

# Comments on the Art Market

B Y R E H S G A L L E R I E S

## Volume 282

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### Current Gallery Exhibition

**Seaside**  
Through June 30th



*SEASIDE* is a captivating showcase that explores the serene and dynamic interplay between land and sea. Featuring an array of paintings, the exhibition invites visitors to immerse themselves in the beauty of coastal landscapes, from the gentle ebb and flow of the tides to the dramatic majesty of ocean storms. Through vibrant colors and masterful brushwork, *SEASIDE* captures the essence of coastal life and allows viewers to reflect on their own connections to the natural world and the timeless allure of the ocean's edge.

The exhibition features works by Ben Bauer, Anthony Blake, Ryan Brown, Mark Daly, Gail Descoeurs, Leo Mancini-Hresko, Sergio Roffo, Ken Salaz, Brett Scheifflee and John Stobart.

### Upcoming Fairs/Shows

We are pleased to announce that during the summer of 2024 we will be participating in 3 fairs/shows:

**Hamptons Fine Art Fair: July 11 – 14, Southampton Fair Ground**  
**The Newport Show: July 26 – 28, St. George's School**  
**The Nantucket Show: August 9 – 12, Bartlett's Farm**

If you would like to attend any of them, please let us know as soon as possible. We receive a limited number of complimentary tickets and once they arrive, we can send them to you.

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## Stocks & Crypto

The weather isn't the only thing heating up these days... May was another positive month for the stock market, meaning 6 of the last 7 months have closed out with gains! It's been quite a run given some of the concerns we were talking about heading into the new year. Even though the Dow saw some wild volatility, it still finished up 2.3% for the month, thanks in particular to a stellar final trading day where the index popped more than 1.5%! That was likely spurred by the release of the latest inflation data, which showed inflation is at least not worsening. The Nasdaq turned in a solid 6.8% gain, while the S&P landed between the two, up 4.8%. All three are flirting with all-time highs. On a personal side note, I started using an investment app called Autopilot – it allows you to set an amount of money you'd like to invest, and then it mimics the trade activity of popular politicians like Nancy Pelosi and Tommy Tuberville. I only put in \$3,000 yesterday, so I'll be sure to let you know how that performs relative to the major indexes going forward – wish me luck!

Turning to currencies and commodities... both the Pound and Euro saw a moderate strengthening relative to the US dollar – the Pound climbed about 1.75%, while the Euro was closer to 2%. Crude futures hovered in the \$80 range most of the month, though it ultimately settled near \$77 – more than a 5% slide through May. Conversely, gold notched a new all-time high as it popped over \$2,400... it gave back a bit, but still achieved a 2.5% gain on the month.

Over on the blockchain, Bitcoin pulled back up into the \$70K ballpark... I'm sure some were a bit nervous when it dipped into the 50s on the first day of the month, but it notched a 15% gain! Ethereum is back to pushing the \$4K threshold, as it turned in a 26% month. Litecoin only managed a meager 3.5% gain, but it's better than a loss!

As I mentioned earlier, we continue to see things trending upward... and notably, at a time when that was not exactly expected. Perhaps things are a bit overinflated, or perhaps the economy is withstanding the stress better than expected; either way, gains are gains!

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## Really!?

### John Jacob Astor's Timepiece Sets Titanic Record



John Jacob Astor's pocket watch

John Jacob Astor's pocket watch, which he was wearing when his body was found, is now the most expensive Titanic memorabilia purchased at auction.

[John Jacob Astor](#), an American self-made millionaire, was a multifaceted individual who excelled as a businessman, inventor, and writer. He hailed from the prominent Astor family, and his service also marked his life as a lieutenant colonel in the Spanish-American War; a significant chapter in his life that often goes unnoticed. Astor tragically perished in the sinking of the [RMS Titanic](#), marking him as the wealthiest casualty of that disaster.

His extensive business endeavors, primarily focused on real estate, left an indelible mark on New York City. Notable projects included constructing the Astoria section of the [Waldorf-Astoria](#) and the [St. Regis Hotel](#).

Astor and his first wife, [Ava Lowle Willing](#), divorced in 1909. In September 1911, a scandal ensued when Astor married [Madeleine Talmadge Force](#), a woman 29 years his junior. Following their wedding they indulged in a prolonged honeymoon, initially exploring various local destinations, and subsequently, in January 1912, embarking from New York on the RMS Olympic for an extensive tour of Egypt. It was during this journey that Madeleine conceived, prompting her desire to return to the United States for the birth. On April 10, 1912, Astor and Madeleine commenced their voyage aboard the Titanic's inaugural journey.

Amidst the chaos of the Titanic's tragic demise on April 14, Astor displayed remarkable composure, assisting his wife in securing a place aboard a lifeboat. However, despite his heroic efforts, Astor met his tragic fate when the ship sank into the icy depths on April 15, a moment that forever etched his name in the annals of the Titanic disaster.

Recovery efforts commenced following the disaster, leading to the retrieval of Astor's remains and other victims on April 22, 1912, by the cable ship Mackay-Bennett. Among his recovered possessions was a prized 14-carat gold Waltham pocket watch, symbolizing his wealth and status.

This cherished timepiece eventually passed to Astor's son, Vincent, who later entrusted it to William Dobbyn IV, Astor's trusted executive secretary, in 1935. The Dobbyn family safeguarded the watch for decades until deciding to auction it in the late 1990s.

In April, the historic pocket watch, initially expected to fetch £100,000 (\$135,000)—£150,000 (\$190,000), far exceeded projections; selling to Patrick Gruhn, a German fintech entrepreneur and former executive at cryptocurrency exchange FTX, for an astonishing £1.17 (\$1.5 million). This made the timepiece the most expensive Titanic memorabilia purchased at auction.

### Gatling Gun Shoots Past Estimate

The Gatling gun, invented by Richard Gatling in the 1860s, marked a significant advancement in firearm technology due to its innovative design featuring multiple rotating barrels. It is regarded as one of the earliest practical machine guns and was actually meant to dissuade people from waging war. Richard Gatling designed the gun to fire so rapidly and cause so much bloodshed that it would make people hesitant to use it. Or, in his words, it was meant to "supersede the necessity of large armies" and greatly reduce "exposure to battle and disease" (so much for that, I guess). During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Gatling gun played a pivotal role in various conflicts, including the American Civil War and colonial wars waged by the British in Africa and Asia. Its impact on the battlefield was profound, solidifying its status as a game-changing weapon. Despite the evolution of machine guns with automatic firing mechanisms and other enhancements, the Gatling gun remains an enduring symbol of early rapid-fire weaponry, marking a crucial milestone in the trajectory of modern firearms development.



