

In-Sight

October 7, 2009

Yukio Lippit, Harris K. Weston
Associate Professor of the
Humanities, Department of
History of Art and Architecture,
Harvard University.

Left Hand of a Colossal Buddha,
Japanese, Kamakura period, late
12th–early 13th century. Wood with
lacquer, polychromy, and gilding.
Harvard Art Museum/Arthur M.
Sackler Museum, Gift of Charles
Bain Hoyt, 1931.9.



Through a remarkable display of art-historical acumen, this left hand was recently determined to belong to a large Japanese Buddhist icon by the 13th-century master sculptor Kaikei. His figure of the Buddha was a key component in one of the most dramatic chapters in Japan's religious and cultural history, the efforts of the monk Chōgen (1121–1206) to rebuild Tōdaiji monastery—the world's largest freestanding wooden building—and its Great Buddha in Nara. The hand not only returns us to this historical moment, but also provides new insights into the wholesale changes taking place in Japanese sculpture, architecture, and religious culture of the period.

November 18, 2009

Miriam Stewart, Assistant
Curator of Drawings, Harvard Art
Museum/Fogg Museum.

Edward Burne-Jones, The Days of
Creation: The First Day, 1870–76.
Watercolor, gouache, shell gold,
and platinum paint on linen-cold,
panel prepared with zinc white
ground. Harvard Art Museum/Fogg
Museum, Bequest of Grenville L.
Winthrop, 1943.454.



When Henry James saw Edward Burne-Jones's watercolor series *The Days of Creation* exhibited in 1877, he noted the artist's "imagination, his fertility of invention, his exquisiteness of work, his remarkable gifts as a colourist." This splendid series in the Harvard Art Museum collection invites close examination of such essential issues as painting materials, iconography, collecting, and reproduction.

January 13, 2010

Ivan Gaskell, Margaret S.
Winthrop Curator, Harvard Art
Museum/Fogg Museum, and Senior
Lecturer, Department of History,
Harvard University.

Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, Jesus Christ
as the Divine Mercy, 1934. Oil on canvas.
Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy, Vilnius,
Lithuania.



Kazimirowski's *Jesus Christ as the Divine Mercy* is arguably the most famous Christian miraculous image of the twentieth century. Deriving from the vision of a canonized Polish nun, the original painting is in Vilnius, Lithuania, but has given rise to many other versions, both painted and in reproduction. A version by a Mexican artist is venerated in the US national shrine of the devotion in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Recently, the image has proliferated via the Web. Cultural historian Ivan Gaskell will recount the extraordinary story of this neo-medieval artifact, believed to have been dictated by Jesus Christ himself. Is it propaganda, kitsch, art, or an agent of miracles?

February 17, 2010

Michelle Lamunière, John R. and
Barbara Robinson Family Assistant
Curator of Photography, Harvard
Art Museum/Fogg Museum.

Unidentified artist, Twins When They
Began to Take Modified Milk, The
Starr Centre Association, Philadelphia,
c. 1907. Gelatin silver print. Harvard
Art Museum/Fogg Museum, On
deposit from the Carpenter Center
for the Visual Arts, Social Museum
Collection, 3.2002.132.



This compelling photograph of a mother and her twins is the basis for a larger discussion of Harvard's Social Museum, a compilation of photographs and graphic material established in 1903 to collect the social experience of the world as material for university teaching. The image prompts an exploration of the early use of photography as a social document and its role in educating students about social problems and the solutions—such as the provision of pasteurized milk—developed to ameliorate them.

March 3, 2010

Amy Brauer, Diane Heath Beever
Associate Curator of Ancient Art,
Harvard Art Museum/Arthur M.
Sackler Museum.

Mosaic of Two Figures Seated on a
Couch (detail), Antioch (modern
Antakya), AD c. 450–525, from Daphne,
House of the Green Carpet. Stone,
marble, and glass tesserae. Harvard Art
Museum/Arthur M. Sackler Museum,
Gift of the Committee for the Excavation
of Antioch and Its Vicinity, 1939.146.B.



In the 1930s excavations along the banks of the Orontes River (modern Asi) in Turkey uncovered nearly 300 mosaic pavements from the ancient city of Antioch. Depicting interiors, landscapes, classical figures, and decorative devices, they provide a sample of the pictorial arts of the Roman East. This fragmentary mosaic floor representing two figures lay for years crated and nearly forgotten in the subbasement store-rooms of the Harvard Art Museum. Its recent conservation reveals much about Roman domestic arts, ancient manufacturing, and modern salvation techniques.

April 7, 2010

Helen Molesworth, Houghton
Curator of Contemporary Art,
Harvard Art Museum/Fogg
Museum.

Rachel Harrison, I'm with Stupid, 2007.
Mixed media. Harvard Art Museum/
Fogg Museum, Purchase through
the generosity of Agnes Gund and Gift
of Leslie Cheek, Jr., Gift in gratitude
of John Coolidge, Anonymous Fund
in memory of Henry Berg, and William
M. Prichard Memorial Fund, 2007.128.



Harrison's *I'm with Stupid* is an aggressive and funny sculpture that refuses easy interpretation or categorization. It is as painterly as it is sculptural, and while as sculpture it nods to the history of the medium, its materials very much feel like the children's craft table at summer camp. The evocations of childhood are complicated by consumerist motifs and references to death, among many other details that open the door to an associative chain of interpretive possibilities.

In-Sight: Looking Deeper and
Differently Join us for a new series
of lectures that will explore individual
objects from the Harvard Art Museum
collection and beyond. Each lecture
will look deeply at a single work of art,
inviting interpretations that probe
beneath the surface. Approaching each
work from multiple perspectives, we will
examine the techniques, contexts, and
stories that helped shape these excep-
tional works, and their significance to
the Art Museum.

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___ Left Hand of a Colossal Buddha, October 7

___ The Days of Creation, November 18

___ Jesus Christ as the Divine Mercy, January 13

___ Twins When They Began to Take Modified Milk, February 17

___ Mosaic of Two Figures Seated on a Couch, March 3

___ I'm with Stupid, April 7

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