at this time. Artists began to hone in on the importance of gender roles and power in portraiture in the second half of the 18th Century. When it came to portrait composition for females, fertility or the future potential of fertility was a central focus.

This approach to focusing the fertility of women and the future motherhood of young girls came from the importance of showing the lineal strengths of the monarchy and gentry class in England. Portraits of members of the monarchy and other noble classes used this opportunity to show who they were related to and that their family line would and could continue.

This was especially important for the monarch, so as to avoid any suggestion of a royal crisis. *We all know how the world gets when the members of the royal family aren't seen for days on end.* There could



Their Most Sacred Majesties George III and Queen Charlotte
Richard Earlom, After Johan Zoffany,
London, England 1771 Mezzotint
Courtesy of the British Museum



Mary Lightfoot, John Wollaston
Charles City County, Virginia,
1756-1757
Oil on canvas, 4725
DAR Museum Collection, Gift of
Mr. Herbert Lee Pratt



Countess of Pembroke
Engraved by John Dixon, after Sir Joshua
Reynolds London, England c. 1764
Mezzotint 2022.15.2
DAR Museum Collection,
Friends of the Museum Purchase

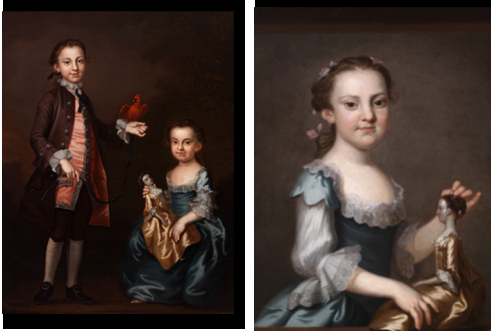
be no concern about the future of the empire if

the line of succession is firmly established. Prints of important portraits were published to indicate that line of succession.

We can see this attention to fertility and motherhood in the portraits of Mary Lightfoot and this unidentified mother and child. Both, while being attractive likenesses, reveal the importance of motherhood through subtle clues.

For Mary Lightfoot, much of it has to do with the context in which her portrait hung. When John Wollaston painted her picture in Charles City County, Virginia around 1756, he also painted a portrait of her mother, Mildred Lightfoot, which remains in a private collection. Mildred is portrayed wearing a dress exactly like that on the doll in front of Mary. Hung together at their home, Sandy Point, the connection between the two portraits would have been quite clear. Mildred and her husband, William, essentially advertised to visitors that young Mary was going to grow up to be like her mother. That she will one day be able to run a household like Sandy Point. Her dress already suggested that she was on her way to that position as she was no

longer in child's clothing but in a well-suited dress and carrying herself in the way of a well-trained lady.



Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture

This isn't the only time Wollaston used this imagery. In both of these portraits, we see Elizabeth Page seated with a doll next to her brother, Mann Page, and Elizabeth Randolph of Wilton, with yet the same doll. In all three cases, Wollaston positions the doll in such a way that it appears the doll is facing the young girl. In all three cases this use of the doll points to a desired future of motherhood.



*Mother and Child
Unidentified Artist America
c. 1760 Oil on canvas
67.268 DAR Museum Collection,
Friends of the Museum Purchase*

This portrait of an unidentified mother and child also follows a long tradition of conveying the importance of child-bearing in North America and can be seen through the use of pearls and the positioning of the two figures.

When divided up, the female subject occupies the majority of the central third of the portrait. She gazes directly out of the canvas at the viewer drawing them into the picture and downward to the young boy writing his initials into the book on his mother's lap. The placement of the book and the child close to the



mother's abdomen brings the attention again to the womb. The young boy, not yet old enough for breeches, can almost be viewed as a prop in this portrait.



John Singleton Copley and John Smibert both used this same technique to draw attention to the sitters' wombs in their 1762 and 1732 portraits, respectively. Copley's portrait of Elizabeth Storer Smith (part of the Yale University Art Collection) uses grapes resting

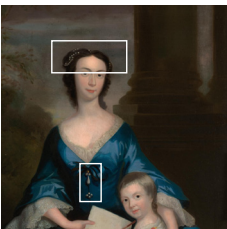


in Mrs. Smith's lap to draw your eyes in that direction. Smibert's portrait of young Jane Clark (in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collection) does the same with a small basket of oranges and peaches. Not only are these artists drawing attention to this part of the body, they are using things like fruit to associate fertility. Here the abundant fruit in close proximity to this part of the body also symbolizes their (the female figures) abundance to bear children. Interesting fact. Storer was pregnant at the time of the sitting for this portrait.