Colt Model 1875 Gatling gun

The May 8th-10th Firearms & Militaria sale held at Morphy's Auctions in Denver, Pennsylvania, had several impressive pieces up for grabs. These included [a 1921 Tommy Gun](#), [a nineteenth-century American Bowie knife](#), and [a German MG-42 machine gun](#) (a model nicknamed "Hitler's buzzsaw" by American GIs). However, the star of the sale was a Colt Model 1875 Gatling gun, which drew widespread attention and secured an auction record. In preparation for the auction, Morphy's experts undertook meticulous verification procedures to ensure the authenticity and integrity of each component, including confirming the matching assembly numbers on all the bolts. After ensuring the weapon's authenticity, Morphy's concluded that this Gatling gun was one of the forty-four acquired by the US Army, several of which accompanied General George Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

The Gatling gun's illustrious and bloody history further enhances its appeal. Originally gifted to Lafayette College's class of 1952 by William Simon, who later ascended to the position of Secretary of the Treasury, the firearm carries a rich legacy. This distinguished 'Long Model,' identified by the serial number '130,' fetched an impressive \$310K (or \$381.3K w/p), shooting past the \$200K to \$300K estimate. While the identity of the successful bidder remains undisclosed, this acquisition represents a significant addition to the realm of historical firearms, amplifying the legacies of the weapon and its esteemed previous owner.

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## The Dark Side

### Monet & Auerbach Changing Hands



*Bord de Mer* by Claude Monet

This week saw two confiscated paintings make the news: in the United States, a Monet pastel drawing stolen by the Nazis may be returned to its owners' descendants. Meanwhile, Britain's National Crime Agency will auction off an Auerbach painting taken from a money launderer.

*Bord de Mer* is an early pastel by Claude Monet, executed in 1865. Adalbert and Hilda Parlagi, prominent Viennese art collectors in the 1930s, purchased the work in 1936. The Parlagi family had to leave their extensive art collection behind when they fled Vienna in 1938, shortly after Nazi Germany annexed Austria. Even though Adalbert was an Austrian citizen who converted to Christianity, raising his two children as such, according to Nazi race law, he was still considered a Hungarian-

born Jew. The family left their collection in a warehouse, hoping to retrieve it after the war. However, the Gestapo seized the warehouse's contents and sold the collection, including the Monet at Dorotheum. After researching its provenance, the FBI seized the painting in June 2023. That was when the drawing's chain of ownership was uncovered: after being confiscated by the Nazis and sold at Dorotheum, the painting wasn't seen again publicly until 2016, when the Galerie Helene Bailly of Paris lent it to an exhibition in Ornans. From there, the gallery sold it to an art and antique dealer in New Orleans, who sold it to a private collector in 2019. In late March of this year, the government filed a lawsuit as the current owner of the drawing for the district court in Louisiana to determine which of the interested parties will be awarded ownership. Though the court has not decided yet, it is widely suspected that it will hand the Monet over to the Parlagi family's remaining descendants, cousins Françoise Parlagi and Helen Lowe.

While the Monet made news in the US, over in the UK, a more recent work made the news. Britain's National Crime Agency announced that it would auction off a confiscated painting by a living legend. [Albert Street, 2009](#) is an abstract cityscape by Frank Auerbach showing the titular street in North London. Auerbach has done many works that show Albert Street. Since it is the location of his studio, the paintings in the series are rather personal for the artist. The NCA confiscated the painting from Lenn Mayhew-Lewis, who was convicted of money laundering last year and subsequently went on the run. Coincidentally, the NCA announced they had seized the painting on April 29th, Auerbach's 93rd birthday. Mayhew-Lewis paid £1.6 million for the painting, with the investigation concluding that it was used as collateral for a £5 million loan. The NCA is currently waiting for anyone to make an ownership claim. Should no such a claim come forward, *Albert Street, 2009* will be auctioned off, with the proceeds going to the NCA and the Home Office.

### British Museum Recovers Half Of the Higgs Theft

In a truly remarkable feat, the British Museum, against all odds, is on its way to recovering nearly half of the artifacts that were likely stolen by former curator Peter John Higgs. This feat, achieved mere months after the theft's discovery was announced, is a testament to the museum's resilience and determination. They announced 626 artifacts have been recovered and identified about 100 more found across Europe and North America. Considering the museum's estimate that Higgs stole or damaged between 1,500 and 2,000 artifacts, it is making amazing progress.

The museum administration credits this to "clever detective work and a network of well-wishers". However, a good portion of the recovered items came from a single source, the Danish antiques dealer Ittai Gradel. Gradel, the one who initially brought Higgs's activities to the museum's attention, personally recovered 350 stolen items after discovering lots available for sale on eBay. Of course, had museum deputy director Jonathan Williams not dismissed Gradel's initial concerns in 2021, Higgs may not have had the opportunity to steal dozens or possibly hundreds of artifacts. Sadly, we cannot alter the past. [Williams has since left the museum in disgrace](#), and staff are diligently working to identify as many pieces as possible. Even the museum chairman, George Osborne, expressed some amazement: "Few expected to see this day, and even I had my doubts." Given that Higgs specifically targeted uncatalogued items, tracking them all down has been a Herculean effort for the museum staff. Of course, Osborne has recognized that confirming all the recovered items as artifacts from British Museum storerooms and archives is next to impossible since the



British Museum

museum never catalogued them. Therefore, the museum will be accepting all artifacts as donations.

The Metropolitan Police is still investigating the theft but have made no arrests. The British Museum, however, [has sued Higgs in a civil suit](#), the first time the former curator has been officially named as the person most likely responsible for the theft. The suit alleges that Higgs “abused his position of trust” as a curator to steal and damage thousands of artifacts and antiquities for over a decade. The court has ordered that eBay and PayPal turn over any records associated with the accounts Higgs used to facilitate the items’ sale. On top of the theft, the museum also alleges that Higgs forged documents and manipulated museum records to cover his tracks; claiming he altered 83 documents in total. Arthur Brand, an investigator who made news last year during [the recovery of a stolen Van Gogh](#), made some suggestions as to preventative measures the British Museum should take. Among them is the creation of a secondary database that the museum can use to double-check the catalogue. This database would be inaccessible to museum staff to prevent it from being altered. It would only be consulted when discrepancies are detected.

The current efforts to catalogue the British Museum’s entire collection are expected to cost £10 million and predict that the whole catalogue should be publicly available online within five years.

### Damien Hirst’s Backdating Scandal



Damien Hirst (photo courtesy of Christian Görmer)

Damien Hirst has always been controversial to some. While he is often hailed as one of the greatest artists to come out of Britain in the 1990s, he has always received his fair share of criticism. Some of it comes from people who do not like his art from an aesthetic point of view, particularly those associated with the Stuckist art movement. Some critics and fellow artists have dismissed his work as “tacky” and “over-rated”. While artistic taste is inherently subjective, claims of plagiarism and backdating are pretty cut-and-dry. Hirst has had such accusations leveled at him for much of his career, and now new allegations are starting to surface.

