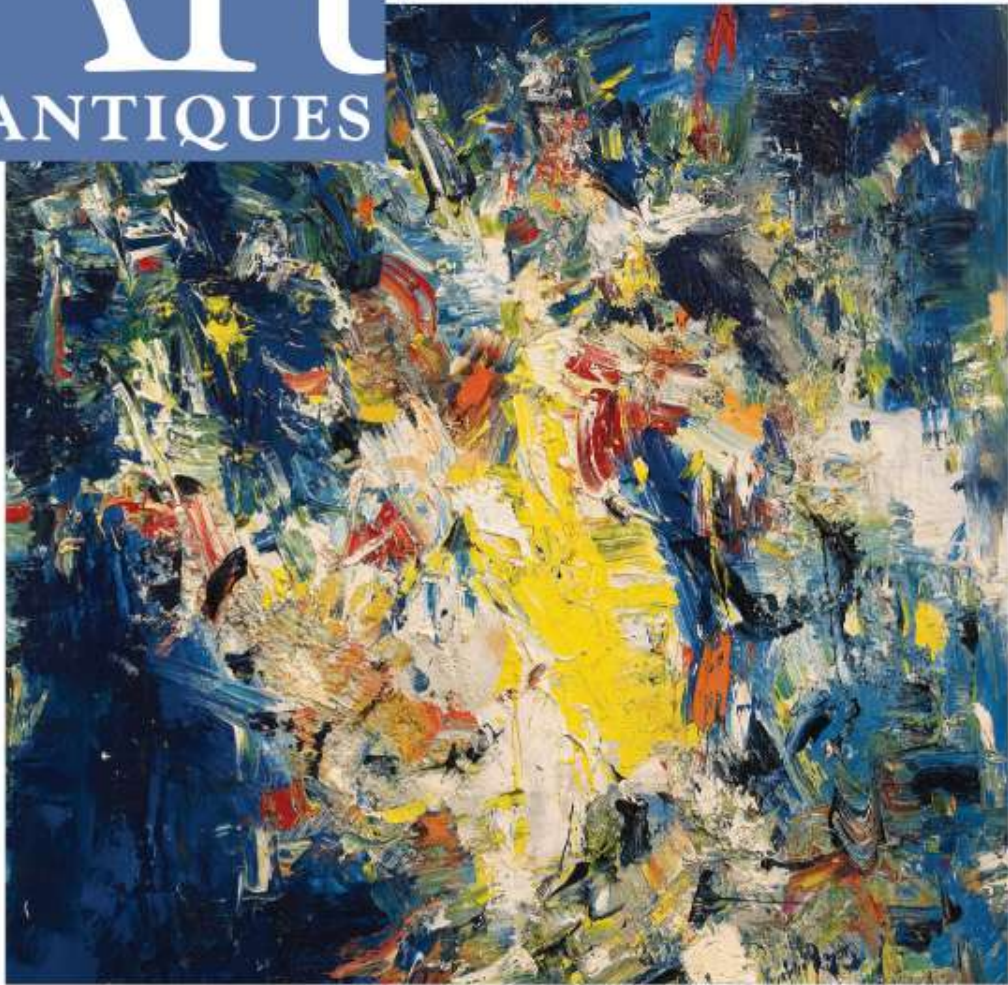


Art & Antiques - May/June 2024

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Art
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FOR COLLECTORS OF THE FINE AND DECORATIVE ARTS



FRANÇOISE GILOT | JOHN STEUART CURRY | SONIA DELAUNAY | AMERICANS IN PARIS

NORMAN CARTON



A Radical Look at the Past

A NEW MAJOR exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite art features fine and decorative works exhibited alongside Italian masterworks from the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. *Pre-Raphaelites: Modern Renaissance* remains on view through June 30, 2024 at the San Domenico Museum in Forlì, Italy. Curators designed the exhibition as a conversation across time. With loans from major European, American, and British collections, the over 300 works on display demonstrate the range of creative formats utilized by the Brotherhood. Organizers provide not only a chronology of three generations of Pre-Raphaelite creative production but also invite viewers to interrogate the ways in which their art drew inspi-

ration from the work of Italian medieval and Renaissance artists. A supporting catalog in Italian, with essays by top scholars in the field, will be published.

When a group of young British artists first began meeting in autumn 1848, they set out to chart a new creative course while rejecting the Royal Academy's current teaching practices. In the 18th century, Academy founder Sir Joshua Reynolds insisted that Raphael and other select High Renaissance artists were the paragon for artistic achievement. The newly formed Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood wanted more and set out to chart their own radical course by looking to less-celebrated historical models and



by melding past approaches with deeply modern sentiments. This new exhibition highlights key works by early Italian masters, including Cimabue, Botticelli, Angelico, Lippi, and Veronese, revealing the iconographic and stylistic borrowings in the Pre-Raphaelite's artistic output. Moreover, Pre-Raphaelite masterworks that image the Renaissance cra's rich liter-

ary offerings, from Dante to Shakespeare, also shine.

Ford Maddox Brown's *The Entombment* (1868) is surprising given the artist's penchant for realist visions of the working class. Seen alongside earlier scenes of the Crucifixion, such as Beato Angelico's stunning *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1436-1441), we recognize not only his borrowing of past iconographic



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SAN MARCO; RICHMOND; COLLECTION MUSEO SAN DOMENICO, FORLÌ; PRIVATE COLLECTION; MARCO; COLLECTION MUSEO SAN DOMENICO, FORLÌ





conventions but also Brown's insistence on modern, muscular bodies, despite their flat, historical balos.

The large-scale *Holy Grail* tapestries: *The Arming of the Knights* (1890), a collaborative design by Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, and John Henry Dearle, is a stunning work on its own. Dem-

onstrating the Pre-Raphaelite love of Arthurian lore, Burne-Jones insisted on the use of silk threads that make the complementary color scheme shimmer but the figures lack volumetric presence. Viewed alongside Sandro Botticelli's lithe, graceful bodies, stage-like backgrounds, and pale palettes in work such as *Pal-*



las and the Centaur (c. 1482–1483), the connection between past and present is not direct but rather careful homage and considered evolution.

Other works on display further reinforce the role of the past in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites. Frederic Leighton's gorgeous *Greek Girls Picking up Pebbles by the Sea* (1871) evokes a kind of effortless classicism while still maintaining the Brotherhood's persistent focus on lush, romantic images of women. Leighton's sensuous *Pavonia* (c. 1859) similarly evokes the past. The careful attention to her pearl hairpiece and her delicate features suggest, among other reference points, the work of Filippo Lippi. Walter Howell Deverell's *Twelfth Night* (1850), a delightful take on

Shakespeare's romantic comedy, feels reminiscent of the work of Venetian masters, such as Paolo Veronese, with its engaging clusters of figures and attention to light effects. Put in conversation with one another, the exhibition highlights the Brotherhood's reliance on the past while envisioning a new artistic future.

