LOVE
ART OF EMOTION 1400–1800

ARTWORK LABELS

Love: Art of Emotion 1400–1800

'Past cure I am … And frantic-mad with evermore unrest', laments the narrator of Shakespeare's Sonnet 147. Here, as in many of history's most celebrated love poems, to love is to sacrifice one's reason, an experience as akin to injury or victimhood as to glory or celebration. Why are so many archetypal love stories of our culture also stories of despair, loss and longing? Why is the anticipation of passion, or the memory of it, often more powerful than the event itself? Love, as expressed in the art of early modern Europe, is not so much a single emotion as an intricate constellation of feelings. To consider love is to consider the full spectrum of human experience, from birth to death, and perhaps beyond.

Drawing upon more than 200 works from the NGV's rich and diverse collection, *Love: Art of Emotion 1400–1800* explores love's varied manifestations, including familial relationships, romantic desire, religious devotion, friendship, patriotism, narcissism, materialism and nostalgia. Love is revealed as both transforming and transformative, its very definition subject to numerous historical and cultural shifts. From the cult of Priapus to the cult of the Virgin, love emerges as an inescapably complex emotion, as formidable as it is fluid, in all of its sweetness and all of its suffering.

ANTICIPATION

IMMUNE TO REASON, LOVE'S EMERGENCE IS GOVERNED BY IMAGINATION AND DESIRE – INFUSED WITH FASCINATION, FRIVOLITY AND SOMETIMES WITH FEAR.

Mystery and enchantment

Love's inception has long been associated with myth, legend and fantasy. The notion of enchantment, with its associated loss of logic and will, provides the conditions for many of our most powerful and enduring love stories.

Of all the great texts of Classical mythology, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* exerted the greatest influence on the visual arts. *Metamorphoses* is divided into fifteen books, bringing together more than 250 stories from Greek and Roman mythology. At its heart is the idea that love quite literally transforms lovers, for good or for ill. While individuals are often metaphorically or literally transformed by love, the emotion itself may also undergo transformation. Desire may become anger, yearning may become regret.

Venus is the most frequently represented of the Roman gods, a goddess of love who inflames desire, either directly or indirectly, through the arrows fired by her son, Cupid, the god of erotic love. Temples of Venus were widespread in the Classical period, when she was worshipped as a goddess of fertility and an intercessor in romantic affairs. Venus enjoyed a popular revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Romantic enthusiasm for ruins and follies saw Classical images and motifs reinvented and integrated into fashionable life.

Alexandre de Comans, Paris tapestry workshop
French active 1635–50
Simon Vouet (after) designer

Carlo and Ubaldo at the Fountain of Laughter

1640–50
wool, silk, linen

Felton Bequest, 1966 1458-D5

Torquato Tasso's poem *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) reimagines the First Crusade as a tale of heroism and romantic conflict. Here, the knight Rinaldo is distracted from his mission when he falls in love with the seductive witch Armida, and his two companions Carlo and Ubaldo must rescue him. They encounter in her garden a fountain, where siren-like bathing nymphs try to lure them from their task with tempting food and rest; but they have been forewarned about the Fountain of Laughter, the waters of which make one laugh until death. Their masculine reason and valour overcomes these feminine enticements, a victory celebrated in tapestries designed by Simon Vouet.

Jean Pierre Simon engraver
English c. 1750– c. 1810
Henry Fuseli (after)

Midsummer Night's Dream: Act IV, scene 1

from the *Shakespeare Gallery* series, published by John and Josiah Boydell, London
1796
stipple engraving and engraving

Thomas Ryder engraver
English 1746–1810
Thomas Ryder junior engraver
English after 1766– after 1803
Henry Fuseli (after)

Midsummer Night's Dream: Act IV, scene 1

from the *Shakespeare Gallery* series, published by John and Josiah Boydell, London
1803
stipple engraving and engraving

Felton Bequest, 1926 2919-3

In an illustration derived from Act 4, Scene 1, the Fairy Queen, Titania, wakes from an enchantment to discover that the former object of her desire is in fact Bottom, an oafish weaver with a donkey's head. The fairy king, Oberon, her once and future lover, who has engineered her deception, stands over her, enjoying the revelation. Engraved by Thomas Ryder after a painting by Henry Fuseli, the image is at once playfully erotic and subtly sinister; a group of good fairies appear on the left, cavorting and making love, while to the right, the hapless Bottom sleeps surrounded by evil spirits, including an imp riding a 'nightmare'.

Michiel van Lochom

Flemish 1600–47

The diverse effects of divine and human love ...

Amoris divini et humani antipathia, … Les effects divers de l'amour divin et humain …

published by Guillaume le Noir, Paris
1628
book: engravings, velveteen and paperboard cover, leather label on spine, cotton stitching

Presented by Dr Ursula Hoff, 1989 P191-1989

Amoris divini et humani antipathia (*The opposing emotions of divine and human love*) is an example of an emblem book, a genre popular in medieval and Renaissance Europe, containing drawings accompanied by allegorical interpretations. It went through reprintings and adaptations three times in the second half of the 1620s, and nearly every decade thereafter up to the beginning of the eighteenth century – a sign of its widespread acceptance and enthusiastic reception.

Francesco Colonna (attributed to)
Italian 1433/34–1527

The Strife of Love in a Dream of Poliphilo
Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: ubi humana omnia non nisi somnium esse docet
published by Venetiis, in aedibus Aldi Manuti
1499
book: engravings and woodcuts, 234 leaves (gilt-edged), red Morocco leather cover

Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
Purchased with support from the Ivy May Pendlebury Bequest

The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is a book about love, for lovers of books. The narrative takes place in a dream within a dream in which Poliphilo finds himself in a forest yearning for his lost beloved, Polia. As the lover of ‘many things’, Poliphilo is driven by physical, emotional and intellectual desires. He perambulates through an ancient landscape, and once every sense is awakened, finally meets his ‘holy idea’ – the nymph Polia. Polia has taken a vow of chastity, but the couple appeal to Venus, who blesses their union. However, as they embrace, Polia dissolves into fragrant smoke. Poliphilo wakes and finds himself alone.

Picchi Di Marcantonio (attributed to)

decorator

Italy active c. 1530–c. 1581

Myrrha giving birth to Adonis, plate

1550

earthenware (maiolica)

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4405-D3

In Greek mythology, Myrrha was the mother of Adonis (himself later the subject of an important cult). Myrrha fell in love with her father, Cinyras, and tricked him into a sexual encounter. After discovering her identity, the enraged Cinyras drew his sword and pursued Myrrha, who fled across Arabia. She called upon the gods for help, who took pity on her and transformed her into a myrrh tree. Having taken on the form of the tree, Myrrha gave birth to Adonis, a scene that was to inspire numerous artistic interpretations. According to legend, the fragrant sap of the tree is composed of Myrrha's tears.

Henry Fuseli

Swiss 1741–1825, worked in England 1764–70, 1779–1825, Italy 1770–78

Milton, when a youth

c. 1796–99
oil on canvas

Purchased, 1981 E1-1981

The dream state, so readily poeticised, is the focus of Fuseli's *Milton, when a youth*. The painting depicts the poet swooning beneath a tree, a beautiful woman towering above him. The scene is drawn from an account of Milton's undergraduate days at Cambridge. While he slumbered, a young woman purportedly left beside him a note of Italian verse. On waking, Milton discovered the note and searched for her, but she had long since departed. Later, so the story goes, he went to Italy, and to the end of his days declared that the unknown woman had inspired him to write *Paradise Lost.*

Master of the Stories of Helen

Italian active mid 15th century

Antonio Vivarini (studio of)

The Garden of Love

c. 1465–70

oil, tempera and gold on spruce panel

Felton Bequest, 1948 1827-4

Few works in this exhibition present the number of questions posed by *The Garden of Love*. Though the iconography of this work indicates that it is intended as a representation of a Renaissance ‘garden of love’ – a garden where men and women would meet to dance, sing and pursue romance – the symbolism of some elements of the composition is not well understood. While the rose arbour, the fountain and the enclosed garden all point to the theme of a pleasure garden, the significance of the syringe and the meaning of the gestures remain elusive. The painting’s complex series of symbols and cyphers offers the potential to imaginatively complete the narrative.

Girolamo Campagna
Italian 1549–1625

Dancing putti
c. 1605–07
bronze

Felton Bequest, 1956 1662-D4

Small cherubic figures, sometimes winged, sometimes earthy and bacchic, abound in Renaissance art. Several names exist for them: *putti, cupidi, eroti* and *spiritelli*. Depending on their context, these small figures could have pagan or Christian meanings, or both. Girolama Campagna was a leading Venetian sculptor who specialised in these stolid yet graceful sprites for architectural settings. The motif is rare in sculpture and possibly inspired by a Venetian woodcut of *putti* sporting around a fountain-like vat, reproduced in Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (see opposite wall). The unusual ring formation indicates a possible intended function as an ornamental fountain surround.

Sebald Beham

German 1500–50

Venus

from *The Seven Planets* series
1539
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.582-3

In this engraving from *The Seven Planets* series, Venus is depicted as the planetary god ruling over the second sign of the zodiac, Taurus, represented by the bull, and the seventh sign, Libra, represented by the scales of justice. Beham was one of the most talented printmakers of the early sixteenth century and known as one of the 'Little Masters' on account of the small, detailed prints he executed. Similar representations of Venus were well known in late medieval Europe from the so-called *Children of the Planets* series, which linked temperaments, age groups, social classes, occupations, and social and cultural activities to the planetary gods.

Francis van Bossuit (attributed to)

Venus and Adonis, relief

late 17th century
ivory

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4114-D3

The Flemish sculptor Francis van Bossuit specialised in small-scale ivory sculpure, and after travelling to Rome he adapted Antique prototypes for a domestic middle-class consumer. Ivory, with its pallor and warmth, could convey an unusual and evocative verisimilitude of flesh, which amplified the sensuality of Bossuit's subjects. This relief was designed for display in the private apartments of a middle-class dwelling. Bossuit was renowned for the lyricism and tactility of his practice, and in this example, the increased sheen on the figures' bodies indicates that they may, over time, have been touched, through devotion.

Germany

Venus and Cupid, plaquette

c. 1550
gilt-bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4159-D3

James Barry

Irish 1741–1806, worked in England 1764–1806

The Birth of Venus

1776

etching and engraving

Presented by the Society for
the Encouragement of Arts, 1881 p.183.218-1

In this popular subject from Classical mythology, Venus reclines in a cockle shell supported by a sea god, lifting her hair from her face and watching as three water spirits bow and extend their arms in admiration and reverence. The two doves perched on the shell, their beaks locked in a loving ‘kiss’, were attributes of the goddess, symbols of peace and lasting devotion. James Barry was an exponent of the ‘grand style’, drawing his subjects from Classical Antiquity and literature. Stylistically, however, the sinuous, linear quality of his work links it closely to the leaders of the English Neoclassicism, and to the work of radical poet-painter William Blake.

Italy

Aphrodite

2nd century CE
marble

Felton Bequest, 1929 3071-D3

This figure of the goddess Aphrodite (Venus, in the Roman tradition) was acquired by the NGV in 1929, after fragments of it were purportedly discovered in the garden of an archaeologist and former director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. It is comprised of three sections, which have been combined to form a replica of the *Medici Venus*; however, the head and torso are not originally of the same statue. The work contains substantial areas of filling and remodelling, some of which have altered its classical silhouette. The size of the breasts, for example, is not consistent with the original period, and reflects instead the Victorian/Edwardian taste for hourglass figures.

Italy

Venus

16th century
bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 3987-D3

Marcantonio Raimondi

Italian c. 1470–1527

Mars, Venus and Eros

1508

engraving

David and Marion Adams Collection.
Gift of David Adams in memory of his
wife Marion Adams, 2011

2011.510

Hendrick Goltzius
Dutch 1558–1616

Mars and Venus
1588
engraving

Private collection

Venus's sexual life existed primarily in adultery with the god Mars, seen in the engraving designed by Bartholomeus Spranger and cut by Hendrick Goltzius in 1588. Aided by Cupid and *putti*, naked Mars and barely cloaked Venus embrace enthusiastically. The weapons of both Mars and Cupid lie discarded on the floor of a palatial bedroom, furnished with a plush bed looking out on a distant landscape. The Latin inscription tells us that from the sun god Phoebus, visible in the sky, 'nothing remains secret or concealed.'

Agostino dei Musi engraver
Italian c. 1490 – after 1536

Raphael (after)

Venus and Vulcan surrounded by cupids

1530
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1939 928-4

Vulcan, blacksmith and god of fire, was a common subject for interior frescoes, and here his forge is visible in the background. The workplace is pictured adjacent to the bedroom, symbolic place of fiery passion, yet Venus, wife of older, lame Vulcan is engaged in domestic rather than personal passion, assisting cupids in their preparation of the weaponry of love that has been fashioned at Vulcan's forge.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Venus

c. 1759–60

porcelain (soft-paste)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Mrs M. E. Cutten, Founder Benefactor, 1980

D416-1980

Nymphenburg Porcelain Factory, Munich manufacturer
Germany est. 1761

Franz Anton Bustelli modeller
Switzerland/Germany 1723–63

Putto as Venus, from the Gods of Ovid series

1770s
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939 4557-D3

Playfully modelled by Franz Anton Bustelli, this figure of a *putto* as the goddess Venus is from a series of twenty-six such figures of deities from Classical mythology. Venus is shown holding a burning heart and a torch while she tramples upon a sword and shield – the fires of love defeating war and conflict. Bustelli's depiction of deities as smiling children toying with their traditional emblems does not conjure thoughts of omnipotent divine power, but rather of joyful celebration here on earth.

Chantilly Porcelain Factory, Chantilly

manufacturer

France c. 1730–92

Crouching Venus

1740–45

porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Mr Peter Wynne Morris, Governor, 1997 1997.325.1

This unique figure illustrates how the sculptor has successfully translated the tradition of bronze cabinet sculpture current in seventeenth-century France into the recently mastered soft-paste porcelain medium. The *Crouching Venus*, based upon an admired Classical sculpture, was a popular subject in bronze since the Renaissance. The modeller has treated porcelain not as a substitute for bronze, but as an independent sculptural medium. The mature, supple body is treated with fluid modelling and dramatic torsion well-suited to the material. Unlike cold bronze, the unctuous glazed surface of the white porcelain invites touching, lending an almost erotic frisson to the smooth ceramic body of the naked goddess.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst
manufacturer
Germany 1746–96
Johann Peter Melchior modeller
Germany 1742–1825

Venus

c. 1771
porcelain

Felton Bequest, 1944 4813-D3

A small porcelain figure of Venus produced by the Höchst Porcelain Factory in the late eighteenth century carries a wealth of possible associations, from a public table decoration to a private love token, or an object of erotic fascination. While ostensibly an image of a Classical goddess, this tactile figure, with her eighteenth-century hairstyle, pink flesh and fashionable sprigged drapery, was equally recognisable as an image of a contemporary naked woman.

William Blake engraver
English 1757–1827
George Cumberland draughtsman
English 1754–1848

Venus councels Cupid

plate 14 from *Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture, and the System that Guides the Ancient Artists in Composing their Figures and Groupes* by George Cumberland, self-published, London, 1796
1794–95
engraving

Augustin Burdet engraver
French active 19th century
Victor Marie Picot (after)

Cupid and Psyche

c. 1817
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1927 3506-3

The story of Cupid and Psyche, originally told in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, concerns the overcoming of numerous obstacles to the love between Psyche (Soul or Breath of Life) and Cupid (Desire) and their eventual union in a sacred marriage. This engraving is after a popular painting by Picot, which won acclaim at the Paris Salon, and was widely reproduced.