In March of this year, claims circulated that some of Hirst’s most iconic pieces, a series of conceptual works consisting of animals in glass boxes filled with formaldehyde, may have been created far later than was advertised. Hirst started this series in 1991 with [The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living](#), featuring a tiger shark caught off the coast of Queensland, Australia. The actual shark carcass reminds us of death. At the same time, the formaldehyde solution preserves the animal’s life-like appearance by not only preventing decay but also giving it the impression that it is swimming in a tank. The original piece was

lauded as one of the greatest works of art to come out of Britain in the 1990s. It soon spawned a series, with Hirst placing any number of different animals in glass tanks filled with formaldehyde. In 2017, three of these works, allegedly made between 1994 and 1999, were exhibited for the first time at the Gagosian Gallery in Hong Kong. Some, however, grew suspicious that an artist of Hirst’s prominence would refrain from exhibiting work so long after their creation. This prompted [an investigation by The Guardian](#), which led to the discovery that these pieces were likely made not in the 1990s but in the months leading up to the Hong Kong exhibition in 2017. One of the formaldehyde works, [The Unknown \(Explored, Explained, Exploded\)](#), was sold for \$8 million to Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, the latter of whom is CEO of Station Casinos. Consequently, the work [appeared behind the bar at the Palms Casino](#) in Las Vegas.

This led researchers to delve into Hirst’s entire back catalogue to see if there was any other evidence of backdating. Sure enough, [The Guardian released a follow-up](#) this past Wednesday, reporting that Hirst likely created many paintings later than what he assigned. These paintings are primarily part of his series [The Currency](#), consisting of dots of acrylic paint on A4 paper. In 2021, Hirst began to sell 10,000 NFTs of the *Currency* series, each corresponding to a physical painting, which, according to Hirst, were all made in 2016. Controversially, Hirst made headlines when he announced [he would destroy any physical Currency painting sold only as an NFT](#), prompting many NFT owners to ask for their physical copies. However, despite the date written on the paintings, some sources, including studio assistants who made some of the works, attest that many of the paintings, at least a thousand, were made on a sort of production line between 2018 and 2019. Within a month, the sale of the *Currency* NFTs generated about \$47 million and was done through the vendor site Heni, owned by Hirst’s manager, Joe Hage. While many of the *Currency* paintings were probably made in 2016, the information provided by Hirst’s studio staff indicates that the artist seemed hell-bent on getting the number of paintings up to 10,000. This is likely because, according to NFT and cryptocurrency specialists, the first well-known NFT sales’ organizers frequently used the number 10,000. Art lawyer Howard Kennedy even called 10,000 “the magic number for an NFT art project”.

When first asked for an explanation in March, Hirst's company, Science Ltd., stated that "the date Damien Hirst assigns to [his works] is the date of the conception of the work. [...] it is not the physical making of the object or the renewal of its parts, but rather the intention and the idea behind the artwork." I know that art and its appreciation have a good amount of subjectivity baked into it. However, you would think that even the most avant-garde conceptual artists would agree that the date you assign to a piece is when you first physically created it. In Hirst's world of conceptual art, creating a work of art is not as important as when an artist comes up with the idea. The conception of an artwork is indeed important, but it means nothing until you put brush to canvas or pencil to paper. It is rather refreshing that Hirst is not denying that he created these works later. However, this bizarre workaround makes everything even more frustrating. It also contradicts the *Currency* series' description published by Heni for the 2021 NFT sale, which reads, "The physical artworks were created by hand in 2016". It seems pretty explicit that the date refers to the works' execution rather than their conception.

Hirst has previously made copies of his works, most notably in 2007 when the Tate displayed a replica of his 1993 work [Mother and Child \(Divided\)](#). The Tate catalogue did not contain a hint of shame or concealment in assigning a later date to those works. This leaves us with a more cynical way to look at all this: it's all because of money. Hirst made a name for himself in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Therefore, work dating from that time is sometimes more popular among collectors and might bring in more money. In that case, I almost pity Hirst. By backdating these incredibly striking pieces, he admits that his best days are behind him. He would rather keep living his past glories than come up with something new and truly great. Damien Hirst is now the KISS of contemporary art: shocking and shiny at his peak but has now resigned himself to putting out more greatest hits albums than actual studio albums. Could this be an admission that he's in creative decline?

With these revelations, Hirst's future seems uncertain. His reputation is certainly damaged in the eyes of many, with [The Guardian's Jonathan Jones](#) writing that this scandal will "threaten to poison Hirst's whole artistic biography". But it might not just be his standing that takes a hit, it can also be his bank account. Artists and galleries have been successfully sued for backdating their art. In 2022, Alec Baldwin [successfully sued gallerist Mary Boone](#) for selling him a 1996 Ross Bleckner painting that he discovered was actually made in 2010. With millions of dollars on the line, it could only be a matter of time before one of Hirst's buyers decides to take legal action.

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## The Art Market

### Bonhams New York American Sale



*New Mexico Recollection No. 8* by Marsden Hatley

Immediately after the Derain came the second place lot, though few people would've guessed it. Christie's specialists seemed to think that one of the Sisley paintings or perhaps the lone Pissarro might make it to the top three. However, it ended up being one of the sale's two women who took second place. Françoise Gilot's oil on panel painting *Le Concert Champêtre*, or *Concert on the Green*, is a rather large work, measuring 51 ¼ by 63 ¾ inches. Gilot created it in early 1953, during the final months of her decade-long romantic relationship with Pablo Picasso. The painting from Tuesday's sale displays hints of Picasso's style while remaining unique. Picasso experts say that the Spanish master assigned a different color to each of the important women in his life, with Gilot's color being green.

Christie's assigned the Gilot an estimate range of €200K to €300K, with the hammer coming down at €1.05 million / \$1.14 million (or €1.3 million / \$1.43 million w/p). As I wrote several weeks ago, the Picasso Museum in Paris [curated one of its gallery spaces dedicated to Françoise Gilot's work](#), which commentators say is a significant step towards Gilot's rehabilitation in France, where her reputation suffered immensely after her break with Picasso. In North America and, to some extent, the rest of Europe, Gilot's popularity and reputation have remained mostly intact, with her work selling for far greater amounts at auction houses in London and New York. *Le Concert Champêtre* is now Gilot's fourth most valuable painting and is by far the most valuable of her paintings ever sold in France. Not only is this one of the artist's biggest moments at the auction block, but it may serve as a bellwether testifying to Gilot's reputational rehabilitation in France.

Two lots were tied for third place, each selling for €550K / \$598.3K (or €693K / \$753.8K w/p). The first was one of the two Sisley paintings featured during the sale. Sisley painted *Les Coteaux de La Celle, après Saint-Mammès* in 1884, not long after moving to the Moret-sur-Loing area in the countryside just south of Paris. Like

much of his work, Sisley focuses on the Seine, capturing its banks at Vernou-la-Celle-sur-Seine, just a few miles east of Fontainebleau. With a range of €400K to €600K, the Sisley fell nicely within its estimate. Meanwhile, the other lot sharing third was the single work by Rodin in the sale. Rodin originally exhibited the original marble sculpture *Éternel printemps*, or *Eternal Springtime*, at the Salon in 1897. After that, he created multiple versions cast in bronze, including this one, which he cast during his final years between 1916 and 1917. The sculpture has intrigued many, leading some to guess that the figures represent Cupid and Psyche, or perhaps they are personifications of the wind and the earth. It slightly exceeded the €300K to €500K estimate Christie's assigned it.

The sale did incredibly well, with eleven of the twenty-three available lots selling within their estimates, giving Christie's specialists a 48% accuracy rate. An additional three lots (13%) sold below, while eight lots (35%) sold above. Only one lot, an oil on canvas painting by Le Corbusier, went unsold, giving the sale a 96% sell-through rate. In total, the sale made €9.9 million, well within its presale estimate range of €7.39 million and €11.37 million. It's important to remember that a quarter of the sale's total came from the Derain painting.