Boston mercantile elite Isaac Winslow and his family were painted by Joseph Blackburn in 1755, and the depiction of the girls in this portrait carries a strong underlying message through a similar technique. The



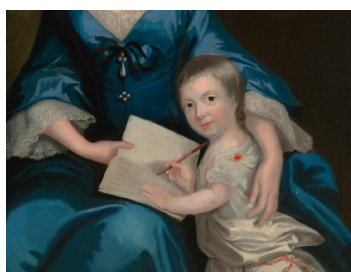
eldest daughter, Lucy, holds her apron up as it overflows with fruit. Younger sister, Hannah, reaches out for Hannah and fruit, while her mother holds her back with one hand and a teething rattle with the other.



To the well-educated contemporary viewer, the use of pearls also alludes to this mother's ability to have children. Adorning her hair and down the front of her dress this subtle accessory was not only a way to share one's status, but also served the same purpose as fruit in many portraits of this time period.



*Louise Renne de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth Pierre Mignard 1682
Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery*



time, George Romney. She is depicted leaning into her son, who sits on a stone pedestal. This mezzotint of the Countess of Pembroke also illustrates one arm around her son and holding his hand.

By the time our portrait was painted, this symbol was pretty ubiquitous. Nearly a century earlier, Pierre Mignard painted this portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth now in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Here, Mignard uses a shell as a stand in for a cornucopia full of pearls. This imagery was new for the Duchess and her contemporaries but quickly became a commonly used motif.

The last thing I'd like to point out in this portrait, of mother and child, is the use of the child as part of the message. Here, he is leaning slightly into his mother and looks directly out at the viewer. He holds a writing utensil in his right hand and keeps his book open with the other. His mother places her left arm and hand around her child almost to say that this is her son, whom she bore in an age when mortality rates were shaky, and that she mothered the heir of this family. She is making her statement in this larger portrait, one that shows the future of this family, both financially and genetically are well established and will live on.

Source material for this pose was abundant in English portraits and prints. Here, Mary Rutledge Smith, sister of Edward Rutledge, who signed the Declaration, had her portrait with her son, Edward Nutt Smith, painted in London by one of the leading artists of the



The transition from adolescence to young adulthood was expressed in different ways and could be seen in something as simple as the articles of clothing one wore. For boys, they no longer wore the gowns of childhood by the age of ten and were given their first pair of breeches. Girls progressed from one style of gown to a more sophisticated one more appropriate for adulthood. In this family group, we can see some of that progression. The younger boys here are in skeleton suits worn by children and play with toys. The elder children are in more adult attire and are practicing on their instruments, a common event for an affluent household so that children could be better prepared for entertaining.



Looking back at some of our previous subjects, James and George, we see the distinct difference in clothing. James is believed to be no older than five years old in this image, and George is ten. One has been breeched and the other has not. For George, he is beginning his transition toward adulthood and will soon start to embark on an education befitting his status.



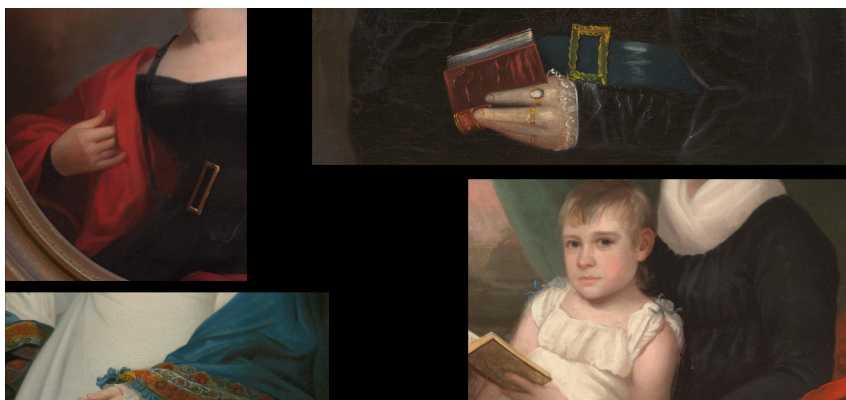
All of these symbols and subtle messages reached their peak in the late 18th Century and began to fade following the American Revolution thanks to the growth of Enlightenment philosophy. This pivotal moment in American history witnessed not only a major political shift but a social one, a shift that favored an educated and well-rounded future rather than a future based on what part of society in which you were born.



Mary Balfour
Matthew Pratt, Virginia
Late Oil on canvas, 18th century, On Loan
Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of History
and Culture

With the Age of Enlightenment and the rise of Neoclassicism in America came a new approach to portraiture. This transition, like many things, did not happen overnight, as we see here in this portrait of Mary Balfour of Virginia. While we see Mary seated, draped in expensive fabrics, and wearing her pearls, we also see her holding an open book. Literacy in females was not widely promoted in colonial Virginia, and portraits of women in colonial America were rare compared to what we have seen so far.

The raising of this next generation of thinkers fell largely to the women. Portraits of women with books increased during and after the Revolution, suggesting that they could now practice more of



their own interests, but also that it was important for them to learn so that they could educate their children. This is not to suggest that women were now the sole educators of children in America following the revolution. However it is important to know that they laid the foundation for future education.