Chelsea-Derby, London manufacturer
England 1770–84

Cupid and Psyche, candlesticks
c. 1770–80
porcelain (soft-paste)

Gift of Dr H. Kapper, 1981 D61.1-2-1981

Here depicted as *putti*, Cupid and Psyche are witty subjects for candelabra. In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Psyche is taken to dwell in a palace, unaware of the identity of the husband who visits her each night, forbidding her to look upon him. Prompted by her sisters' jealousy of the luxury in which she lives, Psyche takes a lantern one evening and looks upon her sleeping husband – it is Cupid, the most beautiful creature she has ever seen. In her surprise, Psyche spills lamp oil, causing Cupid to flee. These candelabra transform a practical light source into a nightly re-enactment of Psyche's discovery of her divine lover.

Claude Randon engraver
French active 1674–1704
Dominic Zampieri (after)

Cupid in his chariot

late 17th century
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1925 1451-3

Joshua Cristall

English 1767–1847

An allegory of Love

c. 1800

pencil, pen and ink, watercolour

Presented, 1964–68 1813-5

This rather curious picture by renowned English watercolourist Joshua Cristall depicts a group of mischievous *putti* contained in a delicate playpen by benevolent female attendants. The theme of *putti* misbehaving was popular in Baroque and Rococo painting, and here their confinement suggests the control of disorderly emotion.

Pietro Testa

Italian 1612–50

Venus in a garden with putti

1632

etching on grey paper

Felton Bequest, 1961 852-5

In Testa's garden, swarming fleshy cupids allude to Titian's *Worship of Venus*, but where Titian grouped them around a statue of the goddess, Testa gives us a lounging Venus in the flesh, replacing the sculpture with a herm (pillar topped with the head of a god, and usually including his phallus and testicles) of the god Pan. Flying *putti* decorate him with a garland, and three of them attempt to hitch it to something halfway up the herm. Testa is too polite to etch in the phallus directly; however, the classically trained eye would know how to fill that space, to 're-flesh' and complete the priapic body.

Italy
Guido Reni (after)

Eros destroying the shafts of Cupid

17th century
oil on canvas

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 550A-4

Cupid is often depicted blindfolded – as in this seventeenth-century painting after Guido Reni – to convey love's arbitrariness. This notion of blind love is articulated directly in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> Love looks not with the eyes,
> but with the mind
>
> And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
>
> Nor hath love's mind of any judgement taste;
>
> Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.
>
> And therefore is love said to be a child
>
> Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

Courtship, flirtation, seduction

Late medieval and Renaissance art often pictured love set within lush, secluded gardens, its inhabitants enjoying perfect weather, charming music, abundant flowers and amorous flirtation. Separation from the everyday world is a key theme, as is emphasising unending, leisurely pleasure.

Eighteenth-century Rococo art saw the reinvention of the pastoral – a form of idealised landscape populated by shepherds and shepherdesses enacting scenes of erotic and sentimental love. Dressed in fine silks and ribbons, these rustics betray not a trace of dirt or any signs of rural labour. The pastoral was closely tied to contemporary theatre and presented a fantasy world that must have held great appeal to an aristocracy constrained by court ritual and protocol. This dream of a carefree life lived in harmony with nature, along with its playful eroticism, was reflected in contemporary porcelain sculpture.

François Boucher
French 1703–70

The enjoyable lesson
L'Agréable Leçon
1748
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1982 E1-1982

The themes of flirtation and seduction are central to Boucher's *The enjoyable lesson*, which combines nostalgia for an imagined rusticity with curious eroticism. Tension is expressed in the adult gestures and suggestive objects, juxtaposed with the subjects' innocent, youthful appearance. The soft and sensuous palette and the voluptuous folds of the rich textured fabric conjure an atmosphere of invitation and possibility. Here, a sentimentalised vision of naive desire is borne of a privileged, aristocratic perspective. A porcelain variation on the theme, produced by Chelsea in c. 1765, demonstrates the degree to which romantic pastoral imagery had also become fashionable with upper-middle-class British consumers.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London
manufacturer
England c. 1744–69
Joseph Willems modeller
Flanders/England c. 1715–66
François Boucher (after)

The music lesson

c. 1765
porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1990 D12-1990

Flanders
Peter Paul Rubens (after)

The Garden of Love

mid 17th century
oil on canvas

Bequest of Alfred Felton, 1904 138-2

This scene is based upon an original by the great Flemish/Netherlandish painter Peter Paul Rubens, in which an enthusiastic party flirt and take their leisure in an idyllic garden setting. The idealised landscape and the fine costumes of the figures tell us that this is an imagined courtly gathering, and the numerous pairings and intimate gestures suggest a variety of romantic intrigues. Rubens is widely considered the most notable artist of the Flemish Baroque school, working in an extravagant style that privileged sensuality, colour and movement. His works were widely copied during his lifetime, and afterwards.

Jean-Baptiste-Claude Chatelain etcher
English 1710–1758/71

Charles Le Brun (after)

The school of love
L'Ecole de l'amour

1772
hand-coloured etching

Felton Bequest, 1939 919.54-4

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Lady on horseback and lansquenet

c. 1497

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3496-4

As with many of Dürer's early engravings, the exact meaning of this print remains uncertain. Some scholars have suggested that it may represent a noblewoman in love with her squire, who has made her a gift of his plumed hat. The print draws attention to the power wielded by women in romantic relationships – the finely dressed lady sits high on the horse, at the viewer's eye level, while her lover gazes upward. His expression, far from carefree or rapturous, seems to hint at the anxiety of an imminent separation.

Joshua Cristall

English 1767–1847

Landscape with two figures by a stream

c. 1800

watercolour over pencil

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 622-4

In the early years of his career, Joshua Cristall's preferred subjects were Classical figures with landscapes. This fine watercolour exemplifies the delicate luminosity of his palette at this time. Later, he produced rustic groups, genre scenes and allegories, such as that included in the Venus and Cupid section of this exhibition.

Jacques Marchand engraver
French 1769– c. 1845

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (after)

The kiss
Le baiser de l'amour

late 18th century – mid 19th century
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1928 3712-3

Jean-Honoré Fragonard's works reflect the taste for voluptuous, playful sensuality, frivolity and decorative excess that was popular among the aristocracy before the French Revolution. In addition to the obviously erotic subject matter, he also created appropriately lavish surroundings and costumes, with the textures of silks and lace amplifying the aura of hedonistic pleasure.

Doccia Porcelain Factory, Doccia

manufacturer

Italy 1735–1896

Shepherd and shepherdess

c. 1760

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939 3845-D3

Neudeck Porcelain Factory, Neudeck
manufacturer
Germany 1747–61

Franz Anton Bustelli modeller
Switzerland/Germany 1723–63

The watcher at the fountain

c. 1756
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939 3823-D3

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst

manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

The fortune teller

c. 1750

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944 4809-D3

This amusing figure group is direct in its erotic content. An elegantly dressed couple have stopped to consult a fortune teller. As the fortune teller distracts the young lady with a palm reading, her companion employs a mirror to surreptitiously admire her bosom. The humorous episode, with its lighthearted erotic imagery, suggests a scene from the theatre.

France

Fan

1715–74

gouache on paper and ivory, mother-of-pearl, paste, metal

Gift of Mr and Mrs E. S. Makower, 1927 2836-D3

This French painted folding fan depicts scenes of courtship in landscape settings. Inspired by *fête-galante* imagery made popular by Rococo artists, the figures are posed as couples engaging in conversation at their leisure. Their postures and gestures parallel the curving forms of the decorative framework surrounding the scenes, lending an artfulness to their bodies. Rustic buildings form part of the rural setting, but with its artificial palette of pastel blues and greens, the landscape appears to be a product of art, rather than nature.

France / Italy

Brisé fan

1775–1800

ivory, glass, metal, silk (ribbon)

Felton Bequest, 1931 3268-D3

In 1711 Joseph Addison commented on the relationship between a woman's emotions and the position of her fan: 'There is scarce any Emotion in the Mind which does not produce a suitable Agitation in the Fan; insomuch, that if I only see the Fan of a disciplin'd Lady, I know very well whether she laughs, frowns or blushes'. Fans were often given as love tokens, and were incorporated into a complex language of gesture, within which one could convey romantic availability and interest or lack thereof, as well as a host of other emotions including desire, hatred and hurt.

Narcissism and vanity

Rituals of self-adornment were intrinsic to flirtation and seduction throughout the early modern period, but the line between wholesome enhancement of one's charms and dangerous self-obsession was not always clearly defined.

The mirror bears ambiguous associations in the Western tradition. 'Know thyself' commanded the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, and as an instrument of self-contemplation the mirror could represent self-knowledge; it is often found as an attribute of allegories of truth and prudence in Renaissance and Baroque art. In an age, too, when rulers identified themselves with Classical deities, the mirror, an attribute of the goddess Venus, cast flattering light on its aristocratic owner.

However, the mirror could also signify vanity, and it increasingly came to be used in this fashion by artists during the Renaissance and after. 'The role of a pretty woman is much more serious than one might suppose', French philosopher Montesquieu mockingly observed in 1721. 'There is nothing more important than what happens each morning at her toilette, surrounded by her servants; a general of an army pays no less attention to placing his right flanks or his reserves than she does to the placement of a patch.'

François Vivares engraver

French 1708–80, emigrated to England 1711

Claude Lorrain (after)

Landscape with the story of Narcissus

1741/43

etching

Felton Bequest, 1926 2201-3

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was the beautiful son of the river god Cephissus and the nymph Lirioe. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus's mother was told by a fortune teller that her son would have a long life, provided that he never saw his own image. However, after rejecting the love of the nymph Echo, he aroused the wrath of the gods. Bathing near the woods one day, Narcissus glimpsed his reflection in the waters of a spring, immediately fell in love with it, and slowly pined away at the waters' edge. The word 'narcissism' derives from the myth.

Thomas Rowlandson

English 1756–1827

A little tighter

1790

pen and ink and watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1920 1056-3

This watercolour depicts a tailor struggling to fasten the corset of a large woman who stands with her back to the viewer. The dressmaker's fashionable tricorn hat has fallen off during the struggle and lies on the ground at the bottom right. The popular fashion of forcefully restricting one's waist to achieve the perfect figure was frequently ridiculed in art and literature, where beautiful young women were depicted literally bound by fashion.

Thomas Rowlandson

English 1756–1827

A little bigger

1790

pen and ink and watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1920 1055-3

In this companion piece to *A little tighter,* the tailor struggles to measure the ample girth of his client during a fitting. Both appear frustrated by the endeavour. Together, these watercolours parody the foibles of the fashionable world, as well as the results of over indulgence that such society fostered.

John Raphael Smith
English 1752–1812

Narcissa
1787
colour stipple engraving and engraving (à la poupée)

Gift of Dr Lilian Alexander, 1934 208A-4

This satire on the Greek myth of Narcissus changes the subject's gender to offer a gentle critique of eighteenth-century feminine vanity. John Raphael Smith was a skilled painter and mezzotint engraver, renowned in his lifetime for subject pictures such as this. Today, he is perhaps best remembered as the teacher of the great Romantic English landscape painter J. M. W. Turner.

James Gillray
English 1756–1815

Lordly elevation
1802
hand-coloured etching and aquatint

Purchased, 1946 1573.20-4

James Gillray was a British caricaturist famous for his political and social satires, many of which were directed against the royal family and members of the aristocracy. Nineteenth-century commentator Thomas Wright described the subject of *Lordly elevation* thus: 'Lord Kirkcudbright who was a very little man was remarkable for his vanity and foppery. He is here at his toilette raised on the only elevation he possessed – that of his toilette'.

With the rise of dandysism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, men's grooming inspired fascination and some disdain. Here, the overstuffed aristocrat proclaims his desire to 'have my chambers lin'd with looking glass'.

Elizabeth Louise Vigée le Brun

French 1755–1842

The artist at work

1830

miniature: watercolour and gouache on ivory in wooden and bronze frame

Bequest of Helen J. Gibson,
widow of the late Robert Carl Sticht Jnr, 1994 P8-1994

Elisabeth Louise Vigée le Brun was one of the most accomplished eighteenth-century painters. Uncommonly skilled as a portraitist, she gained artistic recognition and broader social influence during one of the most turbulent periods in European history. A favourite of Marie Antoinette, she fled France in 1789, and in 1790 was elected to membership in the Accademia di San Luca, Rome. Independently, she worked extensively throughout Europe, accepting commissions from numerous royal families. This miniature self-portrait provides a romanticised representation of the artist at work, the billowing folds of her dress slipping away to reveal porcelain skin. Her subject, a delicately rendered *putto*, reinforces the work's sense of playful sensuality.

Anthony van Dyck etcher
Flemish 1599–1641, lived in Italy 1621–27, England 1632–40

Jacobus Neeffs etcher
Flemish 1610–after 1660

Self-portrait
frontispiece for *Iconography*, published by Gillis Hendrickx, Antwerp, c. 1645
c. 1626–32
etching

Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1959 142B-5

In this energetic self-portrait, Anthony van Dyck is depicted looking rakishly over one shoulder. Together with other prints in his *Iconography* – a portrait series depicting approximately one hundred famous nobles, scholars and especially artists – Van Dyck's *Self-portrait* enlivened this established genre with lively, original depictions of the sitters. The plates to the *Iconography* underwent modification and reprinting many times over the centuries; in later editions the engraver Jacques Neeffs completed the composition with a sculptural bust and pedestal, effectively transforming the artist into a monument. Whether this amusingly self-conscious gesture was part of Van Dyck's original intention for the image is unknown.

Jean-Baptiste Regnault
French 1754–1829

Venus preparing herself
La Toilette de Vénus
1815
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 2000 1998.375

Emotion is often present in the ways in which objects have been acquired, collected, displayed and conserved. Jean-Baptiste Regnault's *Venus preparing herself* is a literal depiction of vanity and luxurious excess; moreover, the purchase of such a work, on so grand a scale and requiring an appropriately scaled and decorated interior for its display, is itself an act of conspicuous consumption, providing material evidence of its owner's considerable wealth and status.

England manufacturer

Dressing table

c. 1790

West Indian Satinwood (*Zanthoxylum flavum*), Tulipwood (*Harpullia sp.),* mirror, iron, brass, copper

Felton Bequest, 1929 3057-D3

As the ritual of the toilette became established in eighteenth-century society, its paraphernalia become an essential part of domestic furnishing. In the late seventeenth century European high society began commissioning luxurious specialised furniture. There were many names for the objects that today we would call dressing tables – the *poudreuse* in France, and the low boy, Beau Brummel and shaving table in England all served as early models. This English example, with multiple drawers and compartments and tilting mirror, is typical of its period and, with its fine decoration and craftsmanship, served as a reflection of the owner's taste and status, as well as an aid to her beauty.

Daniel Smith & Robert Sharp, London
manufacturer
England 1763–88

Pair of boxes from the Countess of Westmorland toilet service
1783–84
silver-gilt

Presented through the NGV Foundation
by Elizabeth J. Morgan, Founder Benefactor, 2003 2003.417.a-d

In the eighteenth century, objects associated with the toilette became increasingly elaborate and emotionally charged. The *Countess of Westmorland toilet service* was made for Sarah Anne, Countess of Westmorland, a year after she eloped with the Earl of Westmorland. Included in it are two cosmetics boxes; the cover of each is decorated with a different scene of love from Classical Antiquity. These luxurious, tactile objects are readable in the context of the countess's recent marriage, and the sense of playful eroticism and enticement is further intensified by the objects' role in beautifying the body.