### Sotheby's New York Contemporary Evening Sale

This month's sales at New York's auction houses had a decent start last night at Sotheby's with back-to-back contemporary sales. Things started at 6:30 pm with a short sale called The Now, featuring established giants and the best new artists today, or what Sotheby's called "the masters of today and tomorrow." It was a rather successful prelude to the larger Contemporary Evening sale, mostly featuring works by the greats of twentieth-century art like Warhol, Basquiat, and Thiebaud. The expected star of the evening was Francis Bacon's *Portrait of George Dyer Crouching*. Last November, [Christie's hosted a 20th Century sale](#) that featured another Bacon titled [Figure in Movement](#). It is meant to be another portrait of George Dyer, Bacon's friend and lover, who committed suicide in 1971. While Bacon created *Figure in Movement* after Dyer's death, the portrait offered at Sotheby's on Monday night was made at the peak of their relationship in 1966, three years after the two met in London. Though expected to be the sale's biggest star, the Bacon also turned out to be the sale's biggest disappointment. With an estimate range of \$30 million to \$50 million, *Portrait of George Dyer Crouching* hammered at \$24.5 million (or \$27.74 million w/p).



*Portrait of George Dyer Crouching* by Francis Bacon



*Noon* by Joan Mitchell

Next up was one of the four paintings by the American abstract expressionist giant Joan Mitchell. The four Mitchell works available at Sotheby's were created at various points in her career, ranging from 1955 to 1989. One of them, entitled *Noon* (created in 1969) measures nearly six-and-a-half by eight-and-a-half feet. Sotheby's specialists noted that Mitchell created *Noon* around the same time she moved to Vétheuil, a small town on the River Seine just west of Paris. Claude Monet once lived there as well, featuring the town and the surrounding countryside in many of his works. However, that is not where the connections to Monet end. Art historians have previously investigated the influence that earlier artists like Monet and Matisse had on Mitchell's work. Her move to Vétheuil seemed to have greatly impacted her use of color and form, with some calling works like *Noon* "a grand botanical abstraction." *Noon* ended up selling for \$20.5 million (or \$22.6 million w/p), just slightly above its \$20 million high estimate and far above its last selling price of \$9.8 million w/p at Christie's New York in 2016.

Finally, there was one of the two works by Lucio Fontana featured at the sale. *Concetto spaziale, La fine di Dio* consists of an oval-shaped canvas pierced many times and painted bright yellow. These holes in the canvas and the ragged shapes they sometimes made were Fontana's attempts to push the boundaries of abstraction at a time when American abstract expressionists like Pollock, Mitchell, Rothko, and Frankenthaler dominated the art world. Fontana punctured and slashed the canvas itself, creating shapes and textures that were not possible with just paint. The painting is part of his *La fine di Dio* series, consisting of thirty-eight works made between 1963 and 1964, all with the same egg-like shape. It last sold at Sotheby's London in 2003 for £1.37 million w/p (or £2.4 million now). On Monday night, it sold for \$19.7 million (or \$22.9 million w/p), becoming the third most valuable Fontana work ever sold at auction.

With sales mostly consisting of high-value lots, there are often few surprises. However, Monday night ended with a bang for the final lot, an oil painting by Yayoi Kusama called [The Pacific Ocean](#). Sotheby's specialists gave it a presale estimate range of \$1 million to \$1.5 million. Within thirteen seconds of bidding, the Kusama

exceeded its high estimate when someone in the telephone bank bid \$1.7 million. After one minute and 10 seconds, the \$2.5 million bid was placed. The \$3 million bid came after two minutes. The bidding's frequency slowed down after that, but with multiple interested parties, it dragged on. Finally, after just under seven minutes of bidding, the hammer came down at \$3.8 million (or \$4.66 million w/p), over two-and-a-half times the initial high estimate.

In the end, the contemporary evening sale didn't do too badly. Out of 35 available lots, 17 sold within their estimates, giving Sotheby's a 49% accuracy rate. Additionally, nine lots (26%) sold below estimate, while six (17%) sold above. A total of three lots (9%) went unsold. The entire sale brought in \$201 million (or \$234.58 million w/p), just slightly under the total presale low estimate of \$217.6 million the sale might have made within its estimate had the Bacon not sold below estimate. Additionally, one of the three unsold lots was [a 1984 Richard Diebenkorn painting](#) expected to sell for at least \$18 million.

### Sotheby's New York Modern Evening Sale



*Meules à Giverny* by Claude Monet

On Wednesday evening, Sotheby's New York followed up their string of contemporary sales with something a little older. The Modern Evening sale consisted of fifty lots, mostly by nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and North American masters like Pablo Picasso, Mark Rothko, and Henry Moore. However, for months Sotheby's advertised the expected star of the sale, one of Claude Monet's haystack paintings. The original haystacks, or *meules*, is a series of about twenty-five paintings Monet created in 1890 and 1891. The series' English translation may be a little misleading since the stacks Monet painted are not hay but are likely wheat or some other kind of grain. He painted these stacks repetitively, each time under different conditions to note changes in weather and light. The *meules* was the first major painting series Monet did, later moving on

to Rouen Cathedral and, most famously, the water lilies in his garden. However, the work offered at Sotheby's was not part of the artist's original series. Monet returned to the *meules* every once in a while, creating the present work in 1893. To the best of our knowledge, it is the last time he ever painted the subject. The consigner acquired the painting in 2001, having last sold at Christie's in 1983 for just \$420K. The bidding started rather high at \$26 million, slowing down the closer things got to the \$30 million estimate. After over six minutes, a bid of \$29.8 million was made. The auctioneer, Sotheby's Europe chairman Oliver Barker, stayed there for nearly two minutes before the winning \$30 million (\$34.8 million w/p) bid finally came in; making it the third most valuable of Monet's *meules* paintings ever sold at auction.

Next up was a far more modern work by the British surrealist Leonora Carrington. *Les Distractions de Dagobert* was created in 1945 when Carrington was experimenting with different materials, which is why Carrington created it with egg tempera paint on a piece of masonite. The painting mainly consists of a pale figure in red robes at the center of the painting, the titular Dagobert, surrounded by his "distractions", representing the four classical elements of earth, air, fire, and water. It was previously owned by the Pierre Matisse Gallery and was last sold at auction in 1995, selling for \$430K hammer. On Wednesday evening, *Les Distractions de Dagobert* eventually exceeded its \$18 million high estimate, with the hammer coming down on \$24.5 million (or \$28.48 million w/p).



*Les Distractions de Dagobert* by Leonora Carrington

In third place at Sotheby's was *Le Banquet* by René Magritte. Magritte created several versions of this particular subject, with the work offered at Sotheby's omitting the stone wall present in the others. The main motif remains the same, showing a red sunset with the sun disc in front of the trees. In the painting, Magritte presents what Sotheby's refers to as a "subversion of the fundamental properties of nature", a theme present in many of his other works, most notably [L'Empire des Lumières](#). Estimated to sell for between \$15 million and \$20 million, the Magritte sold for \$15.5 million (or \$18.14 million w/p).

