

House Highlights



The Maas at Dordrecht

Aelbert Cuyp (Dutch, 1620-1691) Oil on canvas, c. 1650

Aelbert Cuyp spent nearly his entire life in Dordrecht. Influenced by the "Italianate" painters of his day, Cuyp bathed his town in a warm, golden light that feels more like Italy than the North Sea.

This large canvas is widely considered Cuyp's masterwork. However, its history is marked by a dramatic 18th-century intervention. In 1774, to satisfy the market demand for "pendant" paintings (matching pairs), the canvas was cut in half. The left side was sold as a busy morning scene, while the right became a quiet evening study.

Fortunately, the two halves were recognized and reunited in the 1800s. Today, the painting stands restored as a celebration of Dutch maritime history and the delicate beauty of the "Golden Hour." Few people could paint the light like Cuyp, and he never painted it better than he has here.



A Large Dish with Ladies Playing 'Pitch-Pot'

China, Qing Dynasty, Kangxi Period (1662-1722)

This huge dish is an extraordinary survivor from the Kangxi period, and is significant because of its size and near-pristine condition. It is a wonderful example of famille verte (the "green family"), a palette dominated by translucent green enamels layered over a white porcelain body.

The central scene gives a glimpse into Qing dynasty leisure, showing elegant ladies engaged in the game of "Pitch-pot" (touhu). The game required players to throw arrows or sticks into the neck of a narrow pot.

While much large export porcelain from this period suffered damage or loss over the centuries, the size and condition of this piece make it a hero of 17th-century Chinese ceramic making.



Five Brood Mares at the Duke of Cumberland's Stud Farm in Windsor Great Park

George Stubbs (British, 1724-1806) Oil on canvas, 1764-1765

This painting marks a pivotal moment in the career of George Stubbs, the preeminent equine artist of the 18th century. It represents Stubbs's first commission for the Duke of Cumberland, a wealthy patron and breeder.

While Stubbs is celebrated for his "Mares and Foals" series, this work is a real rarity: it is his only surviving painting that portrays mares without their foals. By omitting the young horses, Stubbs focuses entirely on the anatomical precision of the five adults, arranged under the shade of an oak tree.



The Honourable Thomas Needham

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) Oil on canvas, c. 1768

This commanding, full-length portrait shows The Honourable Thomas Needham (c. 1740-1773), eldest son of the 10th Viscount Kilmorey. He stands with an air of quiet confidence, wearing the uniform of the 3rd Foot Guards. The painting is celebrated for its scale and colouration, but it remains a slight enigma. It is highly unusual for a portrait of this importance to conceal both of the sitter's hands. One hand is tucked into his waistcoat – a common gesture in 18th-century "polite" portraiture, but the other is hidden from view.

By omitting the hands, which were often considered the most difficult anatomical features to paint, Gainsborough directs the viewer's focus entirely toward Needham's face, and his own skill in painting the details of his uniform.



'Full Cry' The Rothschild Brothers in the Vale of Aylesbury

Attributed to William Barraud (British, 1810-1850) Oil on canvas, c. 1840s

This equestrian painting shows the four sons of Nathan Mayer Rothschild: Nathaniel, Lionel, Anthony, and Mayer. Their father, who settled in England in 1798, founded the London branch of the family bank and established the Rothschilds as a pillar of the British economy.

The brothers are shown riding through the Vale of Aylesbury, a landscape that would eventually be nicknamed "Rothschildshire." During the mid-19th century, the family acquired numerous estates in this region of Buckinghamshire, including Ascott, Mentmore, and Waddesdon.

The painting captures the brothers' shared devotion to the English countryside and the hunt. Beyond just a sporting scene, it confirms the family's integration into the English landed gentry or 'squirearchy' and their impact on the local landscape.