England manufacturer

Necessaire de toilette

c. 1780

wood, velvet, steel, glass, silver, shagreen, copper

Felton Bequest, 1929 3077.a-j-D3

A *Necessaire de toilette* was a portable grooming kit that fit together with a specially designed, sometimes decorative, case. This *necessaire* contains four glass scent bottles and a funnel with which to fill them. Perfume, worn by both men and women, was an important part of eighteenth-century grooming rituals, and many enthusiasts would mix a personal blend from individual scents.

Music and dancing

Music and dance were important aspects of the courtship ritual. Music was an essential accompaniment to celebrations and festivities, and the ability to sing and play a musical instrument were vital courtly accomplishments. Dance, too, was central to much court entertainment. Many formal dances associated with the court were in fact rustic in origin, and folk dance continued to influence more formal dance traditions throughout the eighteenth century.

Bucolic dance scenes, common in art since the Renaissance, enjoyed great currency in the eighteenth century, encouraged in part by the elegant pastorals of Antoine Watteau and his followers. Such images of dance could also hold subtle erotic content – the joy of dance's rhythmic movements spoke of other sensual pleasures.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst
manufacturer
Germany 1746–96
Laurentius Russinger modeller
Germany 1739–1810

The musicians

c. 1753
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944 4812-D3

This delightful figure group depicts a pastoral scene of Arcadian bliss. A shepherd plays a tune on a recorder, accompanied by a companion playing a musette (a form of bagpipe with rustic associations) and a shepherdess playing a zither. This making of harmonious music by three friends suggests a more general harmony in life and the world at large. Although the three figures are ostensibly peasants, their richly adorned costumes suggest that here we are witness to courtiers at play.

Ludwigsburg Porcelain Factory, Ludwigsburg, Württemberg
manufacturer
Germany 1758–1824

Johann Jacob Louis modeller
Germany active 1762–72

Garland winders

c. 1762–70
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939 4705-D3

Chelsea-Derby, London manufacturer
England 1770–84

Dancers
c. 1770
porcelain (soft-paste)

Anonymous Bequest, 1980 D50-1980

It has been suggested that this young woman and man engaged in a rustic dance may be related to a Sèvres biscuit porcelain group modelled in c. 1765 by Falconet entitled *The German dance*. A number of Sèvres groups were copied or reinterpreted by the Derby factory. However, a more likely inspiration for the composition may be Jean-Baptiste Pater's painting *La Danse* of 1738.

Stephen Keene

English c. 1640–c. 1719

Spinet

c. 1700

walnut (*Juglans sp.),* ivory, ebony (*Diospyros sp.),* iron, fabric, other materials

Purchased, 1905 597-D2

A spinet is a small variety of harpsichord that was popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The harpsichord was widely used in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, but during the late eighteenth century the rise of the piano meant that it gradually disappeared from use. A musical education was deemed essential for a well-bred young woman, increasing her charm and marriageability, and spinets, with their small scale and elegant appearance, were particularly well suited for this purpose. The music lesson itself also became incorporated into rituals of flirtation and seduction, as many images from the period attest.

Jean Massard lithographer
French 1740–1822
Sigmund Freudenberger (after)

The clavichord lesson
La Leçon de clavecina
1770–1801
hand-coloured lithograph and etching printed in brown ink

Felton Bequest, 1939 919.55-4

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

The torch dance at Augsburg

from the *Freydal* series
c. 1517–18
woodcut

Felton Bequest, 1956 3637-4

Circle dance, sometimes known as chain dance, is a style of dance performed in a circle or semicircle to musical accompaniment. Circle dancing is thought to be the oldest known dance formation and was an important part of community life. Usually employed to mark special occasions, it was common to many cultures, reinforcing social bonds and enabling close physical interaction. In Germany, the circle dance, known as a *Reigen*, dates from the tenth century and may have originated from devotional dances at early Christian festivals. There exist several accounts of circle dances being performed at weddings and betrothals.

Sebald Beham
German 1500–50

left
March and April

right
September and October
from *The Country Wedding* series
1546–47
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1961 953-5, 954-5

Sebald Beham's peasant scenes provide a major source of documentation of social and cultural life in sixteenth-century Germany. Produced in large editions and widely collected from the time of their first production, they offer rare insight into everyday life in the period. Here, pairs of dancers process and enthusiastically circle one another in a ritual of celebration. Weddings were popular sites of courtship and flirtation, at which unmarried people could playfully socialise with prospective partners.

William Dickinson engraver
English 1747–1823

Henry Bunbury (after)

A long minuet, as danced at Bath

1787
stipple engraving printed in brown ink

Unknown

The cradle of love
Le Berceau d'amour

plate 28 from the *Jeu de Société (Parlour games)* series
c. 1816, published by Chez Martinet, Paris
c. 1816
hand-coloured etching

Purchased, 1946 1590.8-4

This hand-coloured print, published as part of an early nineteenth-century volume of parlour games, depicts elegantly dressed ladies and gentleman engaged in a flirtatious dance, their hands joined to form an interlocking trellis above their faces. *Jeux de Société*, or parlour games, were group games played indoors. These games were extremely popular among the upper and middle classes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and frequently played a part in sociable courtship rituals.

France
Jacques André Portail (follower of)

Young man seated, playing a lute

18th century
black and white chalk on oatmeal paper

Presented through the NGV Foundation
by Margaret Stones, Governor, 2004 2004.130

Jacques André Portail, who spent much of his career as an art administrator, is remembered primarily today for his delicate chalk drawings. In 1738, Portail was appointed designer to the king of France and soon became well established at Versailles. Jean-Antoine Watteau inspired his subtle use of chalks, while Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin is believed to have influenced his preference for contemplative subjects, exhibited by his follower here in the somewhat wistful expression of the young lutist.

Love goes awry

Love's early stages are rife with risk; danger is often implied within desire. Accordingly, many images relating to enchantment, courtship and seduction are in fact images of love going awry. The absence of reason is a common theme here, with ill-matched couples and unwanted advances represented across several media.

The gods themselves are impetuous. Venus is the goddess of fertility and fruitfulness, but she is also playful and not always benign. Cupid is winged, according to legend, because lovers are flighty and changeable, and childlike because love is easily influenced and beguiled. His attributes are the arrow and torch, because love wounds and inflames the heart. Mythology tells that his quiver contains two kinds of arrows: one with a sharp golden point and the other with a blunt tip of lead. Those struck by the golden arrow are overwhelmed with desire; those hit by the lead feel repulsion and seek out escape.

Even in cases of mutual and healthy affection, many artists sought to emphasise the fleeting nature of life itself, and the inevitability of separation that mortality ensures.

Orazio Pompei Workshop, Castelli
manufacturer
Italy active 1530s –90s

Spouted pharmacy jar
c. 1545–60
earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1906 600-D2

This sixteenth-century Italian maiolica pharmacy jar, with all the attendant sexual symbolism of vessels and spouts, portrays a beautiful young woman on one side and an ageing man on the other, a possible reference to the unequal nature of many unions during the period in which it was produced.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer
England c. 1748–1848

Time clipping the wings of Love

c. 1765–70
porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939 4494-D3

Father Time, surrounded by his attributes, including the scythe and the hourglass, wields a pair of shears with which he cruelly clips the wings of struggling Love. This rather pessimistic reflection on the effect of time's passage on human affections is probably based upon an undated mezzotint by James MacArdell, after a painting by Anthony van Dyck.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

The ill-assorted couple

c. 1495

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3507-4

Tackling the popular topic in northern Europe of age disparity between sexual partners, Dürer portrays a couple in terms of lust and greed. Bearded and balding, the man rummages in his purse for coins to place in the outstretched hand of the woman whose own purse is open. The transfer not only signals prostitution but also indicates sexual union in the form of seed transmitted from his testicular bag to her uterine receptacle. The sinners rendezvous near lake and town, but their grassy spot is relatively barren, promising none of the pleasures of garden or panorama.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Young couple threatened by Death, or The promenade

c. 1498

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3508-4

German artists often focused on the dark side of passion, contrasting young lovers with skeletal death as a way of reminding viewers to eschew lust and excess because judgement waited in the afterlife. Dürer's *Young couple threatened by Death* has Death lurking behind a tree, holding an hourglass that shows the sands of time running down, while in the foreground a gallant youth invites a stylish lady to accompany him on a stroll. The couple stand on a high rise overlooking a river and distant town, on the cusp of deciding whether to be civilised and constrained or take advantage of the isolation and indulge their appetites.

Francisco Goya y Lucientes

Spanish 1746–1828, lived in France 1824–28

Which of them is the more overcome?
Quién más rendido?

plate 27 from *Los Caprichos* (*The Caprices*) series 1799
1797–98, published 1799
etching, aquatint and drypoint printed in sepia ink

Felton Bequest, 1976 P1.27-1976

In Goya's *Which of them is the more overcome?*, a besotted male admirer is comically compared to an excitable lap dog. The print is part of Goya's great series, *Los Caprichos* (*The Caprices*), which offers a wide ranging, devastatingly acerbic and often brutal critique of the moral failures and universal follies of eighteenth-century Spanish society.

Francisco Goya y Lucientes

Spanish 1746–1828, lived in France 1824–28

Tantalus

Tantalo

plate 9 from *Los Caprichos* (*The Caprices*) series 1799
1797–98, published 1799
etching and burnished aquatint printed in sepia ink

Felton Bequest, 1976 P1.9-1976

In this plate from *Los Caprichos* (*The Caprices*), Goya satirically reinvents *Tantalus*, the Greek myth of unquenchable desire. An elderly man is depicted, hands clasped, rocking to and fro in a state of deep despair, while across his knees is draped the unresponsive form of a beautiful and much younger woman, whose passion cannot be aroused.

France
Antoine Watteau (after)

Jealousy
Les Jaloux
c. 1715
oil on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1910 496-2

Antoine Watteau and his circle specialised in a genre known as *fêtes galantes*, paintings of bucolic ease and amorous play tinged with theatrical masquerade. This variant after the lost original, *Les jaloux,* portrays the intrigues of the proverbial ‘love triangle’.

Italy, probably Faenza manufacturer

Apollo and Daphne, plate

1550–80

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1939 4558-D3

An account of the use of Cupid's arrows is provided by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*: when Apollo mocked Cupid's archery and his unmanliness, Cupid retaliated by shooting him with the golden arrow and striking the object of his desire, the nymph Daphne, with the lead. Depictions of Daphne's subsequent transformation into a laurel tree were prevalent throughout the Renaissance and afterwards. The subject incorporates elements of lust, pursuit, the protection of virtue and the dramatic binary of attraction/repulsion.

Joshua Cristall

English 1767–1847

Daphne and Apollo

1819

watercolour over pencil with scratching out

Gift of Mr Z. Singlust, 1982 P35-1982

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer
England c. 1748–1848

Jean-Jacques Spängler modeller
England active 1750s

Bugbear and Companion

c. 1790–92
porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased, 2006 2006.259.a-b

The story of Apollo and Daphne is referenced in this pair of English eighteenth-century Derby porcelain figures, *Bugbear and Companion*. Here, the classical setting is replaced by a contemporary scene of erotic pursuit, with the predatory desire of the male figure intensified by his concealment behind a theatrical mask. Masks, with their attendant sense of secrecy, had long been incorporated into rituals of flirtation, seduction and transgressive sexual behaviour, most notably in the context of the Venetian *carnivale.*

REALISATION

AS LOVE DEVELOPS AND MATURES, DREAMS AND IMAGININGS GIVE WAY TO ACTION. EMOTION IS LENT STRUCTURE THROUGH DEEDS, RITUALS AND RITES OF PASSAGE.

Contracts, bonds and rituals

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, a form of spirituality had emerged in Europe that emphasised the emotional involvement of the faithful. Believers were encouraged to contemplate events from the life of Christ, the Virgin and the saints as if they had been present at the events themselves. As well as attending the celebration of the Eucharist at church, the devout were expected to undertake prayer several times a day in a private chapel, monastic cell, or simply in a corner of one's home. Numerous images, objects and texts facilitated and regulated these acts of devotion.

Secular relationships were similarly structured. In the period prior to the systematisation of marriage requirements in the edicts of the Council of Trent in 1563, public wedding rituals and the material objects generated for them served to legitimise a marriage. Even in the eighteenth century, a wedding was a social ritual and legal contract led by the bride's and groom's families, which did not often have its basis in love. Most parents hoped for mutual affection between the couple, but a prudent choice based on the character, financial and social standing of the prospective bride and groom was more important than passion.

Italy

Judith and Holofernes, pair of chests (Cassoni)

1570s

Walnut (*Juglans sp.*)

Felton Bequest, 1955 1547.1-2-D4

The exchange of gifts played a pivotal role in the marriage ceremony and *cassone* – large wooden chests used to contain dowry items – were among the most symbolic of these. In the popular biblical account of Judith and Holofenes, Holofernes was an Assyrian general positioned to destroy Judith's home town, the city of Bethulia. Judith, a beautiful widow, took advantage of Holofernes's desire for her, entering his tent and plying him with drink. He lost consciousness and was decapitated by Judith. While the story might appear a brutal choice to celebrate a marriage, the virtues of duty and self-sacrifice that it represents were considered essential qualities in a wife.

England

Wedding dress and petticoat

1791

silk, linen, cotton, wool, baleen

Purchased, 1970 D71.a-b-1970

The owner of *Wedding dress and petticoat* is believed to have been Anne Culliford, a member of the minor gentry who wore the garment for her wedding to Samuel Gloyne on 27 January 1791. The cream silk appliquéd with pale pink chevrons captures the rich simplicity of the transition from the ostentatious dresses of the eighteenth century to the classical fashions of the early nineteenth century. It was also recommended that brides wear silk slippers, a white hat trimmed with blond lace and a long figured white satin cloak trimmed with fur. The wearing of veils was not yet commonplace.

Italy, Venice

Footed dish
Coppa

early 16th century
glass, enamel, gilt

Felton Bequest, 1972 D16-1972

Luxurious dining vessels bearing the coats of arms of families to be united through marriage were often commissioned for nuptial celebrations. Venetian *cristallo* glassware was particularly valued for its brilliance and transparency, and gilded and enamelled wares sych as this footed dish would have formed part of a credenza display for a celebratory banquet. The excellent, preserved condition of the delicate gilding and enamelling suggests that this object served more for show than for use.

Unknown manufacturer
Italy, Venice designer

Lace edging

16th century
linen, glass

Felton Bequest, 1964 874-D5

Italy

Border

mid 17th century
linen (needle lace) (gros point) (bobbin lace)

Felton Bequest, 1964 888-D5

Italy

Bed cover

17th century
silk, linen

Felton Bequest, 1964 1119-D5

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, lace was fundamental to the changing fashions of the day. It was the highlight and often the most expensive component of garments worn by rich and powerful men and women, from European royalty and aristocracy to leaders of the Catholic Church, and, later, those in search of the fabled status that lace imparted. As such, it was an important component of dowries, with the capacity to communicate the wealth and taste of the families and individuals with whom it was associated.

Northern Italy

Casket

early 15th century
bone, wood, paper, iron

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4120-D3

Small boxes, referred to variously as a *forzerino*, *casetta*, *coffanetto*, *goffannucio* or *scatola,* played an important role in rituals of courtship and betrothal in fifteenth-century Italy, where they were frequently gifted to brides-to-be. They held special gifts from a courting lover, such as jewellery, belts, love letters or perfumed sweetmeats. A casket adorned with carved bone panels and *alla certosina* work of a type associated with the northern Embriachi workshop bears images of pairs of women in landscape settings around the box's exterior. The corners of the box display male figures bearing clubs and shields, which could be painted with coats of arms, personalising the object.