By the early 19th Century, yet another style had emerged that reflected the new set of values and iconography of the new nation. New ways of positioning the body within the canvas, different settings and modern props all contributed to the new image of the new nation. One of the largest shifts began at the end of the 18th Century, as we saw with the Mary Balfour portrait, and that was education. With the conclusion of the Revolution came a shift in what was viewed as valuable. Abundance of land gave way to a well-rounded education. Jefferson and other intellectuals advocated for raising a nation of thinkers who could help advance the debate of the revolutionary government.

Here we see Jane Randel, the youngest of 12 children, sitting in her mother's lap. Catherine holds her daughter while Jane holds an open book in front of herself. Catherine no longer wears the decorations symbolic of the previous era. No pearls, fruits, or flowers. She has shifted her focus to child-rearing, rather than childbearing. Nothing about her is lavish or excessive. Her intentions are clear. She is focused on raising this, her last child. Jane, who was born around 1800 would become part of that new nation of learners.

By the middle of the 19th Century, these young learners were raising another generation of learners. Increasingly, portraits of children, including those of girls, included more books and less of what we saw in the previous century. Here, Clara Gross, age 7, stands with an open book and the wide world of possibilities over her shoulder. Her hands are engaged in the book in front of her while she looks directly at the viewer.

Raising competent, young girls also led to contributors to the new American culture. Amelia Comfield's education gave her power that was not available to girls and women like her in the previous century. Comfield's education helped her become a successful author, publishing *Alida* first in 1841. This love story, set during the War of 1812, had such success that it saw 4 editions published in under a decade.

Comfield was so proud of the success of this novel that she features it not once, but twice in her portrait. One of those includes a placement on a bookshelf alongside other notable authors of the 18th and early 19th Century, including works by Edmund Burke and others. Comfield is effectively placing herself on the level of these well-known and collected writers.



Catherine and Jane Randel
Ezra Ames, Albany, New York, 1814-1816, Oil on canvas, 86.26
DAR Museum Collection,
Friends of the Museum Purchase



Clara Jane Gross
Robert Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1851
Oil on canvas, DAR Museum Collection,
Gift of Fletcher E. Ammons



Amelia Stratton Comfield
David Rodgers, United States
1852, Oil on canvas, DAR Museum
Collection, Purchased through the bequest
of Bernice Abbott Cope



image become just as varied as the people who sit for these photographers. While we may be quick to compare this change to a famous quote from the 20th Century: “Video killed the radio star”, Photography didn’t kill the portrait artist, it made the art of portraiture change.



As we look back on the images and influences within these canvases, I think it is interesting to note who dictated many of the decisions that led to the final product. While the artist often played a major role in influencing the decision, ultimately it was the parent who decided how their child or children would pose, what they would hold, and what they would wear, and by extension it was the parents whose values and priorities come through in these canvases. Therefore, as you consider how you might arrange your next portrait, keep in mind the pivotal role you play in shaping how others perceive you and the power your portrait has on shaping the future.



William A. Stollo is the Curator of Exhibitions at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Museum, where he oversees the art, print, metal, and numismatic collections as well as the Museum's exhibition program.

Preserving, Restoring and Recording Our Fine Arts and Crafts

Saturday's Program offered a series of presentations and demonstration for collectors and artists. Everyone busily took notes, asked questions and closely examined a generous display of artifacts provided by the presentors.

The following is a brief synopsis of each presentation.

Caring for Oil Paintings

William Strollo, Curator of Exhibitions at the DAR Museum, gave a slide presentation, illustrating the priorities for preserving our oil paintings. The following points were emphasized.

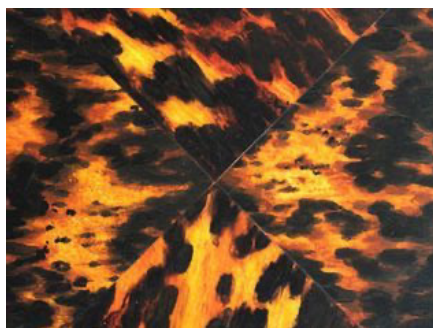
Your painting's environment included its exposure to light (It should be indirect.); ideally, the temperature and humidity should be (@70 degrees & 50 degrees respectively). Strollo cautioned about a painting's proximity to food, water, plants, vents, etc. Furniture placement in rooms, where paintings are hung on walls, may provide a safety barrier.

Frames should fully support the weight of the painting, and, if one chooses, glass may be used to protect the surface in which case, spacers should be used. One often notices that some paintings in museums have glass over them, which protects the paintings while they are lent and travel to other museums' exhibitions. Double or triple wiring, depending on the paintings' size and weight, is recommended for hanging.

