

The Curator's Toolkit: Up Close and Personal with The Rosenbach's Collections

Artifact Lab

Session 6.1: Technologies and Cultures of Production – Prints and Paintings in The Rosenbach Collection



George Cruikshank, "Fairy Connoisseurs Inspecting Mr. Frederick Locker's Collection of Drawings &c &c &c."
Rosenbach accession no. 54.1880.3512.

Learning Objectives

- Study archival documents and 3D artifacts connected to the creation and consumption of “fine arts.” Consider how such materials can be employed by art historians and others to analyze and interpret art history.
- Encounter different techniques employed in creating paintings and prints. Discuss the technical processes and cultural opportunities provided by printing’s reproductive possibilities.
- Study and handle rarely-viewed holdings from The Rosenbach’s library and museum collections. Learn more about our collections of prints, fine art, and books related to the history of collecting. Get a sense of how extensive our collection of paintings, prints, and related materials truly is.

Artifact Selection

Stop One, Portraits in the Parlor: Color, Line, and Iconography

Gilbert Stuart, portrait of Solomon Moses, oil paint on wood, 1806. 2014.0004.

Thomas Sully, portrait of Benjamin Gratz, oil paint on wood, 1831. 1954.1937.

Gilbert Stuart, portrait of Rachel Gratz Moses, oil paint on wood, 1806. 2014.0004.

Matthew Harris Jouett (1787-1827), portrait of Maria Cecil Gist Gratz, oil pain on canvas. 1820-1825. 1984.0005. [Hanging in stair hall.]

Jane Cooper Sully Darley, portrait of Miriam S. Gratz, oil paint on wood, 1831. 2004.0084.

Thomas Sully, portrait of Michael Gratz, oil paint on canvas, 1831. 2008.0004.

G.P.A. Healy, portrait of Joseph Gratz, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas. 2010.0027.

Thomas Sully, portrait of Maria Cecil Gist Gratz, oil on canvas, 1831. 2012.0004.

Thomas Sully, portrait of Rebecca Gratz, oil on canvas, 1831. 2010.0027.

Stop Two, Artifacts of Art Production: Technology and Commerce (Denworth Room)

Set A – John Henry Brown and Technologies of “the Likeness”

Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826; ALS, [18]14 Aug. 9, Monticello, to Gilbert Stuart. AMs 476/5.

James E. M'Clees, Portrait of a man, possibly of Thomas H. Powers, Esq., depicted at three quarter angle from the waist up. Daguerreotype. 2001.0007.001.

John Henry Brown. Portrait miniature (watercolor on ivory). Portrait of a man, possibly Thomas H. Powers, Esq., depicted at three quarter angle from the waist up. 2001.0007.002.

John Henry Brown, journal and account book, 1844-1890. AMs 573/14.1.

John Henry Brown, autograph letter signed to Julia Williams Rush Biddle, 19 March 1888. RUSH IV:31:26.

Set B – Archibald Robertson and Artifacts of the Artistic Process

Stipple engraving depicting Archibald Robertson, 1805. 1954.0759.

Paintbox of Archibald Robertson. Wood, brass, and wool. Ca. 1785-1835. 1954.1875.

Archibald Robertson (1765-1835), portrait miniature (half-length portrait of man), watercolor on ivory, 1830-1840. 1954.1601.

Andrew Robertson (1777-1845), pencil drawing of a woman on cream-colored wove paper, 1830-1835. 1954.0276.008.

Set C – Prints in Books

Titian Ramsay Peale and J.B. Keim, copper printing plates for Thomas Say's *American Entomology*. Accession nos. 2005.0253.001-016.

Thomas Say. *American Entomology, or Descriptions of the Insects of North America. Illustrated by Coloured Figures from Original Drawings Executed from Nature*. Philadelphia Museum: Samuel Augustus Mitchell, William Brown, printer, 1824. Call no. A828 a.

Stop Three, Collecting Prints: Examples from The Rosenbach's Collection (Denworth Room)

French Engravings of the Eighteenth Century in the Collection of Joseph Widener, Lynnewood Hall. London: Chiswick Press, 1923. Vols. 1 – 4. Accession no. 1073/3. [ASSIGNED TO THI, GAGE, AND TARA]

The Rulers of France, 1380-1902: Holograph Letters and Documents. Vols. 1-2. MS f.233/22. [ASSIGNED TO JORDAN, AAYA, NICHOLLE, AND ERIC]

A Portfolio of Aubrey Beardsley's Drawings Illustrating "Salome" by Oscar Wilde. London: L. Jane, 1906. Accession no. 1954.0801. [ASSIGNED TO FRANCES, MARY AND ELLEN]

Oscar Wilde (1954–1900), *Salomé: drame en une acte* Paris: Librairie de l'art indépendante; Londres: Elkin Mathews et John Lane, 1893. EL3 .W672s 893.

Directions

This artifact lab will begin with a stop in The Rosenbach's parlor to meet (or be re-introduced to) the Gratz family oil portraits. We will analyze the paintings before walking up the historic house stairs to Denworth, to study an assemblage of artifacts that speak to the artistic process in its many forms. Finally, students will break into smaller groups to look at a volume in The Rosenbach's holdings that illuminates the history of printmaking and print collecting.

Discussion Questions for Books of Prints from The Rosenbach's Collection

- 1) What is the purpose of the volume you've been assigned? Do you have information about for whom it was made, when, and why? What can you glean from the object itself to answer these questions?

- 2) What artists, pictorial depictions, and printing techniques do you encounter in the book?

- 3) Prepare a few points to share with the entire class about the book you've been assigned: artists and subjects represented within it, printing techniques you may be encountering, and the significance of the volume.