Willem Jacobsz. van Heemskerk

engraver

Dutch 1613–92

Goblet

1681

glass (diamond-point engraved)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Australian Consolidated Industries Limited, Governor, 1989 D31-1989

A diamond-point engraved goblet, decorated by Leiden amateur glass engraver Willem Jacobsz. van Heemskerk, serves as a tangible reminder of a marriage alliance. Toasting played an important role in wedding celebrations, but it is questionable whether a fine, richly ornamented goblet such as this would ever have actually been used in such fashion. Inscribed with '*Getrouw in alles*' 'Faithful in everything' on the bowl and bearing an inscription on the foot identifying the glass as a wedding gift from Van Heemskerk to Coenraed Bucquoy and Maria Muissart, an elaborately decorated glass such as this was frequently intended primarily for display.

Nicola da Urbino

Italy active c. 1520–38

Jupiter and Semele, plate

1524

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1940 4710-D3

This plate forms part of a service created for the great art patron Isabella D'Este; her arms combined with those of her husband Francesco Gonzaga adorn it. The dish shows one of the odder stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, depicting Juno jealous, as always, of her husband, this time over a woman named Semele, who is pregnant with Jupiter's child. Juno, disguised as an old woman, convinces Semele to test her lover: she must ask him to honour a request without first hearing it, and he does. Her request, at Juno's suggestion, is that he come to her in the same form that he comes to Juno, and Semele is destroyed in the fire.

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn

Dutch 1606–69

The great Jewish bride

1635

etching with drypoint and burin

Felton Bequest, 1933 11-4

The model for this etching was Rembrandt's first wife, Saskia Uylenburgh, whom he had married the previous year, but the primary purpose of the image was not that of a portrait. The intended subject is in fact the Jewish queen Esther, who is depicted here about to approach King Ahasuerus to expose Haman's intent to murder the Jews. Esther was one of the great heroines of the Old Testament, symbolising the values of courage and fidelity to her people. Yet despite the grand archetypal nature of the subject, the subtlety with which the artist renders his sitter's features and expression maintains a sense of intimacy.

Heinrich Aldegrever

German 1502–1555–61

Couple embracing

from *The Set of Large Wedding Dancers* series
1538
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.570-3

Heinich Aldegrever's *The Large Wedding Dancers* is a series of six prints recording the festivities at a sixteenth-century wedding. *Couple embracing* is the sixth in the series, and arguably the most emotional in its treatment of the subject. Only the face of the female dancer is visible, as she clasps her partner to her, their cheeks pressed together, her expression one of wistful contemplation.

Italy, Casteldurante manufacturer
Ludovico Picchi (workshop of) (attributed to)
Angelo Picchi (workshop of) (attributed to)

Venus= and Mars, plate from the Sapies service

c. 1551
earthenware (maiolica)

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4407-D3

Colourful, tin-glazed earthenware, known as maiolica, developed in Italy under the influence of ceramics imported from Spain and the Islamic world. Maiolica reached its apogee in the early sixteenth century with the so-called *istoriato* (history-painted) wares. Inspired by Greek and Roman pottery, these vessels were decorated with finely painted scenes from ancient history and mythology. They were highly valued by connoisseurs and were intended as much for display as for use. They were commonly produced to celebrate marriages, and sometimes formed part of the dowry.

John Wright
English c. 1760–1820

Robert William Elliston
c. 1798
miniature: watercolour and gum on ivory, metal, hair

Felton Bequest, 1920 1061-3

This miniature was painted by the fashionable society miniaturist John Wright. Robert William Elliston was an actor and later theatre owner. In 1796 he married Elizabeth Rundall, a dance teacher, and they would have ten children. This was painted two years into their marriage, presumably for Elizabeth. The elaborate variety of hairwork is characteristic of the period and was almost certainly professionally worked. While the inclusion of hair maintains a strong emotional element, there is also an aspect of conspicuous consumption in the intricacy of the design and in the costliness of the materials. Such objects were about the display of feeling as well as the experience of it.

George Engleheart (attributed to)

English 1752–1829

Richard Gregory (Officer in a red coat)

1789

miniature: watercolour with touches of white gouache over traces of pencil on ivory

Bequest of Helen Jeannette Gibson,
widow of the late Robert Carl Sticht, Junior, 1994 P10-1994

George Engleheart was one of the greatest English painters of portrait miniatures, renowned for endowing his sitters with a sense of serenity and elegance. Even the military example seen here demonstrates this characteristic gentleness, with its luminous skin tones, delicate wisps of hair and quiet, pensive expression. It was fashionable at this time for ladies to wear portrait miniatures on bracelets around their wrists, and small miniatures, such as this example, with curved concave backs, helped facilitate this.

Andrew Plimer (attributed to)

English 1763–1837

Portrait of a lady and gentleman

c. 1792

miniature: watercolour on ivory, rose gold

Felton Bequest, 1938 463-4

In miniature paintings, it was common to see husband and wife depicted on either side of a locket, as in this example by Andrew Plimer, a pupil of Richard Cosway. This process literalises the notion of one's 'other half', and was particularly popular among couples who were physically separated, as was often the case in diplomatic or military postings. These objects are very much about regulating emotion in the context of absence – maintaining a kind of physical proximity.

England

Portrait of a woman

1790s

miniature: watercolour on ivory, enamel, hair, pearls, gold, rose gold, glass

The achievement of a so-called ‘true likeness’ was paramount in miniature painting, and the most celebrated miniaturists were those perceived to capture idiosyncrasies of expression or countenance that enhanced these objects’ capacity to function as emotional triggers. This miniature portrait by an unknown artist may have been painted as a love token, or in memoriam.

Thomas de Keyser

Dutch 1596–1667

Frederick van Velthuysen and his wife, Josina

1636

oil on wood panel

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria in memory of their parents Eric and Marian Morgan by Lynton and Nigel Morgan, Founder Benefactors, 1987

E1-1987

In the 1630s, Thomas de Keyser was the most fashionable portrait painter in Amsterdam, and his work was popular with the middle and upper classes of that city. De Keyser's portraits are characterised by a highly detailed style and by realistically painted figures posed in a rather formal manner. This double portrait depicts a married couple: Frederick van Velthuysen, son of the burgomaster of Utrecht, and his wife, Josina, one of the city's elite citizens.

Jan Steen

Dutch 1626–79

The wedding party

c. 1667–68

oil on wood panel

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Mr James Fairfax, Honorary Life Benefactor, 1992 E1-1992

Steen's *The wedding party* depicts marriage festivities at an inn, a typical venue for such events in seventeenth-century Holland. The bride, her loose hair symbolising her chastity, sits beneath a floral bridal crown at a table in an upper room, flanked by her parents. The wealthy groom, clearly much older than the bride, raises his glass in a toast, a toast not returned by the despondent bride whose glass remains untouched. Steen's painting clearly has a moralising content, using a depiction of the ritual most associated with love in the Western tradition, marriage, to suggest, ironically, that considerations of money or status, not love, might often take precedence.

Northern Italy

Profile portrait of a lady

c. 1465–75
tempera and oil on poplar panel

Felton Bequest, 1946 1541-4

The profile portrait was a popular variety of portraiture in the fifteenth century. Originally favoured on ancient coins, it offered clear delineation of the sitter's features. Such portraits were commonly produced around the time of marriage as a means of recording not only the sitter's beauty, but also the rich costume and jewellery that reflected wealth and social status. This somewhat enigmatic example contains some idiosyncrasies of costume – while the brooch worn by the woman probably dates to the 1470s, the headdress is of an earlier style, fashionable around 1430–50. One possible interpretation is that the work was painted posthumously, in commemoration of the sitter.

Bernardo Cavallino

Italian 1616– c. 1656

The Virgin Annunciate

c. 1645–50

oil on canvas on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1968 1829-5

Bernardo Cavallino was one of the most refined and poetic painters working in seventeenth-century Naples, although due to a scarcity of documentary evidence, little is known about him. *The Virgin Annunciate* would originally have been paired in an altarpiece with a painting of the Archangel Gabriel (now lost). The ray of light illuminating the Virgin's face represents the Holy Spirit at the moment of Incarnation, when the son of God was miraculously conceived as a man. The Virgin registers her humble yet resolute acquiescence by leaning forward, a gesture traditionally employed to denote her loving acceptance of the Incarnation.

England
Anthony van Dyck (after)

The mystic marriage of Saint Catherine

17th century
oil on canvas

Purchased, 1869 p.301.7-1

According to legend, before Catherine was baptised she had a dream in which she saw the Virgin Mary holding Christ in her arms. When the Virgin asked the child to allow Catherine to serve him, he averted his head and said that she was not beautiful enough. Tormented about what she should do to make herself more appealing, Catherine allowed herself to be baptised. When she once again had the dream, Christ offered her a ring, which she found on her finger when she woke. While Catherine remains a virgin bride of Christ, her marriage to him is powerfully physical as well as spiritual.

Sassoferrato

Italian 1609–85

Madonna in prayer

c. 1640–50
oil on canvas

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance
of Mr James O. Fairfax AO, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2002 2002.126

Giovanni Battista Salvi, named Sassoferrato, was a Baroque master who specialised in pious devotional images. His *Madonna in prayer* is a classic example of the Catholic Church's emphasis during the Counter-Reformation on reaffirming devotion to the Virgin Mary. Positioned adjacent to a sickbed or installed near a prie-dieu (a piece of furniture on which a person knelt or lent to pray), a Madonna such as this could act as a powerful aid to prayer and meditation.

Italy

The Entombment, pax

1550–1600
gilt-bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4141-D3

Many devotional objects implied physical, even sensual, interaction. The service of the Mass had long included the ‘Kiss of Peace’; however, during the late Middle Ages, direct kissing among the celebrants and congregation was gradually replaced by the kissing of an object known as a pax. The pax usually included a flat surface, decorated with a devotional image, most commonly Christ and/or the Madonna. Paxes began to replace the exchange of kisses in the thirteenth century, as a consequence of anxiety around the moral and medical implications of kissing. During the Reformation, however, concerns around idolatry led to new prohibitions surrounding the attachment of spiritual power to objects, and the physical kiss, or the less intimate handshake, was revived.

Italy

Piétà, pax

c. 1550–1600

bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4154-D3

Italy

The Nativity, pax

16th century
gilt-bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939

4137-D3

Italy

Virgin and Child, pax

16th century
bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4142-D3

Italy, possibly Padua

Baptism of Christ, plaquette

c. 1500
bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4155-D3

Plaquettes are small plaques made of bronze, brass, lead or precious metals. They originated in Italy in the 1440s with the desire to reproduce coins and hard stone engravings from ancient Greece and Rome. While some were made as collector's pieces to be viewed and displayed in private, others were made for practical purposes. These objects, produced in quantities, are often incomplete in themselves, as they were applied or mounted on items of household furniture, such as inkstands, lamps or caskets. They were also sometimes used as items of personal adornment to decorate clothing or accessories, or served as devotional images.

Germany, possibly Rhineland
manufacturer

Virgin and Christ child, leaf from a diptych

1350–75
ivory

Felton Bequest, 1930 3215-D3

Small folding diptychs of carved ivory were popular objects of personal devotional prayer and meditation among wealthy elites in the later Middle Ages. This leaf depicts the Virgin, enthroned and crowned as Queen of Heaven, holding the Christ child who raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing. The pair is surrounded by angels playing musical instruments, and the whole scene is surmounted by Gothic arches. A second carved leaf was once joined to the right of this one, and probably depicted the Crucifixion of Christ. Images of the Virgin and child and the Crucifixion were common pairings of these objects.

Italy, possibly Urbino manufacturer

Sora Mavera, dish

1530–50
earthenware (maiolica)

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4409-D3

In sixteenth-century Italy, marriages and romantic unions were often celebrated through the production of glazed maiolica. Plates and bowls depicting the faces of young women were also popular love tokens. An unusual example of this kind of pottery is a tin-glazed earthenware dish featuring the head of a nun with her name, (Sister Mavera), inscribed on a ribbon that curls decoratively around the rim. In the absence of provenance or similar examples with which to compare it, the purpose of this object remains elusive. One possibility is that in mirroring the form of a marriage object, the maker alludes to the union between the nun and Christ.

Italy

Ornament for garment

17th century
linen (needle lace), glass (beads)

Felton Bequest, 1964 880-D5

In this ornament for an alb (a liturgical vestment worn by members of the clergy presiding over religious ceremonies), the figures of God the Father, Christ the Son and the Virgin Mary stand in almost three-dimensional relief to represent the Assumption of the Virgin. Eyes are highlighted with glass beads, probably from the Venetian island of Murano, and noses and hair are depicted by stitches in high relief. The tale of Mary's Assumption to Heaven was popular in the seventeenth century, although the relatively formal structure of this composition recalls earlier northern European traditions.

Unknown
Anthony van Dyck (after)

Head of Saint Monica in ecstasy

1628–40s

black, red and white chalk

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 603-4

Religious ecstasy, a state of altered consciousness frequently accompanied by visions and heightened emotion, was a popular subject of seventeenth-century art. Saint Monica (also known as Monica of Hippo), was an early Christian saint, a wronged wife and the mother of Saint Augustine. She is honoured in most Christian denominations for her devout life dedicated to the reformation of her son, following her husband's adultery. Popular Christian legends tell of Saint Monica weeping every night for her son. She is venerated as the patron saint of difficult marriages, victims of adultery or unfaithfulness and disappointing children.

Anton Wierix II

Flemish c. 1555–59–1604

Title page

The heart urged by Jesus, Lady World and Satan

Jesus pierces with arrows the whole outer surface of the heart

Jesus knocks at the door of the heart

Jesus explores the inside of the heart with a lantern

Jesus sweeps away from the heart a cascade of filth

Jesus blesses the heart

Jesus scatters flowers inside the heart enframed by roses

Jesus sleeping peacefully in the heart amidst a storm outside

Jesus places the Instruments of the Passion in the heart

The dripping blood of His hands and feet collected by angels

Jesus seated on a chair holding an open book

Jesus singing a hymn

Jesus playing on the harp

Jesus painting the four Last Things

Jesus enthroned reigns in the heart

Jesus crowns the heart enframed by palms

from the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (*The heart dedicated to the loving Jesus*) series
late 16th century – early 17th century
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.325-3, 1278.326-3, 1278.328-3, 1278.334-3, 1278.327-3, 1278.333-3, 1278.330-3, 1278.337-3, 1278.340-3, 1278.332-3, 1278.338-3, 1278.339-3, 1278.341-3, 1278.331-3, 1278.336-3, 1278.329-3, 1278.335-3

Anton Wierix III engraver
Flemish 1596–1624
Hieronymous Wierix draughtsman
Flemish 1553–1619

Jesus at the door of the heart

additional plate from the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (*The heart dedicated to the loving Jesus*) series
early 17th century
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923

1278.325-3, 1278.326-3, 1278.328-3, 1278.334-3, 1278.327-3, 1278.333-3, 1278.330-3, 1278.337-3, 1278.340-3, 1278.332-3, 1278.338-3, 1278.339-3, 1278.341-3, 1278.331-3, 1278.336-3, 1278.329-3, 1278.335-3, 1278.324-3

This series of prints tells a visual story making use of allegorical images. For those versed in Latin, explanatory tercets provide additional information about each image. The underlying idea concerns ‘How the boy Jesus conquers the human heart and teaches man to live a good Christian life’. Throughout the series, the human heart takes centre stage. The open valve at the top of the organ is in direct contact with God; the Holy Ghost, who appears eight times, is in the shape of a dove. This series was created in the context of the Society of Jesus that played a significant role in the spiritual life of Antwerp during the Catholic renewal post 1585. On the title page, a Jesuit, a Franciscan monk and four laypeople support the flaming heart, which is crowned by the letters IHS, the symbol used by the Jesuit order.