Special soft hair brushes are recommended for dusting (do not wipe). The DAR Museum uses a Haki/Haik brush, available in various sizes from Amazon. Dust in one direction, top to bottom motion, and remember to dust the frames. If your painting requires cleaning (other than dusting), a professional oil painting cleaner was recommended, and your local museum is often a good source for recommendations.



*A Hawksbill Turtle.
Photo by Alex Ochoa.*



*Sample of Faux Tortoiseshell
by Alpha Workshops.*



*Antique Tea Caddy and Spoon with Ivory and
Pique Work, c. 1790.*



*Antique French Georgian Eye Patch Box,
c. 1770 – 1830.*

Tortoise Shell Finishes

Linda Brubaker demonstrated the tortoiseshell finish that is derived from the design of the shell of the Hawksbill Turtle.

The Hawksbill's shell had been used to create jewelry, artifacts, book covers, veneers and other designer surfaces including frames for eye glasses. Its popularity peaked during the Victorian era, but there is evidence of its use dating back to the Phoenicians, Romans and Greeks.

The tortoiseshell, the outer, softer plates of layers which is the carapace or plastron, is what remains after removing the shell's bony skeleton. The shell was heated or boiled, and hot salt water was added to facilitate peeling the layers or plates of the shell. The plates, referred to as scutes, are similar to our fingernails. They were then flattened and cut into desired shapes or objects. One is able to appreciate the value and cost of original tortoise shell artifacts for the intensive labor and its rarity.

The Hawksbill Turtle, that inhabits most oceans around the world, has been on the endangered list since 1950. At that time, faux tortoiseshell finishes became popular. Plastic replaced authentic tortoiseshell for jewelry

and ornamental objects and later, artists were able to imitate the finishes with paint. Today, one may paint furniture, lamp bases or boxes to resemble early veneered tortoiseshell.

Linda achieves the best results by using an old formula that a German artist shared with her years ago called “Scumble.” Her recipes follow:

Scumble:

¼ jar (cup) linseed oil

¼ jar (cup) of Japan dryer

½ jar (cup) of mineral spirits

Wet surface with this mixture before applying any color.

Creating Tortoiseshell:

Artists oils: Alizarin Crimson, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber. Mix scumble ingredients into each color to make a half & half mixture. Wet surface of object. Dab colors here and there. With a soft brush, gently blend the colors leaving some of the base color to show through. When surface is dry, coat with a satin finish.



Antique Gothic Papier Mache Trays before and after cleaning

Cleaning and Repairing Papier Mache

Parma Jewett shared her approach to cleaning and repairing Papier Mache. Papier-Mâché (literally French for ‘chewed paper’), a technique that began in 1745, involved binding bits of paper with a glue or paste adhesive. The result was a malleable wet product that was easily molded into three dimensional shapes from small platters and trays to chairs, tables and other furnishings that would harden and could be decorated. These decorated Papier-Mâché objects became quite ubiquitous during the Victorian Period.

Parma referenced several sources that included the following books: *Japanned Papier Mache and Tinware, c. 1740-1940* by Yvonne Jones; *English Papier Mache its Origin, Development and Decline* by George Dickinson; *English Papier Mache of the Georgian and Victorian Periods* by Shirley DeVoe

and *Decorative Arts, 18th & 19th Century, Research and Writings of Shirley Spaulding Devoe* compiled by Shirley Baer and Jeanne Gearin.

Parma Jewett gave a Power-Point presentation, describing three approaches to cleaning and repairing Papier Mache. Her materials included auto repair Bondo, Bin sealer and brown contractor's paper with paste. She explained that the choice of which material to use depends on the type of repair that is needed. Parma also noted how to make a Papier Mache copy of a metal tray. First spray the metal tray with Pam and cover it with shrink wrap. She then applied the layers of wet paper and paste to form the shape.

There are many different solutions for cleaning Papier Mache, and no one solution suits every item. Parma's favorite combination is Dawn's dish soap mixed with alcohol, and each mixture is tailored to the item which is being cleaned. For example, both Henry Clay and Jennens & Bettridge items have a very soft varnish and respond well to the Dawn and alcohol mix.

Parma also mentioned other cleaning agents, such as liquid Bonami and liquid pumice stone as well as different acrylic paint brush cleaners and further explained how she made some of her repairs.



Detail: Pearl Scenic on Tea Caddy



Detail: Pearl Flowers with Gold Details on Portfolio Cover

Mother of Pearl Decoration on Papier Mache

Cora Lombardo shared her research and experience using Mother of Pearl in decoration on Papier Mache. It may have been Henry Clay's original 1787 patent for applying mother of pearl to Papier Mache for the manufacture of buttons that "lit the first spark" exposing the possibilities of using pearl shell and papier mache together. If so, then it was the 1825 Jennens and Bettridge patent, outlining their detailed methods for shaping and affixing the pearl, that proved the spark had taken.