Overall, the sale was very successful. However, that isn't terribly surprising since two-thirds of the lots, including the top three, were guaranteed. Throughout the evening, a small handful of surprises crossed the block. Immediately before the Carrington, there was a work by her Spanish contemporary Remedios Varo. [Esquiador \(Viajero\)](#) was estimated to sell for no more than \$1.5 million, yet ended up hammering at \$3.4 million (or \$4.17 million w/p). Then, towards the end of the evening, Pierre Bonnard's 1925 oil painting [Nu s'habillant](#) was meant



to sell for no more than \$1.2 million. With a provenance that includes Galerie Bernheim-Jeune and Henry Ford II, I guess it's unsurprising that it achieved slightly more than double its high estimate, going for \$2.5 million (or \$3.1 million w/p). However, there were one or two slight disappointments along with the surprises. Most notably, a 1941 abstract portrait by Pablo Picasso entitled [Femme au chapeau](#) was predicted by Sotheby's to sell for at least \$6 million. The bidding got up to \$5.5 million before everything ground to a halt. The painting's reserve went unmet, and it went unsold.

Despite the Picasso going unsold, Sotheby's had a rather successful night. Out of fifty lots, twenty-four sold within their estimates, giving Sotheby's specialists a 48% accuracy rate. Seventeen (34%) sold below estimate, while seven (14%) sold above. Only two lots (4%) went unsold. Against a total presale estimate range of \$180.9 million and \$250.7 million, Sotheby's Modern Evening sale achieved \$198 million (or \$235 million w/p).

### Bonhams Skinner European Art



*Femme nue debout vers le droite* by Auguste Rodin

While the Sotheby's Old Masters sales may have drawn many people's attention on Wednesday, some of the more exciting auction action was going on up in Massachusetts at Bonhams Skinner. On Wednesday, they hosted their European art sale, consisting of one hundred sixty lots featuring nautical and sporting scenes, genre paintings, seventeenth-century Dutch still-lives, and views of Parisian streets. Bonhams anticipated that [Les Débuts d'Un Confesseur](#) by Jehan-Georges Vibert (est. \$15-25K), which had serious condition issues, would likely be among the top lots. However, everyone's expectations were blown apart when an incredible number of works sold far above their presale estimates, including a sketch on paper by Auguste Rodin called *Femme nue debout vers le droite*. Not much is known about the drawing other than its provenance. It is likely a preparatory sketch for a larger work, with Rodin employing a method called drawing à l'aveugle, or blind drawing. This involved Rodin keeping his eyes fixed on the model while his hands sketched away. Bonhams specialists only expected the drawing to fetch no more than \$9K. Imagine everyone's surprise when the Rodin not only surpassed this estimate but exponentially so, with the hammer coming down at \$95K (or \$121.2K w/p), over ten

times the presale estimate.

The sale's second-place lot was one of the paintings Bonhams predicted would bring in a fair amount of money. *Figures and Camels Before a City Gate* by Rudolph Gustav Müller was one of the two Orientalist works featured in the sale, the other being [a portrait by Paul Jean-Baptiste Lazerges](#). There have not been many highly valued works by Müller sold at auction in the past ten years, with his most recent sale being [a moderately-sized Tunis street scene](#) sold in Paris in 2013 for €3.5K. That makes this painting a particularly exciting find. The Müller was estimated to sell between \$25K and \$35K, with the hammer coming down just shy of the highest estimate at \$34K (or \$43.5K w/p); making it the artist's third most valuable work sold at auction.

The third-place lot was another surprise for Bonhams. This was a painting of a sleeping infant against a background of white bedsheets by Nikolaos Gyzis, one of the most important Greek painters of the nineteenth century. Gyzis was a leader of the Munich School, a band of academic Greek artists primarily trained at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. Gyzis and his colleagues traveled to Munich for their artistic education because when Greece achieved independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830, an agreement between Britain, France, and Russia mandated that an independent Greece would be ruled by a European prince of their choosing, which in this case was Otto, the second son of the King of Bavaria. This established close ties between Greece and Bavaria, one of the largest and most powerful of the German states. While Gyzis dabbled in many different painting styles, some of his most popular works at auction were his genre scenes that showed family life. This particular painting captures the artist's first child, his daughter Penelope, created in 1878 when she was six days old. Expected to sell for no more than \$6K, the Gyzis became the subject of a bidding war, with the winning bid being \$24K (or \$30.7K w/p), four times the high estimate.

While some of the hammer prices at Bonhams may not have been as high as at Sotheby's, it was really astounding to see how many lots sold not only over their estimates but exponentially so. The Rodin and the Gyzis were only two of the twenty-three lots sold for more than double their high estimates. The Rodin was probably the biggest surprise at the sale, yet many more proved far more valuable to their buyers than the Bonhams specialists anticipated. Among these were George Smith Armfield's [Two Terriers on the Alert](#) (est. \$700 to \$900; hammer \$5.5K, or \$7K w/p), an eighteenth-century painting by a continental European artist of [a woman with her needlework](#) (est. \$300 to \$500; hammer \$3K, or \$3.8K w/p), and [a copy of an Aelbert Cuyp painting](#) of ice skaters in winter (est. \$1K to \$1.5K; hammer \$7K, or \$8.9K w/p).

Due in no small part to the number of lots sold over estimate, the sale did well. Of the one hundred sixty lots, twenty-eight (18%) sold within their estimates. Fifty-seven (36%) sold below estimate, while forty-seven (29%) sold above. With twenty-eight lots (18%) going unsold, Bonhams ended Wednesday's sale with an 82% sell-through rate and an 18% accuracy rate. However, some of these numbers might appear skewed if you look at Skinner's website. It appears that after the sale ended, three lots (no. 21, 28, and 108) were taken off the website despite them selling. This may be indicative of the house removing the lots from the site on a buyer's behalf to prevent the sale price from being publicly viewable. So, despite there being one hundred sixty lots in the sale, Bonhams' website lists one hundred fifty-seven. Bonhams specialists initially gave the sale a total presale estimate range of \$330.2K to \$504.9K. Even though 18% of the works were bought-in, given that 14% of the lots sold for more than double their estimates, this helped bring the sale's total to \$472.4K – close to the upper end of their estimate range. And in case you are wondering, the Jehan-Georges Vibert did not sell — thank goodness!

### The May Marquee Sales – An Overview



Flowers by Andy Warhol

The May Marquee Sales, a significant series of auctions that spotlighted the New York art market earlier this month, have concluded. This event marked a crucial period in the art market, spanning a whole week and featuring eleven sales between the two major auction houses (w/p = with buyer's premium).

Between May 13th and May 18th, it was almost like everything was up for sale in New York, from nineteenth-century Impressionist to Contemporary art. Christie's and Sotheby's were both incredibly busy hosting the May Marquee sales, with these concentrated bursts of activity making up the bulk of the auction houses' annual revenue. It all started at Sotheby's on the evening of Monday, May 13th, with their brief contemporary sale called *The Now*. It served as a prelude to their Contemporary Evening sale, which brought in \$201 million (or \$234.58 million w/p), giving Sotheby's specialists a 49% accuracy rate and a 91% sell-through rate. It was mostly dominated by Jean-Michel Basquiat's 1982 work [The Italian Version of Popeye has no Pork in his diet](#), which sold for \$27.5 million (or

\$32 million w/p), making up 41% of the sale's total. However, a single Richard Diebenkorn painting, estimated to sell for no less than \$18 million, failed to generate sufficient interest and ended up going unsold. Had Sotheby's sold this painting, the results would've been even better.