Giambattista Tiepolo

Italian 1696–1770, worked in Germany 1751–53, Spain 1762–70

Saint Prosdocimus baptising Saint Giustina

c. 1735–40

pen and bistre ink and wash

Felton Bequest, 1961 1019-5

Baptism is one of the primary Christian religious rites. The ritual consists of sprinkling water on to a person's forehead or immersing them completely, symbolising purification, regeneration and admission to the Christian Church. This image probably depicts Saint Giustina, an especially beloved saint in the Veneto region where Tiepolo worked for most of his career. Tiepolo was among the leading painters of religious and mythological subjects in eighteenth-century Italy, and the main exponent of the Rococo style in the many different media in which he worked. The virtuosity of his skill is evident here in the calligraphic intricacy of the figures' falling robes, and the suffusion of intense light.

Charity, compassion and friendship

While the modern conception of love has a strong individualistic focus, centred on the drama and mystery of romantic desire, for much of the period explored within this exhibition, notions of duty, sympathy, compassion and self-sacrifice occupied an equally significant position.

In Christian theology, charity is the greatest of the three theological virtues, often personified as a monumental breastfeeding woman. Ideals of compassion underpinned many aspects of religious devotion. As Brian Pullan has argued, charity in early modern Europe was understood as a form of love, as well as an act. ‘Kindness to fellow creatures became an expression or proof of love of God and affirmed the divine presence among men and women.’

Stories of compassion and healing were popular subjects for religious art, and were produced on every scale, from grand altarpieces to tiny etchings, modelling sympathy and altruism at an institutuional and a domestic level.

The wider bonds of friendship were celebrated in depictions of relevant myths and Bible stories, and also in portraiture, which could commemorate particular loving ties between individuals. In the eighteenth century the subject began to be extended to include animals, whose loving relationships with humans, and with each other, became a popular focus of art.

Lucas Kilian

German 1579–1637

Boy with a large dog

1612

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.638-3

An early and unusually tender portrayal of human–animal friendship is found in Lucas Kilian's engraving *Boy with a large dog*, in which the boy's diminutive size and the touching proximity of his face to the dog's upturned muzzle convey their mutual affection.

Joseph Wright of Derby

English 1734–97, lived in Italy 1773–75

The Synnot children

1781

oil on canvas

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by
Mrs Michael Hawker (née Patricia Synnot), Founder Benefactor, 1980 E1-1980

In Joseph Wright of Derby's *The Synnot children*, the three young siblings, Maria, Walter and Marcus, are shown in a wooded landscape, clustered around an empty birdcage. The cage's door is open and the missing bird – a turtledove – is struggling in the grasp of the central figure, the smiling Walter, who gestures upward with his other hand, indicating the creature's imminent freedom. Yet one's attention is quickly drawn to his sister, whose clasped hands and heartbroken expression reveal her doubts of her brothers' plan; and this silent suffering, in contrast to her siblings' energetic engagement in the venture, complicates the emotional focus of the narrative.

Jacopo Amigoni

Italian c. 1685–1752, worked throughout Europe
c. 1715–52

Portrait group: The singer Farinelli and friends

c. 1750–52
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1950 2226-4

In this intimate self-portrait, the artist Amigoni reaches forward to embrace his friend, renowned castrato Carlo Farinelli. This tender gesture sets the affective tone of the image, symbolising the affection, solidarity and artistic unity shared by the group. Beside Farinelli sits Teresa Castellini, prima donna of the Madrid Opera, and on the far left is Pietro Metastasio, Farinelli's librettist. These artists, employed far from home in the Spanish court, found emotional support in each other's company, and are depicted here as surrogate family. Their collective loyalty is also signified by the dog, a symbol of fidelity, who bears Farinelli's initials on his collar.

Vincennes Porcelain Factory, Paris

manufacturer

French 1740–56

Dog

c. 1753

porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of The Wynne Morris Collection, Governor, 1983 D16-1983

Companion animals could also be commemorated in decorative media. Porcelain models of dogs were probably being produced at Vincennes by about 1750; a general inventory taken in October 1752 indicates that 263 dogs were in stock, cast from a whole series of models available at the factory saleroom. Among these, the inventory makes mention of '*chiens de Mad. de Belfond*' ('dogs of Madame de Belfond') – probably Madame de Bellefond, granddaughter of the governor of the Chateau of Vincennes, the Marquis du Châtelet. It is quite possible that this sensitively rendered figure of a long-haired lap dog is a portrait of a favourite pet.

John Smart

English c. 1742–43–1811

Lord Carteret’s daughter

1766

miniature: watercolour on ivory

Felton Bequest, 1910 483-2

Prior to the eighteenth century, the inclusion of animals in human portraiture was largely symbolic; however, after this time, there was a notable shift towards a more affective and compassionate depiction of individual animal companions. An unusual example is John Smart’s miniature portrait of Lord Cartaret’s daughter, accompanied by a pet squirrel. The emotional connection between the sitter and her pet is delicately conveyed in the beautifully rendered detail of the squirrel’s paws curled around her finger.

Luca Giordano

Italian 1634–1705, worked in Spain 1692–1702

Saint Sebastian being cured by Irene

c. 1653

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1934 214-4

Sebastian was a member of the Roman imperial guard in the second century CE who used his position to encourage imprisoned Christians to persevere in their faith. He was arrested by the pagan emperors Maximian and Diocletian, tied to a stake, shot with arrows and left for dead. Miraculously surviving this torture, Sebastian was nursed back to health by Irene, the widow of another martyr. While the painting is notionally a depiction of pious compassion and love, it also seems to dwell extravagantly upon the subject's graceful passivity, his pale, sinuous body occupying the majority of the composition.

Italy
Bernardo Strozzi (studio of)

Saint Lawrence distributing the treasures of the Church to the poor

1615–20
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1934 219-4

The themes of charity and *misericordia* are the focus of Bernardo Strozzi's *Saint Lawrence distributing the treasures of the Church to the poor*, which recounts the story of the saint's sharing of the Church's treasures among the needy. When asked by the emperor where the treasures were concealed, he presented the poor and sick in their place, and responded, 'Behold, here are the treasures of Christ's church'. The painting depicts the moment of transference of these finely wrought ritual objects, including a Gothic censer, a silver gilt pitcher and bishop's crozier.

Alessandro Turchi

Italian 1578–1649

Charity

1615–20

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1954 3077-4

The Verona-born artist Turchi was probably working in Rome by the time this monumental allegorical painting was made. Caravaggio's revolutionary approach to religious art was still felt strongly at this time, and ripples from his shockingly new realism can be discerned here, both in Turchi's confinement of the dramatically lit figures to a dark shallow stage, and in his choice of a handsome but perfectly everyday woman as his model for Charity. The figure was traditionally portrayed as a breastfeeding mother, symbolising selflessness and nurturing.

Johan Zoffany

German 1733–1810, worked in England 1760–72, Italy 1772–78, India 1783–89

Roman Charity

c. 1769

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1932 4614-3

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London
manufacturer
England c. 1744–69
Joseph Willems modeller
Flanders/England c. 1715–66

Roman Charity

c. 1763
porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of Alan and Myra Scott, Governor, 1984 D21.a-b-1984

In *Memorable Acts and Sayings of the Ancient Romans*, Valerius Maximus relates the tale of the aged Athenian Cimon, sentenced to death, who was left to starve in prison before his execution. His daughter Pero secretly visited her father to nourish him at her own breast in an act that became the ultimate example of honouring one's parents. This tale, known as *Roman Charity*, became a popular subject for artists in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as this porcelain sculpture and the roughly contemporaneous painting by Johan Zoffany demonstrate. The story gave artists, under the guise of a moralising lesson in filial piety, an opportunity to present titillating imagery.

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn

Dutch 1606–69

Peter and John healing the cripple at the gate of the temple

1659

etching, drypoint and burin

Felton Bequest, 1933 67-4

The scene depicted here is perhaps the best-known biblical account of miraculous healing as an act of love, drawn from the book of Acts: ‘Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer. And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb … laid daily at the gate of the temple … to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God’.

ACTS 3:1-8 (KING JAMES VERSION)

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Saint Peter and Saint John healing the cripple

from *The Engraved Passion* series 1507–13

1513

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3435.16-4

Manuel Salvador Carmona

Spanish 1734–1820

Dying woman receiving charity

late 18th century

brush and ink and wash, chalk

Germany manufacturer

Alms dish

early 16th century
brass

Felton Bequest, 1922 2417-D3

By the end of the fifteenth century, the city of Nuremberg in Germany had become the principal centre for the production of copper and brass in Europe. Dishes such as this were generally used in domestic settings, and may have been intended as basins in which to wash one's hands before a meal. Such dishes were exported in great quantities across Europe, including to England, where they were often used for collecting donations from the congregations.

France manufacturer

Alms dish

c. 1604

pewter

Felton Bequest, 1922 2407-D3

Pleasures of the flesh

The direct representation of everyday human sexuality was proscribed, either legally or through forces of social control, for much of the early modern period. However, when presented through the acceptable prisms of Classical myth and religious allegory, eroticism remained a popular subject of art and literature.

In scenes drawn from the Bible, images ostensibly about the condemnation of carnal desire offered the opportunity to depict the very bodies and acts they warned against. In the Classical tradition, numerous mythological pairs enact their desires and preside over amorous realms located in gardens, woodlands and pools, though the tales of seduction and abduction rarely end in happiness.

In the eighteenth century, satires on sexuality abounded. Many of these reflect the contradictions of a society that celebrated female beauty, while punishing female desire. The struggle between virtue and pleasure, and the dangerous consequences of giving in to temptation, became a popular subject of both tragic literature and humourous critique.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer
England c. 1748–1848

Europa and the bull

1765–70
porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1956 1592-D4

In Classical mythology, Europa was the first queen of Crete. The king of the gods, Zeus, formed a passion for Europa and determined to ravish her. He transformed himself into a white bull, in which form he carried Europa off from the home of her father, taking her across the sea to Crete. In this dynamically modelled Derby figure, the oddly diminutive white bull appears too sweet and docile to have presented much threat to the imposing Europa.

Annibale Carracci

Italian 1560–1609

Pan

c. 1592
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1974 E1-1974

In Greek mythology, Pan is the god of shepherds and flocks, nature, wild mountain places and rustic music. Famous for his sexual powers, Pan is often depicted with a phallus. This unusual trompe-l'oeil depiction of *Pan* was commissioned around 1592 by Cesare d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, to decorate a room in his Palazzo dei Diamanti. The coffered ceiling of the Camera del Poggiolo in this palace was adorned with fifteen alternating oval and octagonal paintings depicting the gods and goddesses of Classical mythology.

Valerio Castello (attributed to)

Italian 1624–59

Susannah and the Elders

mid 17th century
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1928 3729-3

Susannah and the Elders was an Apocryphal allegory of voyeurism and virtue, which enabled artists to legitimately depict a woman in a state of undress. Susanna, a young Jewish wife, was desired by two elders of the community, who plotted to seduce her. They hid in her garden and when she came out to bathe they emerged and threatened that, unless she submitted to their desires, they would accuse her of adultery – the penalty for which was death. Susanna spurned them and they made their false accusation. She was charged and condemned to die, but at the last minute, the youthful prophet Daniel questioned the elders and established Susanna's innocence.

Fontana Workshop, Urbino

manufacturer

Italy active 1520s –80

Alpheus and Arethusa, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, double-spouted ewer

c. 1570–80

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1971 D98A-1971

The form of this maiolica ewer effectively necessitated erotic interaction. The handles, fashioned as naked, back-bending satyrs, transformed the functional act of lifting the object into one of titillation. These suggestive elements, and the object's hybrid form, also directly echoed the myths depicted on the body of the ewer: narratives of desire, pursuit and metamorphosis. The relationship between eroticism and the grotesque is also significant; the grimacing faces, weird chimeras and animalistic body parts that ornament the ewer contrast with the more poetic pictorial decorations on its sides. Repulsion is thus positioned as desire's binary, and perhaps also, paradoxically, as one of its constituent elements.

James Barry

Irish 1741–1806, worked in England 1764–1806

Temptation of Adam

1776

etching and engraving

Presented by the Society for Encouragement of Arts, 1881 p.183.208-1

The iconography of Barry's *Temptation of Adam* was based on the ninth book of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and depicts the moment when Eve confesses to Adam that she has been tempted and has sinned. Barry mentioned this painting in a letter written in Rome to Edmund Burke, dated 23 May 1767, and made numerous other references to it throughout his stay in Italy. In writing that he wished to paint figures of 'absolute beauty', Barry showed that Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (published anonymously, London, 1757) had a profound influence upon his work.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

The Fall of Man

from *The Small Passion*, published 1511
c. 1510
woodcut

Felton Bequest, 1933 4754-3

Albrecht Dürer's series of thirty-seven woodcuts known as *The Small Passion* begins with The *Temptation,* also known as *The Fall*, heralding the commencement of human history and the need for redemption from sin. As Eve takes the apple and Adam opens his palm to accept it, one side of his face in shadow; these 'first parents' are already shown in physical intimacy, arms wrapped around each other as a foretaste of their future sexual relationship. Rather than standing in a garden of pleasure, they are in a thick, dark forest, a foreboding sign of their sin.

James Barry

Irish 1741–1806, worked in England 1764–1806

Satan, Sin and Death

illustration for *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (II, 720–26)
c. 1792–95
etching and engraving

Presented by the Society of the Arts, 1881 p.183.228-1

The passage illustrated here occurs in John Milton's *Paradise Lost, Book II*. Satan arrives at the Gates of Hell, which he finds defended by his daughter, Sin, in the centre, and Death, on the left. Death attempts to oppose Satan with violence, but Sin intervenes, revealing that Death is the product of her incestuous union with Satan. The subject was a popular one in the eighteenth century in both illustrated texts and independent pictures and engravings.

Jacopo de’Barbari

Italian c. 1460–70–1516

Sacrifice to Priapus: The larger plate

c. 1499–1501

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1970 P71-1970

Statues of libidinous hybrid creatures were often included in scenes of eroticism in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, especially in the form of herms – ancient boundary-pillars that culminate in the head of a god and include his phallus and testicles, emerging from the smooth stone. Here, Jacopo de’Barbari reconstructs a religious service involving a Priapus herm, whose phallus matrons ritually wash to ensure healthy offspring.

Pietro Aquila

Italian 1650–92

Annibale Carracci (after)

Orpheus and Eurydice; Diana and Endymion; Europa and the bull Hero and Leander; Hercules and Iole; Pan and Syrinx

plates 7 and 10 from the *Galeriae Farnesianae Icones* series, published by Giovanni Giacomo de Rossi, Rome

c. 1674

etching and engraving

Gift of Professor Peter Tomory, 1991 P132-1991, P135-1991

The Loves of the Gods is a monumental fresco cycle completed by Carracci and his studio for the Palazzo Farnese in Rome between 1597 and 1602. Loves of the gods, hybrid creatures, pissing cherubs, truncated herms and 'glorious bodies' all combine in the ceiling of the Galleria. Also present are Michelangelo-esque male nudes, *putti* with and without wings, goat-legged satyrs, and masks that respond with interest to the stories they frame. Pietro Aquila's monumental engravings provide a sample of the myths depicted, many of which combine a lasciviousness and sense of tragedy.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Abduction of Proserpine on a unicorn

1516

etching on iron

Felton Bequest, 1956 3484-4

This disturbing etching depicts a woman abducted by a man on a unicorn, her arms thrown up in panic, her mouth open in a scream. The print is commonly titled *The abduction of Proserpina* after the story of the abduction of Ceres's daughter by Pluto. Proserpina, however, is usually depicted carried off in Pluto's chariot or on foot. An earlier drawing by Dürer shows that he made several changes – the unicorn was originally a rearing horse, trampling lifeless figures beneath its hooves. Abduction was a popular subject in Classical mythology and the art it inspired, reflecting a voyeuristic enthusiasm for feminine passivity and aggressive masculine desire.