Certainly, pearl shell had been used for surface embellishment in various ways for centuries in both the Far and Near East. England had been using pearl shell for traditional inlay on wooden furniture since the 17th Century. However, Papier Mache was opening-up all kinds of new creative possibilities, and the various manufacturers, particularly in Birmingham, accepted the



Detail: Flowers with Pearl Centers on Hand Screen



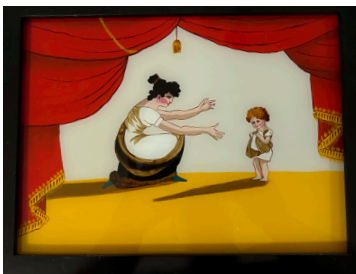
Detail: Pearl Scenic with Bronze Background on Small Box Lid

challenge.

Various styles of pearl decoration evolved during the following years. Realistically, painted floral subjects might have shown pearl centers, or entire flowers, tinted slightly to add color and form without obscuring the shimmer of the pearl. These floral designs were done on black or bronze-powdered backgrounds and also occasionally included pearled parrots and birds of paradise. Another type of floral decoration eliminated the realistically represented flowers entirely and simply focused on garlands or arrangements of pearl flowers, adding gold leaf and sheer color for detail.

Scenic subjects were also quite popular. Simple, but often very delicate compositions in an exotic or orientalist style, showing imaginative combinations of buildings and palm trees were typical. They were done on black with fine gold detail or on bronzed backgrounds with minimal use of color. Scenic ruins, such as Tintern Abbey and Melrose Abbey, as well as images of castles, were also represented. These images often had bronze powder and gold leaf used to produce more realistic results.

Cora brought a plethora of decorated pieces with Mother of Pearl for members to closely examine. For further information, on the history and techniques used in pearl decoration on papier mache, *Japanned Papier Mache and Tinware c.1740-1940* by Yvonne Jones is a particularly interesting source. Other books on the subject by Shirley Spaulding DeVoe, George Dickenson and Jane Toller are also very good references.



Mother Beckoning to Her Child

A Look at Children and Their World in Reverse Glass Painting

Anne Dimock, Specialist in Reverse Glass Painting and teacher of early American decoration, gave a presentation and slide show featuring scenes of children depicted in reverse glass. Anne generously displayed her collection of some of her origi-



Child Playing under A Tree



Young Boy Steering His Boat among The Swans



A Young Child in Prayer



Original and Reproduction of A Young Sheppard

nals and reproductions for members to enjoy, firsthand.

Reverse glass painting is a very old art form, and Anne concentrated on American reverse glass that was used primarily in looking glasses and clocks that were produced in the early 1800s. She stated that the artist first applied the fine details in the foreground, working back, painting the background last. Many pieces included stenciled and gold leaf borders.

Anne reminded us that women were generally portrayed in landscapes or in motherly activities. A popular reverse glass painting of Jenny Lind, the famous Swedish opera singer, was featured on stage. Most often, girls were painted in repose or with an appropriate prop, and mothers are engaged with their children. Greek and classical references were employed for hair styles, dress, furniture and the ubiquitous background drape often framed the scene. Men and boys were often shown in specific and often more interesting activities, fishing being the favorite.

Anne observed that as she gathered her reverse glass collection of children, that although the backgrounds varied, she found several depicting the same girl, suggesting that she was likely a prototype. She explained how she verified this by overlaying tracings of each girl from different reverse glass scenes.

Anne concluded her presentation by sharing some her favorite children, including the young boy and girl on stage (pictured on *The Decorator's* cover), and the young child praying; all have prominent places in her home.

Saturday's program concluded with the excitement and anticipation of taking what we learned from the day's presentations and using this wealth of information on our next project.



Into the Throne of the Mountain Gods: A Journey to Mount Everest in Search of Snow Leopards, Asiatic Decorative Arts and Adventure at The Roof of The World

by Richard Benfield

The decorative arts are dominated by images of plants, geometric designs, abstract motifs and folk art. Occasionally animals are represented, but they are normally domesticated animals in the form of dogs, cats and birds.

Much rarer are wild animals, and this is certainly the case of the decorative arts of Asia and the depictions of the Himalayan snow leopard. Why this is so is a puzzle to experts. This rarity of snow leopards in Asian art puzzles, no less, an authority on Asian art, James (Jim) Callaghan. As one of the foremost authorities in oriental art and much more famous as the Antiques Roadshow appraiser, he valued a Chinese jade bowl at over \$1.1 million. It was, at the time, the most valuable artifact ever brought to the roadshow in 22 years.



17th Century Jade Bowl. Appraised in 2009 at between \$750,000 and \$ 1.1 million.

