

Heroes and Legends:
The Classical World
from Baroque to
Regency



DICKINSON

Heroes and Legends: *The Classical World from Baroque to Regency*

Online Exhibition

28 January – 31 March 2021

www.simondickinson.com

Dickinson Gallery is pleased to begin 2021 with the new online show *Heroes and Legends: The Classical World from Baroque to Regency*. Opening exclusively online on 28 January, to coincide with Old Masters Week in New York, the show will feature a range of Old Master and 19th century paintings and sculpture focusing on aspects of the classical world, its heroes, and the influence of its mythology. The show will be led by Johan Zoffany's monumental *Ulysses seizing Astyanax from Andromache*, an ambitious early work inspired by the classicism of Poussin (c. 1758-59); and by Massimiliano Soldani-Benzi's bronze *Ganymede and the Eagle* (c. 1714), a rare bronze composition from the collection of the Earls of Lanesborough at Swithland Hall, Leicestershire.



Swithland Hall, Leicestershire, UK

The classical world was long held up as an ideal subject for artists. From the Renaissance onwards, scholars distinguished between art that was instructive and that which merely copied the outward appearance of a subject. Thus, according to the hierarchies promoted at Academies in Europe well into the 19th century, history painting – a category that also encompassed religious, mythological or allegorical subjects – was placed at the pinnacle, followed by portraiture, genre painting (scenes of everyday life), landscape painting, and finally the still life.



C. Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London

Interest in the classical past permeated numerous aspects of art and culture. Architects such as Venetian Renaissance master Andrea Palladio looked to Roman and Greek structures for inspiration. In the 18th century, Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington – nicknamed the ‘Architect Earl’ – was responsible for bringing Palladian architecture to Britain, with elegant designs for buildings like Chiswick house. Furniture was designed

to suit the new architecture, with the so-called Neoclassical style dominant from around 1750. In Regency Britain and Post-Revolution era France, women’s fashion took its cue from classical models, replacing restrictive corsets with looser, high-waisted styles that wouldn’t have looked out of place on a nymph in a painting by Claude Lorrain. Literature, music and theatre also turned to the classical past for themes and narratives.

Highlights of Dickinson’s online exhibition include *Ganymede and the Eagle*, a dynamic bronze by one of the most significant proponents of the Florentine late Baroque style in sculpture. It was Soldani’s reputation for refined statuary after the Antique that attracted the Grand Tourist market to his studio, and this work descended in the collection of the Earls of Lanesborough. Only one other version of this composition, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, is known to exist. Dickinson is also featuring *Ulysses seizing Astyanax from Andromache* by German-born Grand Tourist favourite Johann Zoffany, painted just before he moved to London in 1760. In this work Zoffany gives us a dramatic scene from the Trojan War narrative in which the Greek hero Ulysses searches for the son of his vanquished enemy, Hector, the Trojan Prince.



Chiswick House, London, UK



Apollo Belvedere, c. 120 – 140 AD, Vatican Museums, Vatican City



J. Reynolds, P.R.A., *Captain the Honourable Augustus Keppel*, 1752-53, National Maritime Museum, London

Among the other Italian works in the exhibition are Leandro Bassano's *Orpheus Charming the Animals*, which takes as its subject a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* based on the ancient Greek narrative of the musician and poet. Leandro was a member of the influential artistic Bassano family, active in the 16th-17th centuries in the Veneto. Also taking its inspiration from mythology is Baroque artist Carlo Saraceni's imposing painting of *The Giant Orion* (c. 1616-17), based on the *Astronomia* by Ancient Greek author Hesiod. Saraceni depicts the story's most dramatic moment, in which the giant Orion has his vision restored by Helios, the Sun, at the break of dawn; we see him shielding his eyes from Helios's glare. And Pasquale Ottino's *Equestrian portrait of a Nobleman* in armour features a distinctive helmet now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Although best known as a portraitist, Sir Peter Lely turned to a classical bacchanale for inspiration when he painted *A bacchanale with nymphs, a satyr and putti* as a young artist newly arrived in England from the Netherlands and in search of patronage. Lely's elegant, Renaissance-inspired mythological and literary subjects featured in the 2012-13 Courtauld Gallery exhibition *Peter Lely: A Lyrical Vision*; this work, a new addition to the catalogue raisonné, comes from a private