Giandomenico Tiepolo

Italian 1727–1804, worked in Spain 1762–70, Germany 1750–53

Centaur carrying off a female faun

1750s –80s

pen and brown ink, brush and brown ink

Felton Bequest, 1960 672-5

Jan Harmensz. Muller engraver
Dutch 1571–1628, worked in Italy 1594–1602
Adriaen de Vries (after)

Mercury abducting Psyche: lateral view, Mercury's side

from a set of three, published by Harmen Muller, Amsterdam
1593–94
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1926 3025-3

Jan Harmensz. Muller engraver
Dutch 1571–1628, worked in Italy 1594–1602
Adriaen de Vries (after)

Mercury abducting Psyche: view with Psyche from behind

from a set of three, published by Harmen Muller, Amsterdam
1593–94
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1926 3026-3

Lucas van Leyden

Dutch c. 1494–1533

Susannah and the Elders

c. 1508

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1958 3807-4

In Lucas van Leyden's depiction of *Susannah and the Elders*, the artist unusually focuses the viewer's attention not on the defenceless body of Susanna, bathing in her secluded garden, but upon the conspirators who watch her. Rather than positioning the viewer in the role of complicit spectator, as was more often the artistic custom, the entire composition serves to underline the tense, predatory aspect of the narrative.

Wenceslaus Hollar

Bohemian 1607–77, lived in England 1636–44, 1652–77, Flanders 1644–52

Paulus Pontius

Flemish 1603–58

Diana the huntress, lying under a tree

1644–52

etching and engraving

Purchased, 1900 74-2

Hollar's *Diana the huntress, lying under a tree* appears, at first glance, to be a traditional reclining figure in a landscape. Upon closer examination, however, the unmistakable, earthy fleshliness of her body and air of satisfied exhaustion, in combination with the highly suggestive form of her quiver of arrows, heighten the eroticism of the image.

Heinrich Aldegrever

German 1502–1555–61

Lust

from the *Virtues and Vices* series

1552

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.559-3

Joseph Highmore

English 1692–1780

Pamela fainting

1743–44

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1921 1114-3

This painting depicts a scene from Samuel Richardson's popular eighteenth-century novel *Pamela*. The novel caused a storm of controversy about whether the chambermaid swooning in bed, embraced by the lustful squire, was titillating exploitation, or a role model essential for respectable girls to read. Pamela's body – originally left to the reader's imagination since the novel is told in her letters and journals – became a site of conflicting interpretations. Compassion revealing the heart, or suggestive display to tickle the reader? True love or wicked lust? Did she really faint or was she pretending to let her handsome master ravish her without having to perform the charade of 'virtuous' resistance?

Italy, Deruta manufacturer

Dish

1520–30

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1970 D63-1970

In sixteenth-century Italy, marriages and romantic unions were often celebrated through the production of glazed maiolica. Plates and bowls depicting the faces of young women, accompanied by scrolls featuring their name and the word ‘bella’, were popular love tokens. This example includes no such identification, and the subject’s exposed breast lends an additional frisson of eroticism. While the identity of its subject is unclear, it was certainly intended for display as well as use – holes in the foot ring allowed it to be hung on the wall.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Draughtsman drawing a vase and Draughtsman drawing a reclining nude

in *Underweysung der Messung mit dem Zirckel un Richtscheyt* (*Instruction on measurement with compass and ruler*), published by Hieronymus Andreae, Nuremberg, 3rd German edition, 1538
1525
book: woodcut illustrations, letterpress text

Felton Bequest, 1956 3663-4

Artists' workshops were often sexually charged settings. When artists resorted to actual female models (instead of young male apprentices), the women willing to pose were prostitutes or other marginalised workers. Dürer here pictures the sexual dynamics. His treatise on artistic practice, printed posthumously in 1525, contained woodcuts that showed how to draw, with the aid of a transparent grid, convincing views of three-dimensional objects such as a lute, vase or female body. Dürer feminises his subject and renders the artist as quintessentially male, powerful and voyeuristic. He begins the difficult task of perspectival foreshortening, in which the vanishing point penetrates the woman's barely cloaked body.

Germany manufacturer

Goblet (form of a hand in the fica gesture)

c. 1600
glass

Felton Bequest, 1967 1494-D5

The *Mano Fica* (fig hand) is an ancient gesture, a protective sign against the evil eye, in which the tip of the thumb protrudes from the clenched fist, in a representation of the sexual union. The name derives from the Italian word for the vulva, fica, meaning fig. The fruit was sacred to Bacchus, and was associated by the Romans with fertility and eroticism. The gesture is used against the evil eye in the belief that obscenity serves as a distraction to evil. Here, the form is adapted to a goblet designed for the specific purpose of celebratory toasting; it may only be set down once its contents have been drained.

Jan Steen

Dutch 1626–79

Interior

c. 1661–65

oil on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1922 1248-3

Raucous behaviour in taverns was often an amusing topic for the painter Jan Steen, who came from a family of brewers, and for a while in the 1670s ran his own tavern in Leiden. His *Interior* from the first half of the 1660s has one smiling rake caress the swollen breasts of a nursing mother, unbeknown to the child's probable father, a drunken man with loose leggings who tries to concentrate on manipulating tongs in order to pick up an ember with which to light his pipe. Behind them, a group of men in the company of one woman gleefully and noisily enjoy gregarious companionship.

Cornelis Bega
Dutch 1631–64

The amorous couple
c. 1650–64
etching

Felton Bequest, 1933 4741-3

The young hostess
c. 1650–64
etching

Felton Bequest, 1961 964A-5

The young waitress caressed
c. 1650–64
etching

Felton Bequest, 1961 964-5

Taverns were sites of public sociability and communal sensuality, often doubling as brothels. They were a popular subject for seventeenth-century Dutch artists such as Cornelis Bega, whose etchings represent peasant men fondling women who worked as both waitresses and prostitutes. The bedding in a small cubicle behind a woman being propositioned points to her future activity.

William Hogarth
English 1697–1764

Before
After
1736
etching and engraving

Gift of Professor P. W. Musgrave, 2001 2001.38, 2001.39

During the 1730s, Hogarth produced three versions of an image showing a young couple before and after a sexual encounter. Set in a lady's bedchamber, in this version the woman is cast as reluctant prey and the man as heartless predator. The moral message is underlined by the book positioned at the man's feet in the *After* print. This refers to Aristotle's dictum *Omne Animal Post Coitum Triste* (Every animal is sad after sex). While people might satisfy their sexual desires, Hogarth pessimistically suggests, such bodily fulfilment is ultimately no fulfilment at all.

Spain

Saint Sebastian, plaquette

1575–1625
gilt-bronze

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 4145-D3

Devotional images could also be erotic images, and one saint in particular licensed these experiments: the young Roman officer Sebastian, who was shot through with arrows and miraculously healed. In 1550, Vasari tells a story about the female congregants at San Marco, Florence, who were so sexually ‘corrupted’ by Fra Bartolomeo’s nude *Saint Sebastian* that the monks removed it from the church in order to preserve decency. In addition to his notable effects upon female worshippers, Sebastian was to acquire an illustrious homoerotic afterlife. Oscar Wilde, who adopted the pseudonym ‘Sebastian Melmoth’ when in exile in France, maintained a lifelong attachment to Guido Reni’s depiction of the subject, whom he described as ‘a lovely brown boy with crisp, clustering hair and red lips’.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Saint Sebastian at the column

1499

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3469-4

Annibale Carracci

Italian 1560–1609

A naked warrior lying on the ground

c. 1603–04

black chalk on blue paper

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 592-4

Annibale Carracci's *A naked warrior lying on the ground* is both a poignant depiction of a fallen hero and a sensuous appreciation of prone male flesh. This fluid, expressive sketch exemplifies the sense of vital dynamism for which the artist was renowned.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

The bath house

c. 1496–97

woodcut

Felton Bequest, 1956 3596-4

This ambitiously sized woodcut locates a variety of male nudes in the permissive, music-filled environs of secular recreation. Visual jokes abound: the tree behind the onlooker resembles a naked figure, and the tap at the left is not only a cock or valve in German (*Hahn*) but has a spigot in the shape of such a bird, reminding viewers of a slang term for the male genitals situated behind the tap. The all-male grouping is subtly homoerotic. Two figures in the foreground look fondly at each other, one holding a scraper that he could use on his companion's back, the other holding a flower, which usually indicates courtship.

Birth, parenthood and the family

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, art was heavily patronised by the Church, and much human experience and emotion was expressed through references to biblical narrative. If one wished to convey familial affection, an image of the Madonna and Child or Holy Family would fulfil that purpose. The love between Mary and Jesus was celebrated as the purest realisation of that emotion, made the more potent by knowledge of Christ's impending martyrdom.

The Christ child himself also underwent substantial transformation in the early modern period. The transition from the comparatively wooden, expressionless infants of medieval art to the plump, animated babies that wriggle their way across the compositions of Carracci, Correggio and Romano was radical. It signalled not only artistic development but also changing ideas about childhood and emotion.

While these images are clearly aids to religious devotion, they are also means of communicating the ubiquity of parental love, and the visual language they contain was equally identifiable in secular works. Remove the setting and fine eighteenth-century costumes from Louis Gauffier's *The family of André-François, Count Miot de Melito, (1762–1841) consul of France to Florence*, 1795–96, for example, and the sitters become almost indistinguishable from depictions of the Holy Family.

Italy, probably Ferrara

Madonna of Humility
Madonna dell'Umilità

c. 1470
painted wood (Italian poplar)

Purchased 1983
Kindly lent by the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra NGA 83.12

Many devotional works embedded biblical narrative within a familiar context, imbuing it with a more universalised notion of human feeling. The *Madonna of Humility* is both a focus of religious devotion and an image of generalised maternal affection. This very human portrayal of the Madonna and Child, entwined in each other's embrace, their gazes locked in a moment of intimacy and love, is at once an innocent celebration of their bond and a poignant prefiguration of their subsequent separation. The absence of ornamentation, and the Madonna's informality, seated upon the ground, offer further capacity for identification.

Correggio

Italian 1489–1534

Madonna and Child with infant Saint John the Baptist

c. 1514–15

oil on wood panel

Purchased with funds donated by Andrew Sisson, 2011 2011.330

Correggio was one of the greatest and most influential figures of the Italian High Renaissance. Painted in the early 1500s, this picture provides great insight into the development of the young Correggio, shedding new light on the extent to which he was prepared to experiment with form and design, and the degree of emotional content in his work.

Cornelis de Vos

Dutch/Flemish c. 1584–1651

Mother and child

1624

oil on wood panel

Purchased with funds donated by Alan and Mavourneen Cowen, Andrew Sisson, an anonymous donor and donors to the
Cornelis de Vos Appeal, 2009 2009.2

The empathy that radiates from this portrait outshines even its glittering surface details. De Vos's capacity to delineate human affection was recognised through numerous commissions for portraits featuring children, an expertise honed by depictions of his own family. In their simplicity and beguiling address to the viewer, his portraits record-changing attitudes towards the family. The exclusive focus on mother and child signals the increasingly independent status of the nuclear family in the seventeenth century. Most likely hung in a room for receiving visitors on the ground floor of a wealthy Antwerp home, it presents a model of familial concord and virtue as well as material wealth.

Benedetto and Santi Buglioni (workshop of)

Italian active early 1480s–1576

Madonna and Child

c. 1500–30

earthenware

Felton Bequest, 1954 1394.a-b-D4

Intended for private devotion in a domestic setting, this sculpture by the Florentine ceramicist Benedetto Buglioni was probably also considered to have talismanic properties. Contemporary thinkers espoused the belief that if a woman was within eyesight of a beautiful image during conception, she was more likely to give birth to a beautiful child.

Annibale Carracci

Italian 1560–1609

The Holy Family

c. 1589

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1971 E2-1971

In his earlier part of his career, Annibale Carracci worked collaboratively with his family and some of their pupils in his native Bologna. His own reputation grew, however, and by the 1590s Carracci was establishing a strong reputation for his biblical and classical subjects and attracting commissions in Rome and Ferrara. This small devotional image of the Holy Family exemplifies the individualised, emotional approach for which he was to be recognised later in his career. Here, the Christ child, rendered with a rare naturalism leaning into his mother's neck, exhibits both childlike innocence and a sense of melancholy premonition.

Flanders

The Virgin and Child

mid 15th century – late 15th century
oil on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1923 1275-3

The early Netherlandish master Jan van Eyck (c. 1395–1441) was also one of the first artists to develop religious imagery showing the Virgin and Child in more recognisable interiors. This was a departure from the flatter Gothic/Byzantine tradition of representing figures isolated from any believable spatial context. A number of motifs present in this small panel are identifiably in the manner of van Eyck, and for many years the painting was attributed to him. The influence of other Netherlandish masters, including Robert Campin and Rogier van der Weyden, can also be discerned here.

Simon Marmion

French c. 1425–89

The Virgin and Child

c. 1465–75
oil on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1954 3079-4

This solemn depiction of the Virgin and Child is a fine example of the type of Marian painting favoured in the Burgundian Netherlands during the second half of the fifteenth century. Mary is depicted as a beautiful yet humble young woman with idealised facial features in a contemporary setting. The Flemish painter Rogier van der Weyden (c. 1399–1464) and his workshop were instrumental in popularising this type of Virgin and Child. The recumbent position of Christ in his loose swaddling bands invokes later imagery of the lifeless Christ lying prone across his mother's lap.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

The Virgin with the Infant Christ and Saint Anne

c. 1500–01

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3446-4

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

The Birth of the Virgin

from *The Life of the Virgin* series, published 1511
c. 1503, printed before text edition of 1511
woodcut

Felton Bequest, 1956 3544.5-4

Dürer's *The Birth of the Virgin* exemplifies the ways in which religious narrative could be used to convey details of contemporary life. The birth is alluded to in the *Protoevangelium of James* and in the later *Golden Legend*, both of which describe Mary's father, Joachim, and mother, Anne, who were grieved by childlessness; however, no detail is provided about the event itself. Dürer's interpretation fills in the gaps with a detailed depiction of midwifery and women attending a birth in sixteenth-century Nuremburg. The image is a key source for medical history in this period, and also effectively conveys the bonds of female friendship forged around the ritual of birth.

Albrecht Dürer

German 1471–1528

Madonna by the Tree

1513

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1956 3452-4

Louis Gauffier

French 1762–1801, worked in Italy 1785–1801

The family of André-François, Count Miot de Melito, (1762–1841) consul of France to Florence

La Famille d'André-François, comte de Miot de Melito, (1762–1841) consul de France, accrédité à Florence

1795–96

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Andrew Sisson, 2010 2010.513

In 1795 André-François Miot was sent to Florence to represent the New French Republic. While there he met Louis Gauffier, a French Neoclassical artist who created this charming family portrait. In addition to the sense of familial affection, the work also communicated Miot's role as an ambassador. Miot wears the national colours and sits between Classical sculptures of Minerva and Brutus, both republican symbols. Behind him is a view of the famous Florence skyline, signalling Miot's appreciation of the charms of his adopted country and his emerging role as a broker of peace between France and the Papal States.