Jim said that in forty years working in Asian art, he rarely had seen, and thus, appraised oriental artifacts featuring the snow leopard. Why so rare? He thinks it is probably because in the wild, it is rarely seen and thus for local indigenous inhabitants of the regions where it lives, it is close to being supernatural and mystical, almost ephemeral. When it is seen, it quickly disappears and is thus, also transitory in nature. When Jim has seen artifacts featuring snow leopards, he notes the leopard is:

- Usually erect and “fierce” not supine
- Often denoted with or as a “Snow Lion”
- When you see it in decorative art, it is in hangings NOT drawn on ceramics



Door Panel with Snow Leopard head. Tibet. Circa 17 Century.

- Occasionally it is featured on doors and rugs
- May be used as covering or robe thus reserved for nobility or high priest



Snow Leopard and Tiger rug Tibetan. Undated.

Notwithstanding the paucity of snow leopard images in Asiatic art, Tibetan Buddhist writings and oral cosmology, snow leopards have a special place in Tibetan culture, where they are considered a symbol of strength, grace, and power. In Tibetan Buddhism, snow leopards are believed to be the guardians of the mountains and are revered as spiritual beings. Interestingly, snow

leopards also feature in depictions of gods and most often in the company of female deities.



“White Tara” a meditation deity revered within Tibetan Buddhism who embodies compassion, long life, healing and serenity.

Much more common in Asian arts is the Bengal or Asiatic tiger, and while the tiger has historically been seen as a creature of the lowland tropics and sub-tropics, recent research in Bhutan has discovered tigers in the high Himalayas of Bhutan and at an altitude of over 13,000 feet. As a result, the tiger may be more important to Himalayan culture than once thought and indeed may take the place of the snow leopard in artistic depictions. Why the “Snow Lion” is so common is also a puzzle. There are now only 120 Asiatic lions in the wild (in the Ghir Forest of India) and the physiology, unlike that of a tiger, is certainly not appropriate for alpine or high-altitude climates.

Notwithstanding the almost mythical status of the “Ghost of the Mountains,” the snow leopard, as a featured object of decorative arts, was more specifically examined as a link between art, conservation, culture and biodiversity.

The Himalayan Snow Leopard resides in and above the Himalayan ranges of South and Central Asia with the animal rarely going below 16,000 feet in altitude but often above 23,000 feet. The physiology of the snow leopard is, therefore, extremely well-adapted to living in cold temperatures, rarified air and steep mountain cliffs and gullies. Found in 12 countries of the Himalayan chain, there are believed to be between 3,900 and 7,000 snow leopards, wild in nature, the majority of which are found in the far western ranges of China. The snow leopard is corpulent in nature, roaming widely throughout its home range in search of food. While an efficient hunter, a leopard kills in only one- in ten attempts or opportunities and must eat every ten days or so to survive in this inhospitable terrain and climate.

As a result, life is lived on the edge continuously, often exacerbated, in the case of females, by the need to feed up to two (sometimes three or four!) kittens or cubs which rely on their mother for over 18 months while attaining adulthood. Coupled with the need for continuous hunting, snow leopards are under threat from several other influences on their existence. These include:

- Hunting for their skins and fur (a snow leopard pelt fetches over \$ 5,000 in the markets of Asia)
- Retaliatory killing in the event a snow leopard (often starving and old) goes into local corrals and kills sheep, goats and other valuable livestock
- Chinese medicine, particularly desirable are the bones and internal organs
- Loss of natural prey (from hunting and human encroachment on their grazing lands)
- Global warming making it difficult for snow leopards to hunt in a warming climate owing to heat exhaustion.

It is estimated that, owing to the threats noted above, snow leopard populations have fallen from over 10,000 in 1990 to less than 7,000 today – a 20% decline - and the snow leopard is now considered an endangered species in all 12 countries where it lives a precarious existence.

In 1981 the first steps in snow leopard conservation were set up by the formation of the Snow Leopard Trust (www.snowleopardtrust.org) based in Seattle Washington. Along with other wildlife conservation bodies, they are taking steps to halt the decline in snow leopard populations and conserve the species, its habitat and its prey for future generations. One such measure has been the realization that snow leopard conservation is urgently needed to safeguard one of the planets most beautiful and yet enigmatic animals.



Photo Courtesy Snow Leopard Trust and NCF India

Snow leopards have a special place in Tibetan culture, where they are considered a symbol of strength, grace, and power.

In Tibetan Buddhism, snow leopards are believed to be the guardians of the mountains and are revered as spiritual beings. Thus, scientists have begun to recognize that cultural and biological diversity are deeply linked and that conservation programs should take into account the ethical, cultural and spiritual values of nature and enlist indigenous peoples' support for their efforts.

As noted above, China is the most important country holding wild snow leopard populations, and in the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau region of China, Tibetan monasteries have substantial overlap with snow leopard range. In fact, 50% of every Buddhist Monastery in China is within 3 miles of known Snow Leopard habitat, and in countries outside China, it is estimated that 80% of the snow leopards' range is within a region dominated by Tibetan Buddhist religion.