Both Christie's and Sotheby's brought in an incredible amount of money, with Sotheby's successfully selling 587 out of 693 lots across five sales, giving their specialists an 84.7% across-the-board sell-through rate, as well as bringing in a total of \$633.37 million w/p. On the other hand, Christie's made more money with fewer lots sold. Of the 655 lots to cross the block during the six sales at Christie's that week, 540 sold, giving them an 82.4% sell-through rate, adding up to \$640.2 million w/p. While the contemporary sales at Christie's are always exciting, the "blue chip" works of art nearly always come from their twice-annual 20th Century evening sales. This is where the week's top lot crossed the block: *Flowers* by Andy Warhol, which hammered at \$30.5 million (or \$35.5 million w/p). The 20th Century sales can be a little confusing, however, since Christie's tends to shove incredibly different artworks together under the umbrella term of "20th Century". Canvases by Monet, Caillebotte, and Van Gogh are placed in the same category as works by abstract expressionists like Mitchell, De Kooning, and Frankenthaler, pop artists like Warhol and Lichtenstein, minimalists like Robert Ryman, and surrealists like René Magritte. They may have needed to pad the sale to make it longer and more substantial, filling it with Impressionist and nineteenth-century Modernist art like Van Gogh's *Coin de jardin avec papillon*, which came in second behind the Warhol at \$28.5 million (or \$33.2 million w/p).

Sotheby's, however, hosted sales specifically dedicated to Impressionist & Modern art. The two sales, May 15th and 16th, brought in over 45% of the money made at Sotheby's that week. The lots were varied, with [the Modern Evening sale](#) prominently featuring, in addition to the usual Impressionist masters, many twentieth-century surrealist works by Magritte, Fini, Varo, and others. The day sale, however, featured Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Fauvist paintings alongside modern Latin American art, American Impressionist paintings, and sculptures by Henry Moore and Alexander Calder. Among the works featured in these sales was *Meules à Giverny* by Claude Monet, which became the second most valuable lot sold that week when the hammer came down at \$30 million (or \$34.8 million w/p). There was also an incredible surprise in the surrealist masterpiece [Les Distractions de Dagobert](#) by Leonora Carrington, which sold above its \$12-\$18 million estimate at \$24.5 million (or \$28.46 million w/p -- it last sold in 1995 for \$476K).

For fans of Richard Diebenkorn, it was a less-than-ideal week. As I mentioned earlier, his [Ocean Park #126](#) (est. \$18 million to \$25 million ) failed to find a buyer at Sotheby's on Monday night (it last sold in 2018 for \$23.9M, est. \$16 million to \$20 million). Then, at Christie's 20th Century evening sale, his [Ocean Park #12](#), estimated to sell for between \$7 million and \$10 million, joined Joan Mitchell's painting [Crow Hill](#) as one of the evening's disappointments.

Even though a few of the more expensive lots did not find buyers, the two sales still brought in over \$1.27 billion. No matter how you slice it, that is still a lot of money!

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## Deeper Thoughts

### The New Old Frame



*The Arnolfini Wedding* by Jan van Eyck

London's National Gallery has recently stirred up a storm in the art world by replacing the frame for one of its main attractions, Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding*. This seemingly innocuous act has unexpectedly sparked a heated debate, leaving part of the art community divided.

The National Gallery recently announced that they changed the frame for the Northern Renaissance masterpiece, replacing [the ornate, nineteenth-century Gothic revival frame](#) in favor of a far older, period-appropriate, [gilded, fifteenth-century frame](#). Peter Schade, head of the National Gallery's framing department, announced this change on social media. Schade commented that the details now appear "crisper" with the new frame since it lacks any "incongruous carving".

Created in 1434, *The Arnolfini Wedding* is a double portrait, the subject of which has been contested in recent years. The previous consensus among art historians is that the portrait shows the Italian merchant Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his wife Jeanne Cenami. However, in the late 1990s, an art historian named Lorne Campbell, who served as the National Gallery's senior research curator, uncovered that the couple would not marry until over a decade after the work's creation. This has led some to claim that the painting shows Arnolfini with his first wife, Costanza, who died the year before. This means that the painting is both a portrait and a memorial. This explains some of the imagery in the portrait, of which there is a great amount. For example, art historians previously believed that the woman's pregnant appearance represents a contemporary beauty standard. Having a fuller figure meant using more fabric for your clothing, emphasizing wealth. However, if the portrait shows Costanza, it gains new meaning as a memorial since she died in childbirth. This is reinforced by the chandelier above them, which [has only one lit candle](#) facing Giovanni. Furthermore, [the convex mirror in the background](#) is surrounded by small roundels showing scenes from Christ's passion, while a small figurine likely representing Saint Margaret the Virgin [stands on the bedpost to the right](#). Christ's passion represents death, while Saint Margaret is the patron saint of childbirth.

While the new frame has garnered some positive feedback, it has also faced its fair share of criticism. In response to Schade's post, one social media user boldly declared, "Respect 19th-century aesthetics!" But should we disregard the original intent of the artist? There's a fundamental truth that those trained in history understand: the veneer of authenticity is not the same as accuracy. It is the prerogative of future generations of art historians, curators, restorers, and conservators to interpret the historical record and make decisions on how to display works of art and educate the public. Therefore, the opinion of amateurs claiming that the old frame, which is actually the newer frame, *seems* more accurate for the painting holds no weight. If the top specialists in Northern Renaissance painting assert that a simple, gilt frame is most representative of how such a painting would've been displayed at the time of its creation, then it is not our place to argue.

### Formerly Forgotten Caravaggio At The Prado

How did a seemingly second-rate Old Master painting end up being declared a lost masterpiece set to go on display at the Prado Museum in Madrid?

In April 2021, a sale at Ansorena, a Madrid auction house, featured a seventeenth-century painting of Christ wearing the crown of thorns. This scene is often referred to as *Ecce Homo*, or “Behold the Man”, the words uttered by Pontius Pilate during Christ’s whipping and mocking. It was attributed to the circle of José de Ribera, one of the giants of Spanish Baroque painting known for his historical, biblical, and mythological works. Ansorena listed its opening bid as €1,500, or \$1,780. However, shortly before the auction, the Spanish Cultural Ministry pulled it from the sale and slapped it with an export ban. This was after specialists in Spain and Italy suspected it was a lost work by the Italian Baroque master Michelangelo da Caravaggio.