Guercino

Italian 1591–1666

Saint Joseph and the infant Christ

1640s–50s

red chalk

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 596-4

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn

Dutch 1606–69

Abraham caressing Isaac

1637

etching

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.1035-3

Giulio Romano

Italian c. 1499–1546

The Holy Family of Francis I, Saint Elizabeth, Saint John and the infant Christ

c. 1518

cartoon fragment: black and white chalk on prepared paper; laid down

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939 587-4

This drawing is one of two surviving fragments of the cartoon used in the execution of Raphael's altarpiece of *The Holy Family*, painted for King Francis I of France. The lovingly entwined figures represent Saint Elizabeth holding the infant Christ, and St John.

Adriaen van Ostade
Dutch 1610–85

Mother with two children
c. 1671–79
etching
3rd of 6 states

Felton Bequest, 1933 4820-3

The doll
1679
etching

Felton Bequest, 1933 4809-3

Adriaen van Ostade was a contemporary of the Flemish painters David Teniers and Adriaen Brouwer and, like them, he devoted his practice to the depiction of vernacular subjects: tavern scenes, village fairs and country living. His style was particularly well suited to communicating scenes of ordinary domestic life and, here, the playful, loving interactions of peasant families.

William Blake

English 1757–1827

Los, Enitharmon and Orc

plate 21 from *The First Book of Urizen*, 1794, re-issued as part of *The Large Book of Designs*, copy B
c. 1795
colour relief etching printed in opaque pigments, and finished with watercolour and pen and ink

Felton Bequest, 1920 1027-3

This complex allegorical image of the family represents the moment, at the beginning of human history, when life was enslaved by possessive love and sexual jealousy. Los (the fallen imagination) and Enitharmon (his wife or emanation) stand next to each other, their bodies turned towards the viewer and their foreheads touching. Their son, Orc (revolutionary energy), presses his body against his mother's in erotic embrace. The proximate object of Orc's desire is his mother, who at this stage of his life forms his world; yet he seems also to be looking beyond her, towards the lines of cloud, coloured blood-red by the sun. The sky evokes a second, more distant object of Orc's desire – a much larger world that he wants to claim as his own.

Nathaniel Dance

English 1735–1811, lived in Italy 1754–65

The Pybus family

c. 1769
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 2003 2003.687

This picture depicts John Pybus, Senior, a retired East India Company servant recently returned to England, and his wife Martha, with their children identified from left to right as: Martha, Anne, John Junior, and Charles Small. The family is portrayed full length, exquisitely dressed in tones of pink and grey, in an idyllic English-landscape setting. As such, the painting functions as a portrait of familial harmony and affection, but also as an assertion of wealth and social position. *The Pybus Family* belongs to a genre known as the ‘conversation piece’, particularly popular in the eighteenth century, in which groups of figures are posed in an idealised landscape or domestic setting.

St James's Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

English c. 1749–c. 1759

Virgin and Child with Saint Elizabeth and Saint John the Baptist

c. 1750

porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased, 1996 1996.197

This small porcelain depiction of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Elizabeth and Saint John the Baptist*, made by St James's Porcelain Factory in the 1750s, is distinguished by unusual accessibility and tenderness. Here, the infant Christ reaches across the lap of his mother to caress the cheek of his cousin, John the Baptist. The affective tactility of the subject is further enhanced by the object's materials, the pale soft-paste porcelain with its silky glaze also inviting a sensuous response in the viewer.

REMEMBRANCE

LOVE'S AFTERLIFE EXISTS AMIDST THE COMPLEX ENTANGLEMENTS OF LOSS, LONGING AND MEMORY – THE PAIN OF GRIEF AND THE PARADOXICAL PLEASURES OF ABSENCE.

Commemoration and mourning

Many objects and images associated with mourning were produced, in part, as an attempt to reconcile the impermanence of the human body with an ideal of immortal devotion. Mortality rates in early modern Europe were high, and in a climate of perpetual loss the creation of familiar rituals and objects around death became paramount to maintaining emotional stability. In the same way that the relic of a favoured saint could bring comfort and hope, making or commissioning intimate objects in memory of a loved one served as a constant reminder of them – they remained, metaphysically and literally, present.

This practice applied not only to the commemoration of known loved ones but also to military heroes, political martyrs and exiles. During the years of the Jacobite rebellions, rituals expressing love for and loyalty to an absent ruler helped maintain power relationships and consolidate bonds between dissenters.

In the Romantic era of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the cult of ruins invoked nostalgia and longing as pleasurably aestheticised forms of sorrow. Images of tombs, burial grounds and crumbling architectural fragments all attested to a fascination with life's precariousness. Frequently 'created' as well as discovered, the ruins themselves invited spectators' reflections on transience, mortality and decay.

Capodimonte Porcelain Factory, Naples manufacturer
Italy 1743–59

Giuseppe Gricci modeller
Italy/Spain c. 1700–70

Goffredo at the tomb of Dudone

c. 1745–50
porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1991 D4-1991

Gricci's virtuosic sculpture *Goffredo at the tomb of Dudone*, derived from Tasso's epic tale of chivalry *Jerusalem Liberated*, was produced by the Capodimonte Porcelain Factory in Naples. In Tasso's account, Goffredo refuses to grieve for his vanquished friend, embodying instead an exemplary restraint and strength of purpose. In his eulogy, he proposes immortality for Dudone, whose self-sacrifice has elevated him to the heavenly sphere where he continues to do battle. Goffredo is shown here in a heroic stance, delivering his eulogy with resolution, his intense gaze registering his devotion to his friend and belief in his continued presence.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

French 1780–1867, worked in Italy 1806–24, 1835–41

The tomb of Lady Jane Montagu

1816

pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1920 1066-3

In 1815 Lady Jane Montagu, daughter of the Duke of Manchester, died at the age of twenty while visiting Rome. Her grieving family commissioned the French artist Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, with whom they had become acquainted during their stay in Rome, to complete a delicate drawing of an imagined tomb for Lady Jane. The elaborate architectural setting and classical grace of the pose locate the subject within a venerable antique tradition, and lend her beauty an aura of artistic immortality. The tomb itself was never realised, and as such the drawing functions as her memorial.

Luigi Schiavonetti etcher
Italian 1765–1810, worked in England 1790–1810
William Blake draughtsman
English 1757–1827

The meeting of a Family in Heaven

plate from *The Grave, A Poem* by Robert Blair, published by Rudolph Ackermann, London, 1813 (second edition)
c. 1805–08, printed 1813
etching and engraving

Gift of Judith and Graham Ryles OAM
in memory of Dr Ursula Hoff AO OBE through
the Australian Goverment's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010 2010.250

Canaletto

Italian 1697–1768, lived in England 1746–55

Capriccio: A tomb by a lagoon

1740s

pen and brown ink and grey wash over pencil with ruled brown ink border

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.695-3

Canaletto's *Capriccio* (an imaginary view of a landscape) poetically contrasts a vast dilapidated Roman tomb with fishermen going about their daily routine. The melancholy atmosphere of the scene is heightened by the contrast of the living and the dead; small figures scrambling atop sunken ruins hint at the eventual disappearance of the great Roman civilisation and the impermanence of their own short lives.

Unknown

The tomb of Virgil

1820–30

pen and bistre with coloured washes

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.685-3

Felice Giani

Italian 1758–1823

I too am in Arcadia

Ancora io sono stata in Arcadia

late 18th century

pen and ink, blue, light grey and dark grey watercolour wash; ruled ink border

Presented through the NGV Foundation
by Mr J P Palmer, Governor, 2002 2002.165

Felice Giani's gently melancholic watercolour *I too am in Arcadia* alludes to the ubiquity of death in the midst of pastoral beauty. Giani was an Italian painter of the Neoclassical style, whose grand manner subjects often included Greco-Roman themes and allegories.

Aegidius Sadeler II

Flemish c. 1570–1629, worked in Bohemia 1597–1629

Bartholomaeus Spranger and his wife Christina Muller

1600

engraving and pen and ink

Purchased, 1963 1321-5

This complex double portrait symbolically reunites the artist Bartholomaeus Spranger and his wife, Christina, who died at the age of thirty-two. It is an example of a scholarly representation of death, including a range of Classical references. In the centre is the winged figure of Saturn or Chronos, symbol of Time; the skeleton below him holds an arrow directed towards Spranger, which indicates that death will eventually come to him. The Latin inscription on the left reinforces the visual message: ‘What do you wish to do before your time has come? Time forbids you to die; the radiant arts wish to make you more radiant still’.

England

Charles I mourning jewel

mid 17th century – late 17th century (enamels), 19th century (mount)
gold, crystal, enamel

Gift of Mrs Stubbs, 1923 2483-D3

The victory of parliamentary forces in the civil war, the execution of Charles I and the flight of his heir, the future Charles II, into exile saw many Royalists having to adjust to life in a radically transformed political landscape. Charles's execution created a social division that resonated throughout British generations, and many royalists wore his portrait. Mourning jewels were produced in large quantities, and before the Restoration these objects functioned as markers of dissent. Symbols of mourning and the love and longing they entailed entered the public consciousness on a grand scale, at the same time that industrialisation saw an increase in jewellery production.

Unknown
S. H. (after)

Charles I

published by R. H. Laurie, London
1821
etching

Felton Bequest, 1926 2200-3

The precarious transition between life and death is referenced in this anamorphic image of Charles I. An inscription along the top of the engraving reads, ‘King Charles ye first head Drawn in Optiks Place the letter A to your Eye and glance Along’ and at the bottom is the letter ‘A’. In order to see the corrected portrait, the viewer would hold the print flat at eye level, and glance along its lower edge, effectively ‘resurrecting’ the dead king. In this way, the image, unrecognisable without its instructions, is lent both three-dimensionality and an element of coding and secrecy.

England

King Charles I and Henrietta Maria of France

mid 17th century
silk, linen, paper, metal and silk (thread), mica, pearls, coral, wood, cotton (wadding)

Purchased, 1957 1733-D4

This embroidered raised-work picture, showing a couple bearing royal regalia, exemplifies the manner in which needlework could indicate the maker's political allegiances. Thought to depict Charles I and his wife, Henrietta Maria of France, it could have been made before or after the king's execution in 1649. Following his death, a cult developed among those who opposed his sentence as a 'tyrant, traitor and murderer; and a public and implacable enemy to the Commonwealth of England'. The labour-intensive mode of its production also compounds the emotional resonance of the piece.

Unknown

The Iron Duke (The Duke of Wellington)

early 19th century
miniature: watercolour and gouache on ivory, copper alloy, gold and coral

Bequest of Janet Biddlecombe, 1954 1447-D4

Painted to celebrate the life and career of the Duke of Wellington, this miniature demonstrates the duke's growing celebrity status after the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. This final victory over the French led to a cult of personality around Wellington, which led in turn to the fashion for commemorative artefacts. The most desirable of these contained locks of hair, purportedly from the hero himself. The great volume of these in existence, however, as well as the considerable variation in the hair's colour, casts some doubt upon their authenticity.

Etienne Nitot et Fils, Paris manufacturer
French 1806–16

Snuff box with miniature of Marshal de Turenne

c. 1805
gold, tortoiseshell, enamel, glass

Bequest of Dame Mabel Brookes, 1991 D87-1991

Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, (1611–75) was the most illustrious member of the La Tour d'Auvergne family, achieving great military fame and becoming a marshal of France. Turenne achieved many military victories before ultimately being martyred in battle at Salzbach. The news of his death produced universal sorrow, and images and objects commemorating him continued to be produced for more than a century after his passing.

England

Mourning ring

1750

gold, crystal, enamel, gouache, ivory

Gift of Mr Kurt Albrecht, 1987 D81-1987

By the mid seventeenth century, making and wearing jewellery had emerged as an intrinsic part of the mourning ritual in Europe. Much of the iconography of early mourning jewellery drew upon the *memento mori* tradition, within which symbols of death (including skulls, hourglasses and even worms) were worn as reminders of one's imminent mortality. Later pieces referenced that notion less directly, combining Romantic symbols of mortality, such as the urn and weeping willow, with the public announcement of personal grief.

Where rings had originally been the primary form of mourning jewellery, from the mid eighteenth century there emerged a new fashion for memorial medallions or lockets, worn on ribbons or chains around the neck. These became especially popular in Britain, where the symbolic wearing of pendants and brooches over the breast coincided with the widespread acceptance of the heart as a site of romantic feeling. Many pieces combined decorative designs with symbolic stones and enamels, and sometimes human hair.

Mourning jewels conveyed the public/private aspect of the mourning ritual: in one sense public – visible, readable in the context of fashion and accessories – but in another intimate; made, in part, of the body, and worn against it.

England manufacturer

Mourning pendant

1793

gold, ivory, gouache, hair, crystal, velvet

Purchased, 1980

D362-1980

England manufacturer

Mourning ring

1769

gold, ruby, ivory, enamel, hair, glass

Purchased, 1974 D44-1974

England manufacturer

Mourning ring

1776

gold, enamel, glass, hair, ivory

Gift of E. Howitt, 1893

874-D1M

England manufacturer

Mourning ring

1777

gold, amethyst, pearl, crystal, ivory, gouache, enamel

Gift of Mrs D. E. Enston, 1980 D402-1980

England manufacturer

Mourning pendant

1782

gold, pearls, diamonds, enamel, hair, glass, copper

Gift of E. Howitt, 1893 873-D1M

This mourning pendant, with its painted ivory decoration and hairwork on the reverse, typifies the manner in which emotion was given physical form in the Romantic era. Many jewels included the name or initials of the deceased and their dates, as well as generalised mottos of sorrow and yearning. Here the words, ‘With mutual love our heart did burn, and now my tears bedews [*sic*] his urn’, are inscribed upon a curling ribbon. The reverse of the pendant contains a panel of vertically laid hair, presumably that of the deceased.

The simple ritual of drinking a toast to the health of a prince became, in the wake of the overthrow of the Stuart King James II in 1688, a highly charged political act. Forced into exile in France by a *coup d'état* – the so-called Glorious Revolution – James continued to have many supporters in England, Ireland and Scotland who sought for nearly sixty years to see the Stuarts returned to their British thrones. These supporters, the Jacobites, could not openly express their political loyalties as these were treasonous under the new political settlement.

Toasts to the 'King' in glasses whose decoration made coded reference to the exiled Stuarts allowed Jacobites to express solidarity with one another and with their exiled monarch in public, but veiled, fashion.

A drinking glass might be waved over a glass of water as a toast was offered, making it quite literally a toast to the king 'over the water'. The five-pointed star, a symbol found on many Jacobite glasses and associated with the birth of James III's eldest son, prince Charles Edward Stuart, might be kissed as the toast was taken, in a gesture of loyalty not only to the titular king in exile but also to the line of dynastic succession.

England manufacturer
Robert Strange (attributed to) engraver
Scottish 1721–92

Amen glass

c. 1740–50
glass (diamond-point engraved)

William and Margaret Morgan Endowment, 1973 D110-1973

England manufacturer

Decanter

c. 1745

glass (wheel-engraved)

Purchased with funds donated by Elizabeth Morgan, 2013 2013.742.a-b

England manufacturer

Wine glass

c. 1750

glass (wheel-engraved, air-twist stem)

William and Margaret Morgan Endowment, 1973 D53-1973

Romantic martyrdom

The tragedy of premature death was a cornerstone of the Classical tradition, and the notion of dying for love as the ultimate realisation of that emotion is expressed in manifold literary accounts. Doomed lovers are perhaps better remembered than their more fortunate counterparts: Tristan and Isolde, Hero and Leander, Dido and Aeneas, and Antony and Cleopatra are all stories characterised by emotion as passionate as it is brief.