The spiritual link between snow leopards and Buddhism is Buddhism's core tenet of love, respect, and compassion for all living beings, and this perfectly aligns with the goal of protecting China's natural heritage. By combining science and spiritual wisdom, monasteries can contribute significantly to snow leopard conservation. The most important and impactful program in China is the so-called monk patrols where Monks from Tibetan monasteries actively patrol the wilderness to prevent poaching. They teach local communities that killing these majestic creatures is wrong, emphasizing Buddhism's nonviolence principles.

The initial successes of monastery-based conservation are now being extended to regions influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. In the Hindu Kush – Pamir regions of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, mountain communities' knowledge, that transcends linguistic and social boundaries, is being used to



Photo Courtesy Snow leopard Trust and Noam Kedar. Spiti Valley, India 2020.

bring together communities and peoples that have often, historically been at odds with each other. Their knowledge is contextually grounded in their interactions with weather, the land and their natural world, much of which is environmentally complex. These symbolic and real linkages between the biological and the cultural are represented in the stories and their art.

Snow Lion



The Snow Lion is the national emblem of Tibet. The Snow Lion resides in the East and represents unconditional cheerfulness, a mind freed from doubt, clear and precise. It has a beauty and dignity resulting from a synchronized body and mind. The Snow Lion has the youthful, vibrant energy of goodness and a natural sense of delight. Sometimes, the throne of a Buddha is depicted with eight Snow lions on it. In this case, they represent the 8 main Bodhisattva-disciples of Buddha Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha. Associations: main quality is fearlessness, dominance over mountains, and the earth element.

Sources:

“Surprising Ally for Snow Leopards: Buddhist Monks,” *Live Science* an online website.

Photographs were courtesy of The Snow Leopard Trust.



Dr. Richard Benfield, former professor at Central Connecticut State University, is an independent researcher and author of Garden Tourism. Dr. Benfield donated his stipend and the proceeds from his presentation to the Snow Leopard Trust in Seattle that will go toward the adoption and research on one special HSEAD leopard.



Standards for Excellence

“The Historical Society of Early American Decoration grants “A” and “B” and Reproduction Awards for those entries that show excellence in craftsmanship and meet the Society’s Standards” as outlined in more specific detail in *The Standards’ Manual*. The tradition of research and of encouraging excellence through evaluation of members’ work began at the Fall Meeting at the Wellesley Hills Country Club, Wellesley, Mass. in 1947 (recorded in Vol. 1, No.2 of *The Decorator*).

The following excerpted overview offers a perspective of the guidelines (reviewed and revised with respect to ongoing research over the years) for recording historically authentic reproductions submitted for Judging.

“The design of the article submitted must be authentic and appropriate for the piece in size, period and type of decoration. The work must demonstrate techniques that meet the requirements of the category.

The design must include adequate work to demonstrate the craftsman’s ability and to afford the judges enough painting to enable them to make their assessment.

The design and work must meet all General Requirements as well as the Category Requirements. If the design includes other techniques in addition to those of the category, each technique will be judged according to the requirements of that specific category.”

Congratulations and appreciation to all who choose to undergo this process.



Historical Society of Early American Decoration

Master Teachers, Master Craftsmen and Specialists

HSEAD Master Teachers

Clark, Maryjane 1962
Watts, Margaret 1965
Martin, Gina 1968

Hutchings, Dorothy 1969
Gross, Helen 1972
Donnellan, Astrid 1994

HSEAD Master Craftsmen

Bond, Jessica H. 1952
Martin, Virginia (Gina) 1952
Underhill, Emilie 1952
Watts, Margaret 1952
Clark, Maryjane 1957
Hague, Helen 1957
Drury, Bernice 1960
Murray, Maria 1960
Gross, Helen 1962
Cruze, Annetta 1964
Burns, Florence 1967
Hutchings, Dorothy 1967

Keegan, Cornelia (Phil) 1969
Wallace, Louise 1970
Lambeth, Deborah 1979
Donnellan, Astrid 1981
Sherman, Phyllis 1981
Edrington, Roberta 1983
Hedge, Carolyn 1989
Heinz, Carol 2010
Davis, Dortia 2012
Brubaker, Linda 2017
Bartow, Pauline 2022

HSEAD Specialists

Tucker, Lois / Country Painting 1993
Baker, Ann / Country Painting 1995-96
Edrington, Roberta / Free Hand Bronze 1997
Victorian Flower Painting 2000
Buonato, Carol / Clock Dials 2004
Dimock, Anne / Reverse Glass 2012
Jewett, Parma / Country Painting 2016

Sources:

The Decorator; Chair, The Standards and Judging; Chair, Specialist Awards



2024 HSEAD's Annual Exhibition
Southbury, Connecticut
Members' "A" Awards



Country Painting
Linda Brubaker

Penwork
Polly Bartow



Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock

Members' "A" Awards



Stenciling On Tin
Linda Sheldon

Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock



Theorem-Oil
Dennis Lambert

Members' "A" Awards



Country Painting
Linda Brubaker



Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock



Theorem-Oil
Lauren Jean Harhen

Members' "A" Awards



Theorem-Oil
Karen Graves

Country Parinting
Linda Brubaker



**Women's Painted
Furniture**
Eve Marschark

Members' "A" Awards



Reverse Glass Painting
Polly Bartow

Stenciling On Wood
Polly Bartow



Women's Painted
Furniture
Nancy Toombs

Members' "A" Awards

Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock

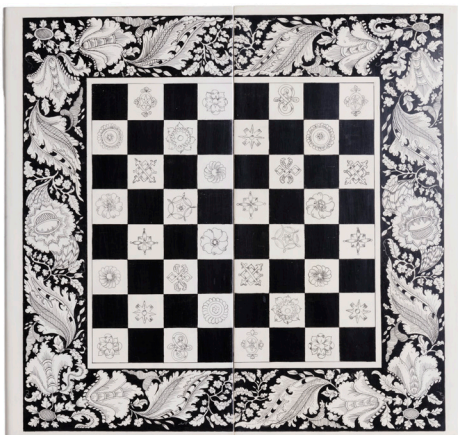


2024 HSEAD's Annual Exhibition
Southbury, Connecticut
Members' "B" Awards



Country Painting
Debra Fitts

Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock



Penwork
Susan Tash

Members' "B" Awards



Reverse Glass Painting
Ann Dimock

Women's Painted
Furniture
Eve Marschark



Reverse Glass Painting
Mary Roth

Members' "B" Awards



Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock

Metal Leaf
Debra Fitts



Country Painting
Susan Tash

Members' "B" Awards



Reverse Glass Painting
Anne Dimock





HSEAD Research Center



HSEAD Research Center, Historic Stockade District, Schenectady, N.Y.

The Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD) maintains its Archival Collections and Library at its facility in Schenectady, New York. Located in the Historic Stockade District at 26 N. College Street, the center also houses the research papers of several prominent experts and teachers of early American decoration. Visits are available by appointment.

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Future Meetings

Fall Folk Art School
Wyndham Southbury
Southbury, Connecticut
September 26 – 29, 2024

Annual Conference and Exhibition
Sonesta White Plains
White Plains, New York
May 2 – 4, 2025

Fall Folk Art School
Wyndham Southbury
Southbury, Connecticut
September 25 – 28, 2025



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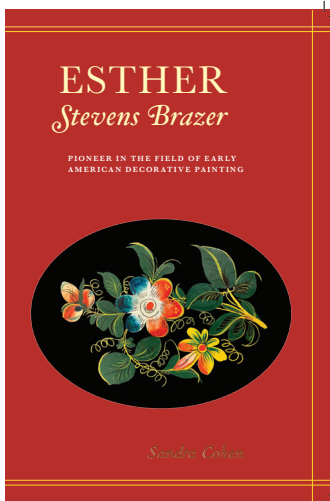
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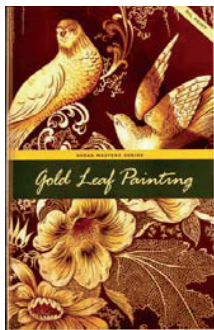
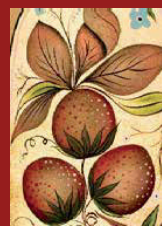
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Historical Society of Early American Decoration

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Theorem (DVD)

Gold Leaf (DVD)

Reverse Glass Painting (DVD)

Videos are available for free. Go to hsead.org, Home Page, click on The Art We Love, Learn More and scroll down to available instructional videos.

Publications

American Painted Tinware:

A Guide to Its Identification (Vol. I, II, III, IV), hard cover

This handsome, hard cover, four volume set is the only authoritative and comprehensive source on American painted tinware. A rich historical text, along with hundreds of full color photographs of original pieces and line illustrations of motifs and patterns, will allow you to visually identify the products of these regional tin shops. This set is available for members for the sole cost of shipping and handling.

A list of HSEAD publications and supplies is available on the website. For ordering information, please contact HSEAD at info@hsead.org.

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Vol. 47 - 58

Vol. 59 - present issue

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Country Painting on Tinware
Stenciling on Tinware

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Standards and Judging	Linda Brubaker
The Painted Works	Eve Marschark





*Reproductions of portraits of a young boy and a young girl, by Kay Hogan, teacher and artist.
Original Portrait of A Young Boy by Ruth Whittier Shute and Samuel Addison Shute (1850-1860 is referenced in Helen Kellogg's article, "Found: Two Lost American Painter," Antiques World (Dec. 1978, No.1, p. 40.
Portrait of A Young Girl, mid to late 1800s, artist of original, unknown.*