*Ecce Homo* by Michelangelo da Caravaggio

Massimo Pulini, a professor at the Bologna Fine Arts Academy, claims that he was one of the first to identify *Ecce Homo* as a lost Caravaggio. “It was like meeting someone on the street who you haven’t seen for a long time. It’s difficult to explain what happens in certain moments when, in a millisecond, you have such an impression. It’s often a question of instinct.” Maria Cristina Terzaghi, an art historian at the Università Roma Tre, commented that the speed with which the scholarly community formed a consensus on the painting’s attribution as a Caravaggio was “absolutely unprecedented in the critical history of the painter”. Miguel Falomir, the Prado’s director, stated that new research indicates that *Ecce Homo* was likely created during the last years of the artist’s life, between 1607 and 1610. It was brought to Spain sometime in the seventeenth century, becoming part of King Philip IV’s collection. In the chaos of the Napoleonic Wars, during which France invaded Spain and suffered from a guerrilla war waged by the Spaniards, the painting found its way into the collection of Evaristo Pérez de Castro, a politician who later served as Spain’s Prime Minister between 1838 and 1840. His descendant, Antonio de Pérez de Castro, left the painting to his three children, who were the ones to consign the work to Ansorena.

The Prado Museum announced that the Pérez de Castro family has sold the work to an anonymous buyer for an undisclosed amount. Despite the secrecy, *Ecce Homo* is likely now worth tens of millions of dollars. The new owner also handed the Caravaggio over to the Colnaghi Gallery for full authentication and restoration since it was previously [in poor condition](#). It was not only caked in grime, obscuring the colors, but a good amount of the paint had flaked off the canvas. The Prado currently has just one painting by Caravaggio in its collection, [David with the Head of Goliath](#).

The new owner chose the Prado to display the now fully restored Caravaggio, which the museum will unveil on May 28th. Until then, *Ecce Homo* is being kept at the Colnaghi Gallery’s Madrid location. The Prado will exhibit the painting until October, after which it will stay in its collection for another few months before being returned to the owner.

### AI Spots Fakes Online



The alleged Monet offered on eBay

A story has been making the rounds in the arts and culture sections of many respectable publications about the latest wonder pulled off by an artificial intelligence program. The Swiss company Art Recognition announced that one of its AIs identified about forty paintings available on the e-commerce site eBay that are most likely forgeries and counterfeits. While some may see this as an example of AI’s potential in art authentication and consumer protection, many seem to be focusing on the wrong issue here.

Art Recognition has been in the news several times over the past few years, mostly regarding AI’s capabilities in art authentication. The first time I wrote about the organization was in 2021 regarding their claims that a Rubens painting kept at the National Gallery in London [is likely a later copy](#). They appeared again in the debates surrounding [the De](#)

[Brécy Tondo](#), a Madonna and Child painting that some dubiously attribute to Raphael. However, part of me grew suspicious when I saw these more recent headlines because there were too many incongruous details.

Firstly, it seemed suspicious to me that these paintings, some of them purportedly by Impressionist masters, were being offered on eBay, the same site people use to sell their old VHS tapes and Beanie Baby collections. A supposed Monet painting is listed on eBay at \$599,000, a price tag you would expect from an auction room. The description reads, “I fully guarantee that the painting is an original 1867 oil on canvas signed and dated by Claude Monet. The painting is not in perfect condition and I do not have any provenance beyond me having it for over 20 years.” The Monet’s seller is based out of Millersburg, Ohio, a town of 3,000 people in the heart of

Amish country, exactly where you would expect to find a random Monet painting. One of the other paintings was [a supposed Renoir](#) offered by an account from Florida.

Reading the coverage, I found that everyone writing about these counterfeit paintings focused on the wrong thing. Nearly all of them focused on how an AI could spot these fakes online, implying that many innocent people would have gotten their money stolen had it not been for this technological marvel. However, this leads to the second big incongruous detail. If you look at some images of the fake paintings for sale on eBay, you might come to the same conclusion we did: you don't need an AI to tell you they're fake. Requiring an AI to tell you that some of these are fakes is like insisting on checking someone's pulse when their head is gone. They're clearly dead, so you don't need to complicate this any more than necessary; especially the case with the supposed Monet. Even as an alleged example of the artist's early work, before his first Impressionist paintings in the 1870s, it's so obviously a fake. At least for the alleged Renoir, it seems like something made by someone who has actually seen the artist's work. It is unknown whether the painting's current owner knows it's a fake. For all we know, their prized possession being a fake might be a genuine surprise to them. Anyone who watches enough *Antiques Roadshow* or *Pawn Stars* will know that there's lots of fake stuff out there, and there's a big market for it among people who might not know any better. And that's what these articles should have been focused on. Enough about the wonders of AI; why aren't we talking about e-commerce sites like eBay being so under-regulated?

Art Recognition has tried to put pressure on eBay to dedicate greater amounts of time, effort, and resources to identifying and removing fake and counterfeit items. eBay is ready to boast about its precautions in identifying and removing fake and counterfeit items. According to eBay, they use "multiple layers of AI technology, professionally trained eBay investigators and buyer protection programs." The company claims that they have "proactively blocked 88 million suspected counterfeits from being published in 2022, while removing 1.3 million items from the platform following a review by an eBay investigator." However, Art Recognition's CEO, Dr. Carina Popovici, has continually expressed her frustration over the e-commerce site's insufficient measures. "I'm really very disturbed about this. They have a responsibility. They can't just pretend that they don't see what is happening, because there is so much of this. There are clear indications that there is a major problem there."

While mentioning AI in an article is nothing more than using a buzzword, at least some are recognizing the actual, real-world problem that exists at the heart of this story: the lack of effective regulation on e-commerce platforms like eBay is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed for the protection of consumers and the integrity of the art market. As of May 10th, the fake Monet listing [is still active](#).

### Mothers In The Arts



Self-Portrait of Mary Beale holding a sketch of her two sons, Charles and Bartholomew

Until 1974, an American bank could refuse to issue a credit card to a woman in her own name. And if they approved her, many required a man to cosign for it. Some major universities did not accept female undergraduate students until well into the 1970s, with Columbia holding out until 1981. And until 1978, it was perfectly legal in the United States to fire a woman from her job because she got pregnant. For some reason, motherhood is exalted, yet until scarily recently, it was enough to quash anyone's aspirations for a career. This discrepancy was not lost on some. Even when women were expected to give up their jobs to focus on raising a family, there were women who pushed back. If motherhood is good enough to put in a painting, it makes sense to have mothers painting them.

In the past (and disappointingly still today, to an extent), some thought that a woman's job would cause her to neglect her family. There was also the vice versa, that the obligations of motherhood would be detrimental to her career. However, if one looks closely, balancing a career and home life was normal for women in the arts going back to the seventeenth century. For example, the Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi was married with children for much of her life as an artist. She had five children, with only one surviving to adulthood, her daughter Prudentia. Artemisia gave Prudentia an artistic training, leading to her becoming an artist herself. For others, like the British painter Mary Beale, motherhood and family life were not a detriment to her career but a benefit. From the 1650s to the 1690s, Beale achieved prominence as a London portraitist partly because her husband and children supported her artistic career very actively. Though Mary's husband, Charles Beale, had a job in the civil service, he left this position to become her studio manager once her artistic pursuits proved sufficient to provide for the family. Both their children helped in her studio and later went on to study art at school.