collection. Also new to the market are Jacques-Antoine Vallin's *L'amour conduisant deux amants au temple de l'hymen* (1798-99), a characteristic work by the French Neoclassical painter best known for such mythological scenes; and Robert Lefevre's portrait of *The Emperor Napoleon* (1814), seen standing in a Neoclassical colonnade filled with sculpted figures of monarchs and philosophers. And while great seriousness was attached to the collecting and appreciation of classical art, Sir Joshua Reynolds showed that it also had a lighter side, with his *Caricature of Lord Bruce, Thomas Brudenell-Bruce, later, 1st Earl of Ailesbury; the Hon. John Ward; Joseph Leeson, Jnr, later 2nd Earl of Milltown, and Joseph Henry of Straffan* (c. early 1751). Reynolds's witty painting, which shows a group of aristocrats on Grand Tour, descended in an Irish private collection.

These and other pieces by Auguste Jean-Baptiste Vinchon, René Vauquelin, Mario dei Fiori and more will be exhibited online through March. Although the doors to our London Gallery remain temporarily closed according to government guidelines, you can pay us a virtual visit via our website, **[www. simondickinson.com](http://www.simondickinson.com)**.



LEANDRO BASSANO (1557 – 1622)

Orpheus Charming the Animals

with inscription verso *Jacques Bassan*

oil on canvas

97.8 x 129.5 cm. (38 x 51 in.)

£ 180,000

Such was his musical skill that Orpheus could charm the wil beasts and birds, who flocked to listen to him. The rabbits in the lower right corner relate to a drawing in the Uffizi collection by Jacopo Bassamo, the artist's father.



FRENCH SCHOOL, c. 1750

A trompe-l'oeil with a sword and a stag's head

oil on canvas

108 x 145 cm. (42 ½ x 57 in.)

£ 22,000



Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, UK

Still lifes featuring hunting subjects were popular in the mid-18th century, as a souvenir of a successful hunt or shoot. This example hung at Chatsworth in the collection of the Dukes of Devonshire.



ROBERT LEFEVRE (1755 – 1830)

The Emperor Napoleon, 1814

signed and dated on the base of the column, lower left *Robert Lefevre 1814*

oil on canvas

53.5 x 38.5 cm. (21 x 15 ½ in.)

in an ornamented frame with Corinthian foliage and flowers

£ 360,000

By posing in front of a classical colonnade lined with sculpted portraits of monarchs and philosophers, the Emperor Napoleon was deliberately associating himself with powerful historical leaders.





SIR PETER LELY (1618 – 1680)

A bacchanale with nymphs, a satyr and putti, c. mid-1640s

oil on canvas

104 x 131 cm. (41 x 51 ½ in.)

£ 300,000

Although Sir Peter Lely is best known for his bravura portraits of Restoration court sitters, it was his Renaissance-inspired subject paintings that initially impressed his English patrons following his arrival from the Netherlands around 1643.



MARIO NUZZI, CALLED MARIO DEI FIORI (1603 – 1673)

A Vase of Flowers

oil on canvas

100.4 x 73.5 cm. (39 ½ x 28 ⅞ in.)

£ 19,500

'Mario of the flowers' earned his nickname thanks to the International success of his floral still lifes, often depicted – as here – in classical urns or vases.





ATTR. PASQUALE OTTINO (1578 – 1630)

Equestrian portrait of a nobleman in armour

inscribed on the column at left *FIDES/MILITIAE/DECVS*

oil on canvas; an oval

144.8 x 119.2 cm. (57 x 43 in.)

£ 52,000

The distinctive close helmet worn by this knight was once in the collection of Lodovico Moscardo in Verona, and was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1929, apparently from the collection of the Veronese Counts Erizo.



Close Helmet, c. 1550, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A. (1723 – 1792)

Caricature of Lord Bruce, Thomas Brudenell-Bruce, later, 1st Earl of Ailesbury; the Hon. John Ward; Joseph Leeson, Jnr, later 2nd Earl of Milltown, and Joseph Henry of Straffan, c. early 1751

oil on unlined canvas

58.7 x 43.6 cm. (23 1/8 x 17 1/8 in.)