Romeo's 'silver-sweet' address to Juliet beneath the balcony is all the more powerful because we know that their bliss is to be short-lived. Much of its beauty lies in its ephemerality, its aura of impermanence. Many of these stories follow a familiar trajectory within which, through misfortune or misunderstanding, one lover dies or commits suicide, and the survivor cannot endure life without the lost love.

In artistic representations of romantic martyrdom, the gestures associated with the pain of lost love suggest futility and helplessness: the arms of Hero in Nicolas Régnier's *Hero and Leander*, c. 1625–26, flung wide above the lifeless body of her drowned lover, are at once a symbol of her powerlessness and an appeal for consolation. Here the performance of grief becomes constituent in its endurance.

Albrecht Altdorfer

German c. 1480–1538

Pyramus and Thisbe

1513

woodcut

Felton Bequest, 1950 2274-4

The Ovidian tale of Pyramus and Thisbe (the antecedent for Romeo and Juliet) concerns ill-fated lovers kept apart by their parents. They live in adjoining houses, and communicate through a crack in the wall. They arrange to meet in a garden. Thisbe arrives first but is frightened by a lion and flees. Pyramus finds Thisbe's veil and, thinking she is dead, kills himself. Returning and finding his corpse, Thisbe does the same. In Altdorfer's woodcut, the Babylonian lovers are transformed into well-dressed Germans and relocated from the gardens of Babylon to a northern European wood. Thisbe's stooped posture and clasped hands are reminiscent of mourners at the foot of the cross.

George Clint engraver
English 1770–1854

J. M. W. Turner (after)
English 1775–1851

Procris and Cephalus

from *Liber Studiorum,* part VIII, 14 February 1812
1812
etching and mezzotint printed in brown ink

Felton Bequest, 1949 2174A-4

Turner drew from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in his *Procris and Cephalus*. In one version of the myth, Eos (also known as Aurora), the goddess of dawn, fell in love with the married Cephalus. In jealous distress, Procris ran into the forest, but when she crept up to see if her husband was betraying her, Cephalus mistook the rustling in the bushes for an animal and killed her with his spear. After accidentally killing his wife, Cephalus was sent into exile on an island. In Turner's version, the affective tone of the image is set by a melancholy dog, who mourns alongside his human companions.

Italy
Gianmaria Mosca (after)

Antony and Cleopatra

16th century
marble

Felton Bequest, 1948 704-D4

In Mosca's depiction of the famous doomed lovers, Cleopatra's vulnerability is emphasised by her nudity, at some point deemed sufficiently indecorous to warrant the addition of a fig leaf, the history of which is still visible in the circular marble inset in her groin. Mosca's interpretation is marked by its intimacy; Cleopatra is presented not as an inaccessible queen, but as a tangible woman who cannot live without her beloved. Depicted in a moment of distress after receiving the snake bite, she reaches out to Antony's body, poised to traverse the symbolic and literal space between them.

Francisco Goya y Lucientes

Spanish 1746–1828, lived in France 1824–28

Love and death

El amor y la muerte

plate 10 from *Los Caprichos* (*The Caprices*) series 1799

1797–98, published 1799

etching, burnished aquatint and burin printed in sepia ink

Felton Bequest, 1976 P1.10-1976

Francesco Xanto Avelli (attributed to)

decorator

Italy c. 1486–c. 1544

Beautiful Dido receives Aeneas at Carthage, shallow bowl with rim

c. 1522–25

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1976 D4-1976

Dido was the founder and first queen of Carthage, whose story was related by the Roman poet Virgil in his epic *The Aeneid*. In this account, the Trojan prince Aeneas, fleeing the destruction of Troy, is welcomed to Carthage by Queen Dido, and the two begin a passionate affair. Aeneas is soon reminded of his duty to continue on to Italy, however, (a journey that will culminate in the foundation of Rome) and he abandons Dido. Overwhelmed with grief, she commits suicide by falling upon her sword. Several scenes from the legend are depicted around this bowl, with the central roundel devoted to the suicide.

Italy, possibly Tuscany manufacturer

Diana and Acteon, dish

1525

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1940 4708-D3

In this large-scale maiolica plate, Diana and her chaste nymphs bathe naked in a large fountain set in a private glade, but their virginal isolation is disrupted by the hunter Actaeon, who is punished by being transformed into a stag, and is then fatally attacked by his own dogs.

Nicolas Régnier

Flemish 1591–1667, worked in Italy 1615–67

Hero and Leander

c. 1625–26
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1955 3262-4

The story of Hero and Leander is found in a poem by the Greek poet Musaeus. Leander, a youth of Abydos on the Asian side of the Hellespont, would swim the strait nightly to meet his lover, Hero, a priestess of Aphrodite, at Sestos on the opposite shore. One stormy night, Leander drowned, and the distraught Hero committed suicide. Hero's gesture of despair mirrors many seen in religious images of the Deposition (see Peter Candid, opposite).

Religious sacrifice and devotion

Imagery of martyrdom has always inspired great intensity and variety of feeling. Christ's death was represented as an act of love, and his wounds as love's physical manifestation, functioning as focuses for grief and devotion.

Luis de Granada, a sixteenth-century Domenican preacher, writes in *The Book of Prayer and Meditation* of the emotions felt while meditating on Christ's Passion, dwelling at length upon Christ's agony:

For it is not a speedy kinde of death … but very long and lingering; and the wounds be in the most sensible parts of the body; in the feet and hands, which are most full of veins and sinews, which be the instruments of feeling. Moreover his paines were increased with the poize and weight of his owne body … [these] augmented the greife of his torments, and this caused his martyrdom to become so extreme grevious, that although hee had no deadly wound, yet by reason of the passing greatness of his paines, his most holy soule departed out of his most precious body.

The effects of witnessing this suffering were frequently modelled for the viewer in the depiction of mourners and spectators, who operate as prompts for sympathetic identification and worship.

Italy, Ferrara

Pieta

c. 1470
painted wood

Purchased 1986 Kindly lent by the
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra NGA 86.1054

The *Pietà* (Italian for pity) is a type of devotional image that developed in Germany at the beginning of the fourteenth century. In its most common form it depicts, as in this fifteenth-century example, the Virgin Mary sorrowfully cradling the dead body of her son. The scene is not an episode recorded anywhere in the Gospel. It is instead an example of an *Andachtsbild*: an image consisting of holy persons extracted from any narrative context in order to form an emotionally powerful vignette. This highly expressive *Piétà* was probably made in Ferrara, a prominent cultural centre in the fifteenth century.

Prospero Mallerini

Italian active 1794–1837

Crucifixion

1801

oil on canvas

Gift of Kenneth Reed through the
Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2016 2016.383

The ache of separation is one of love's notorious hazards. In *Crucifixion,* Mallerini deploys the illusionism of trompe-l'oeil painting to stage the vanquishment of such separation through mystical Christian devotion. The longing in the picture unfolds between two objects: an ivory figurine of Christ on the cross and a printed image of Saint Gertrude inscribed with the words, 'In Gertrude's heart you will find me'. Mallerini juxtaposes these two simulated works of art so that the printed Saint Gertrude offers an adoring upward gaze towards the ivory Christ, whose downcast face seems to return it. Thus, two art objects miraculously interact, and the time and distance separating Christ and a thirteenth-century nun are collapsed.

Austria / Southern Germany
manufacturer

Crucifix reliquary
c. 1700
ivory, iron, wood, tortoiseshell, bone, paper, silk, gold fabric, rock crystal

Presented by Mrs G. Furche, 1990 D13-1990

This crucifix, dating to the beginning of the eighteenth century, emphasises Christ's agony and torment. Here, his painfully extended arms bearing the full weight of his body, his twisted lower limbs and the unnatural backward tilt of his head are all markers of the extremity of his pain. For a worshipper contemplating this imagery, the power of the object was amplified by the presence of a collection of holy relics displayed behind crystal on the reverse of the cross. However diminutive the fragment, a relic was invested with magical power, with the capacity to be infinitely replicated, perform miracles and even manifest the saint from whom it was derived.

Peter Candid

Flemish c. 1548–1628, worked in Italy early 1560s–86, Germany 1586–1628

The lamentation over the dead Christ

c. 1585–86
oil on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1966 1664-5

In Candid's *The lamentation over the dead Christ*, a spectrum of feeling is depicted in the mourners, who model the emotional response of the viewer through a language of gesture. The outstretched hands of John the Evangelist were a recognised symbol of grief and sorrow, and the concealment of the Magdalene's face intensifies her depth of emotion. In the foreground are included the instruments of Christ's torture – the crown of thorns and the nails with which he was crucified. These functioned as foci for prayer and meditation, their eye-level position at the lower edge of the composition triggering what Giuliana Bruno terms 'the touching experience of feeling through the eye'.

Hans Memling

German/Flemish c. 1430–40–1494

The Man of Sorrows in the arms of the Virgin

1475/79

oil and gold leaf on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1924 1335-3

In this composition, Christ and the Virgin Mary are presented in an *imago pietatis* (image of pity). The painting depicts Christ as dead, yet at the same time alive. Behind Christ and the Virgin are the instruments of the Passion and some of the key figures and moments associated with the betrayal and the mocking of Christ. The wound in Christ's side became the focus for meditation – it was seen as a threshold between the human and the divine, as described by Saint Bonaventura in his *Vitis mystica*:

> His heart was wounded for us to see in the visible wound, the invisible wound of love. Through the portal in His side, pierced by the lance, approach Christ's merciful heart.

Antonio Begarelli

Italian 1490s–1565

The Virgin attended by three holy women

c. 1530

earthenware

Felton Bequest, 1971 E3-1971

In Begarelli's small-scale earthenware sculpture *The Virgin attended by three holy women*, produced as a model for one section of a much larger composition of the Deposition, the figure of Christ is omitted altogether from the scene. Viewed independently, the female mourners become the emotional focus of the sculpture, the billowing folds of their drapery seeming to mirror their internal turmoil, as they support the Virgin, rendered unconscious by grief. The object is both a focus of religious devotion and a moving depiction of the bonds of female companionship.

Italy

Reliquary with image of Saint Anthony of Padua

18th century
wax, paper, metal thread, wood, glass

Bequest of Mrs Henry Marsh, 1980 D438B-1980

While a spiritual relationship with devotional objects was often implied in their form and subject matter, reverence could also be expressed in the manner of their production. For many religious communities, physical labour was a central aspect of devotion. During the Counter-Reformation, several women's orders became renowned for their paper filigree and wax reliquaries, and two later Italian examples, continuing this tradition, are displayed here. The rejection of costly metals and gemstones favoured in medieval prototypes of these humbler objects, intended for private devotion, positioned the relic itself as the central 'treasure', and privileged the labour involved in their production as an act of religious observance and love.

Italy

Reliquary with image of Saint Mary Magdalene

18th century

wax, paper, metal thread, wood, glass

Bequest of Mrs Henry Marsh, 1980 D438A-1980

Italy, probably Urbino manufacturer

Saint Peter, Martyr, bowl

1515–25

earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1940 4674-D3

The painted decoration of this bowl includes a depiction of Saint Peter of Verona, patron of inquisitors and midwives, a celebrated early Dominican preacher in northern and central Italy who was martyred by heretics in the mid thirteenth century. His attribute is the knife blade that split his skull and killed him. Peter's tomb in Milan became a pilgrimage shrine, and maiolica objects such as this one, bearing images of saints, sometimes functioned as pilgrimage souvenirs. Such objects may also have served to introduce images of exemplary figures into the home, providing models of appropriate moral and religious conduct.

Italy, Venice

Reliquary jar

17th century
glass (applied decoration)

Purchased, 1871 90.a-b-D1R

The Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation saw profound changes in the cult of relics. The Protestant reformers rejected relics entirely, while at the Council of Trent the Catholic Church promulgated strict new guidelines about the authentication, display and adoration of relics. Emphasis was placed upon the visibility of the relic in its reliquary, and clear labelling of the relic's source. This covered glass jar is a form frequently used to house relics. Threads would be tied around the knop on the lid and the stem of the jar and then sealed with wax, protecting the contents from tampering.

Pietro Teutonico (attributed to)

Germany/Italy active 1288–1331

Nativity and Crucifixion, reliquary diptych

c. 1320

glass (verre églomisé), wood, (bone)

Felton Bequest, 1936 3651-D3

This reliquary in the form of a diptych showing the Nativity of Christ and his Crucifixion is one of a small group of related objects produced in a workshop in Assisi, Umbria, associated with the Franciscan father Pietro Teutonico. The object was intended for private devotional use and would have served as a souvenir of a pilgrimage to the Franciscan shrines at Assisi. The coats of arms presumably represent the patron who commissioned the object. The *verre églomisé* technique involves painting on the reverse side of the glass and is intended to emulate the effect of more expensive enamel work.

Bartolommeo Bellano (attributed to)

Italian 1437–38–1496–97

Lamentation of Christ

late 15th century
stone

Presented by Tomas Harris Esq., 1952 1276-D4

In the fifteenth century, a sophisticated type of sculpture using shallow relief carving was developed by the Florentine sculptor Donatello and his followers, including Bartolommeo Bellano. Known as *schiacciato,* or ‘flattened-out’ carving, the technique was widely used for devotional subjects, such as this *Lamentation*. Seen by flickering candlelight, such images offered a marvellous interplay of shadow and substance not available to painters of the time.

Heinrich Aldegrever

German 1502–1555–61

Faith

1528

engraving

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.927-3

Faith, one of the three theological virtues, was traditionally depicted as a full-length female figure, draped or sometimes nude, holding a crucifix. Aldegrever's *Faith*, by contrast, wears fashionable sixteenth-century costume, elaborate jewellery and a crown, and grasps the foot of a full-scale cross. It is possible that the artist has combined the traditional depiction of Faith with that of Mary Magdalene, often shown embracing the foot of the cross. The subject's luxuriant hair may be a reference to the rather sensual moment of the Magdalene's conversion, when she washed Christ's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

Pasquale de Rossi

Italian 1641–1722

A saint holding the dead Christ

late 17th century – early 18th century

pen and bistre over red and black chalk; laid down

Felton Bequest, 1923 1278.729-3

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London
manufacturer
England c. 1744–69
Joseph Willems modeller
Flanders/England c. 1715–66

Pietà

c. 1761
porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Alcoa Foundation, Governor, 1989 D2-1989

Willems's *Pietà* is a moving image. It is also a highly symbolically charged one in the English context. At the time of its production, the Catholic Mass was forbidden, and Catholic priests faced execution if discovered by the authorities. In the absence of regular access to the Eucharist, many English Catholics turned to Marian devotion for religious and emotional succour. The *Pietà*, an iconography replete with Eucharistic resonances, is an especially fitting image to serve as a focus for private devotions. Here, contemplation of the Eucharistic body of Christ rendered in porcelain becomes a spiritual substitute for the forbidden Mass.

Claude Mellan

French 1598–1688

Sudarium of Saint Veronica

1648

engraving

Purchased, 1909 387-2

According to legend, the sudarium was a cloth that Veronica, a woman observing Christ carrying the cross to Calvary, used to wipe the blood and sweat from his face, leaving an imprint of his features upon it. The sudarium became the focus of an important cult, inspiring numerous images. Mellan created the head of Christ with one line, beginning at the tip of the nose and delineating the features by thickening the line, all within a near-perfect spiral. Thus, the uniqueness of the miraculous relic is reflected in the exceptional technique used to create the image. The inscription reflects this feat: ‘The unique one made by one [like no other]’.

England manufacturer

Wine glass

c. 1760

glass, enamel (enamel-twist stem, enamel)

William and Margaret Morgan Endowment, 1973 D51-1973