Classical Chess Set and Board

European, 18th Century, Mother-of-pearl, silver, and silver-gilt

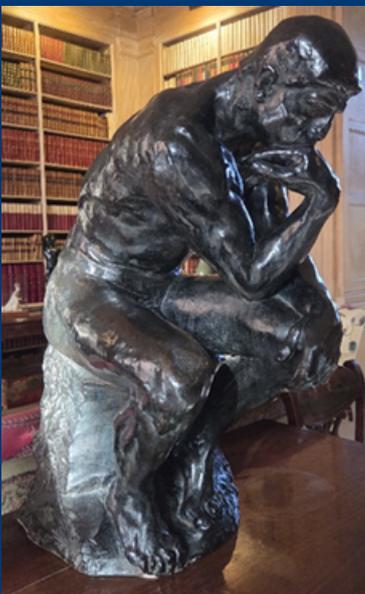
This exquisite and rare chess set is a masterpiece of decorative art. The board is made from mother-of-pearl, prized for its iridescence and delicate colouring. Its borders are engraved with scenes of animals, lush foliage, and landscapes, reflecting the 18th-century fascination with the natural world. The chessmen are cast in silver and silver-gilt (vermeil) to distinguish the opposing sides. Rather than traditional abstract shapes, the pieces are sculpted as miniature figures from classical history. These characters evoke the "Grand Tour", when collectors and scholars drew inspiration from the legends of ancient Greece and Rome.



Blue-Glazed Grain Jar

China, Tang Dynasty (618-907) Earthenware with cobalt-blue glaze

This celebrated grain jar is a monumental rarity from the Tang Dynasty. Its most striking feature is its vibrant blue coloration – a high-status luxury achieved through the use of cobalt. During this period, cobalt was not yet sourced within China and was a valuable import brought from the Middle East via the Silk Road. Because the pigment was more valuable than gold, it was typically used sparingly as a highlight. This vessel is considered an almost unique survivor because of its size and the multiple layers of glaze applied to its surface, which create a deep, luminous finish rarely achieved on such a large object.



The Thinker (Le Penseur)

Auguste Rodin (French, 1840-1917), Bronze

This bronze is a reduced-scale casting of Auguste Rodin's most iconic work. Though now recognised globally as a symbol of philosophy and intellect, its origins were deeply tied to a specific literary masterpiece.

Rodin originally conceived the figure as the centrepiece of 'The Gates of Hell', a monumental pair of bronze doors inspired by Dante Alighieri's 'Inferno'. This figure was intended to represent Dante himself as he leant forward in meditation.

By 1888, Rodin began exhibiting the figure as an independent work, stripping away its specific identity as a 14th-century poet. By portraying the figure nude and muscular, Rodin transformed 'The Poet' into 'The Thinker' – a representation of the physical and mental struggles of mankind.



Jun Ware Flowerpot

China, Early Ming Dynasty, late 14th century

This exceptional flowerpot is a rare survivor from the late 14th century, a period when Chinese potters were perfecting the art of 'transmutation' glazes. The vivid colours were notoriously difficult to control in the kiln. These colours were achieved through the careful use of copper oxide, which required precise conditions to transform into these brilliant colours.

On the base of this vessel, the numeral '1' is incised into the clay. This mark belongs to a sizing system used for vessels produced for the Imperial Palace. The numbers range from one to ten, with number 1 designating the largest size available. As the preeminent piece in its series, this pot was designed to hold important botanical displays within the courtyards or halls of the imperial court.



Lady Mary Bruce, Duchess of Richmond

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), Oil on canvas, c. 1786

Although traditionally said to be a portrait of Lady Mary Bruce, the subject is now in doubt, and so this painting is often known as 'Portrait of a Lady with Red Hair'.

This is a large, late work by Thomas Gainsborough, and is notable for the striking red hair of the subject. A bonnet was painted upon the head of Lady Mary to cover the red hair when it became unfashionable. When the coverup was discovered, Anthony de Rothschild had conservators remove the bonnet and return the painting to its original condition.