Even among the bohemian modernists of the late nineteenth century, motherhood still had its place. The great women of Impressionism took great care to balance their family lives and their artistic careers, maintaining them both. Of the *trois grandes dames* of Impressionism, two did just that. Berthe Morisot married Edouard Manet's younger brother Eugène. They had one daughter, Julie, who frequently served as a model for Morisot, her uncle Edouard, and other Impressionists. Meanwhile, Marie Bracquemond, whose husband Felix exhibited with the Impressionists in 1874, had a painting career while caring for her son Pierre. Pierre would later become the most prominent source of information about his parents through his short, unpublished double biography on the couple. There were, however, newer, modern conceptions of womanhood that some artists more readily embraced.

Focusing on one's family had been the socially imposed standard for most women, a standard that some in the late nineteenth century rebelled against. Mary Cassatt, one of the *trois grandes dames* of Impressionism, represented the more modern woman coming into prominence at the turn of the twentieth century. She eschewed traditional feminine gender roles by focusing on her career rather than marrying and raising children. She was also very outspoken on issues concerning women's rights, even exhibiting her work at suffragist events organized by the feminist activist Louise Havemeyer.

Interestingly enough, while Cassatt had no children of her own, mothers with their children are probably her most prominent subjects. The mother and child is actually one of the most widespread subjects in Western art, mostly because of the popularity of the Madonna as a Christian icon. Many will point out, however, that it was not motherhood that Cassatt highlighted, it was womanhood. Despite being the epitome of a modern woman, Cassatt would not frequent the same spaces as her male counterparts. Going to the Moulin Rouge for a cabaret show was out of the question for her and other respectable women. The dancers and revelers that populated paintings by Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec had no place in Cassatt's work. Rather, in capturing private moments at home, showing women [reading books and newspapers](#), [focusing on needlework](#), or [tending to their children](#), she elevated simple domestic moments into great works of art. Even her more misogynistic colleagues like Edgar Degas admitted to this ability, calling her 1899 painting [Mother & Child \(The Oval Mirror\)](#) "the greatest painting of the nineteenth century", comparing it to the great Madonna and Child works of the Renaissance.



*The Child's Bath* by Mary Cassatt

Though Cassatt was not a mother herself, she teaches an important lesson about motherhood. Mothers are some of our first teachers and role models. They care for us and give us valuable lessons that remain with us for the rest of our lives. Even in calm, tranquil, domestic moments, Cassatt captures motherly strength and perseverance. These same qualities also helped every mother who made a career for herself as an artist, even in a time or place when such a career (or even a career at all) was socially discouraged.

### King David's New Portrait Has Some Divided



*HM King Charles III* by Jonathan Yeo (image courtesy of the artist)

King Charles III has one of the most recognizable faces in the world, meaning his image and presentation is of paramount importance. This week, Buckingham Palace revealed His Majesty's first official painted portrait as king, made by the British artist Jonathan Yeo. And it has some people raising their eyebrows in both amazement and confusion.

Yeo started work on the portrait in 2021 while King Charles was still the Prince of Wales and heir to his mother, Queen Elizabeth II. Yeo has become known in Britain as one of the country's leading portraitists, with the likes of [Malala Yousafzai](#) and former Prime Minister [Tony Blair](#) sitting for him. In the past, Yeo has also created portraits of [Queen Camilla](#) and [Prince Philip](#). On Tuesday, [the King pulled away the curtain and unveiled the painting](#), revealing his likeness against a splotchy red and pink background. In the portrait, the King wears his uniform as regimental colonel of the Welsh Guards, the bright red uniform commonly associated with parts of the British military. His uniform, combined with the background, brings the viewer's focus to the King's face rather than his regalia. Another noticeable detail is a butterfly just above his right shoulder. Many have interpreted the butterfly as a reference to the King's environmentalism. However, Yeo says he added it as a symbol of metamorphosis, a nod to the King's ascension and the changes in status and responsibility that accompanied it.

The portrait was commissioned by the Worshipful Company of Drapers, traditionally a wool and cloth merchants' guild but now a philanthropic society. The King and Queen are reportedly very happy with the portrait, while some members of the public seem rather unenthused. One Instagram comment on a post from the royal family's account says that the red background and uniform almost seem like a "visual representation of the massacre cause[d] by colonizers". Another comment read, "Looks like he's going straight to hell." Others have also ascribed symbolic meaning to the painting differently; the King blending into the background is a good analogy for the British monarchy's depleting significance. It also may be seen as a statement on the King's struggles living in the shadow of his incredibly popular mother. While, in the past, Yeo has certainly satirized and criticized figures of authority through his art, he expressed that the King's portrait contained no such criticism. He wrote on his website that the bright colors are meant to be "a dynamic, contemporary jolt" in a genre of painting perhaps seen as stuffy and conservative.

The portrait will be temporarily exhibited at the Philip Mould Gallery in London until June 14, moving on to Drapers' Hall in August. Drapers' Hall, the London seat of the Company of Drapers, houses its own gallery of royal portraits. There, the King's portrait will hang alongside paintings of his relatives, like [a copy of Heinrich von Angeli's portrait of Queen Victoria](#).

### Hockney Catalogue Raisonné By 2026

Compiling a catalogue raisonné while the artist in question is still alive is a relatively recent phenomenon in academic art history. Scholars often published their catalogues for well-known historical artists decades or centuries after their deaths. Rehs Galleries began research for the catalogue raisonnés on [Julien Dupré](#), and [Daniel Ridgway Knight](#) in 1991 and [Emile Munier](#) in 2003, decades after any of those artists were alive. However, beginning work on an living artist's catalogue raisonné has its benefits; the most important of which is that researchers and academics can consult them regarding biographical details and authentication of works. And after nearly twenty years, the first volume of the David Hockney catalogue is nearing completion.



David Hockney (photo courtesy of Connaissance des Arts)

The first volume of the Hockney catalogue will be dedicated to just the artist's paintings. It will feature over 35,000 works and will be published online in 2026. Hockney was actively involved in the catalogue's writing and research, providing a series of essays to accompany the entries. Like Hockney's embrace of digital forms of artistic media, his catalogue raisonné will be entirely digital. That way, updates, edits, and revisions can easily be made if necessary. Since Hockney has used a wide variety of media throughout his artistic career, from paintings to prints to iPad drawings, it is unknown how long the rest of the catalogue project will take. If just the paintings took almost twenty years, it may be a long time before we see a completed David Hockney catalogue raisonné. However, with the contemporary British master coming up on his eighty-seventh birthday, it is generally a smart move to get an endeavor like this off the ground while he is still alive and useful as a repository of information.

The Hockney catalogue is a collaborative effort overseen by the David Hockney Foundation and David Hockney Inc. The artist, his studio assistants, and the trustees of both organizations are actively involved in its completion, working alongside a dedicated team of art historians, researchers, and other specialists. This collective effort underscores the project's significance, making it a true testament to the art community's commitment to preserving Hockney's legacy. According to David Hockney Inc.'s director, Shannan Kelley, the catalogue project has been a monumental undertaking that has involved "expanding and upgrading our inventory and archival databases, adding staff and resources to enhance the preservation and management of physical as well as digital collections of work by David Hockney and all materials associated with his life and career."