£ 500,000

This witty caricature of a group of grand tourists was presumably commissioned in Rome by one of the sitters, the 2nd Earl of Milltown, and passed thence to his goddaughter at Killadoon House in County Kildare, Ireland.





CARLO SARACENI (1579 – 1620)

The Giant Orion, c. 1616-17

oil on canvas

128.6 x 100.3 cm. (50 5/8 x 39 1/2 in.)

£ 1,500,000 *

*According to the lost *Astronomia* by the Greek author Hesiod, the giant Orion was blinded for attacking a princess of Chios, but later had his sight restored by Helios, the Sun god, at the break of dawn. Here we see Orion shielding his gaze from the glare of the rising sun.*



* non UK/non EU work. Please contact the gallery for questions about this artwork.

MASSIMILIANO SOLDANI-BENZI (1656 – 1740)

Ganymede and the Eagle, c. 1714

bronze, dark brown patina

31.5 x 38.5 cm. (12 ½ x 15 ¼ in.)

£ 950,000

Soldani enjoyed a prestigious clientele, including members of the Royal and papal courts, who admired his elegant Baroque bronzes. This particular model is also very rare, with the only other known version held by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.





JACQUES-ANTOINE VALLIN (c. 1760 – c. 1835)

L'Amour conduisant deux amants au temple d l'hymen, 1798-99

signed and dated lower right *Vallin. an 7*

oil on panel

54 x 78 cm. (21 ¼ x 30 ¾ in.)

£ 70,000

Although this work is inscribed 'an 7', we know that Vallin painted it during the Post-Revolutionary period when the French Republican Calendar was in use (from late 1793 until 1805). Year 7 lasted from 22 September 1798 until 22 September 1799.



RENÉ VAUQUELIN (1854 – 1941)

Head of a Lion

signed lower right *René Vauquelin*

oil on canvas

114 x 78.2 cm. (44 ⁴/₅ x 30 ³/₄ in.)

SOLD

Inspired by their exotic notion of the East, Western Orientalist painters depicted subjects such as animals, harems and baths. Most, however, never travelled to the regions they depicted, and thus paintings such as this one would have been based on travelogues and imagination.





AUGUSTE JEAN-BAPTISTE VINCHON (1789 – 1855)

Castle on the shore; early morning

oil on paper laid down on canvas

17.8 x 18.4 cm. (7 x 7 ¼ in.)

£ 3,500



AUGUSTE JEAN-BAPTISTE VINCHON (1789 – 1855)

A Tomb in the nave of a Basilican church

oil on paper laid down on canvas

25.7 x 38.4 cm. (10 1/8 x 15 1/8 in.)

£ 5,000

During Vinchon's stay in Rome, the fashion for plein-air sketching in oil was at its height and was practised even by artists who, like Vinchon, were not specialists in the genre. These sketches served as a library of motifs available for consultation and use in more formal studio paintings.



AUGUSTE JEAN-BAPTISTE VINCHON (1789 – 1855)

A Fountain in a wooded landscape; possibly at Tivoli

oil on paper laid down on canvas

22.3 x 27.9 cm. (8 ¾ x 11 in.)

£ 5,500



JOHANN ZOFFANY, R.A. (1733 – 1810)

Ulysses Seizing Astyanax from Andromache, c. 1758-59

signed on the base of the sarcophagus *Zauffaly*

oil on canvas

124.8 x 173.3 cm. (49 x 68 ¼ in.)

£ 280,000

Although best known for his elegant society portraits, German-born Johann Zoffany was also a talented painter of history scenes. This monumental episode from the Trojan War narrative shows the Greek warrior Ulysses (or Odysseus), who, having sacked Troy, searches among the ruins for the infant he is afraid might one day avenge the death of his father, Prince Hector.





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Please contact the gallery for any questions about specific artworks

All works listed, unless otherwise specified, are offered for sale by Dickinson
in the show *Heroes and Legends: The Classical World from Baroque to Regency*