"Valuables and Ornamental Items":

The Collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Alastair Bradley Martin

Private collectors, if they wish and if they are clever, often have great advantages over museums in acquiring works of art. They are free to move quickly and to exercise personal predilections, regardless of scholarly or popular fashion. They can make purchases in an instant, taking unexpected opportunities, whereas approval for museum purchases sometimes involves time-consuming deliberations. Their collections, even more than those of museums, reflect their individual tastes, their enthusiasm, and their perseverance.

To reveal some of the different approaches to collecting, and to provide an arena in which the public may view works of art that are privately owned, the Metropolitan Museum has initiated a program to present exhibitions of the holdings of individual collectors. Recent shows have included Far Eastern art gathered by Florance Waterbury and Greek vases belonging to Walter Barciss.

The collection of Mr. and Mrs. Alastair Bradley Martin (known as the Guennol Collection, guennol being “marten” in Welsh) will open as part of the Centennial series of exhibitions in the Blumenthal Patio on November 6. The Guennol Collection is unique and courageous, for the Martins have attempted to accumulate a variety of objects from many different fields. As other collectors do, they strive for excellence in every purchase they make, but, unlike some, they don’t mind leaving lacunae in their collection, and they are proud of the objects they have purchased in “eccentric, ignored” fields. Because of their collecting philosophy, the Martins were acquiring pre-Columbian and African art before The Museum of Primitive Art was founded and before the Metropolitan Museum became a serious competitor; they have been able to develop a group of Olmec jades that Mr. Martin considers among the best in the world. And they have been highly successful in finding small gems of great beauty and historical importance in medieval art. The Hours of Catherine of Cleves illustrated on the next page, half of which is in the Guennol Collection and half in the Morgan Library, is a superb example of fifteenth-century illuminated manuscripts.
Though eclecticism has led some collectors to create meaningless jumbles of unrelated, insignificant objects, it has given the Martins an open-mindedness that has allowed them to build a collection replete with aesthetically and historically valuable works of art. They have escaped the pitfalls of eclecticism largely because Mr. Martin is quick to admit that he is not an art historian. He has learned a great deal about those fields in which he has collected, but he has no pretension of being an expert in them. He does, however, know many of the experts, and he says that he uses them as dictionaries. He seeks their advice and opinions, but ultimately he depends on the judgment of his eye. Usually the curatorial appraisal and his sensitive eye are in accord, but on one occasion—when he showed an art historian the Limoges enamel hunting horn (see pages 156-157)—he trusted his eye rather than desist from purchasing what the expert deemed a fake. Since its acquisition the horn has been fully authenticated, and Mr. Martin learned that it had been in the possession of man-of-letters Horace Walpole in the eighteenth century.

It is very fitting that Walpole, an antiquarian, art historian, and inveterate collector of "Valuables and Ornamental Items," owned one of the Guennol pieces, since the Martins think their holdings are similar to those of this illustrious Englishman. There is, however, an outstanding difference: Walpole hoarded his possessions in his Twickenham mansion for his own enjoyment, whereas the Martins have generously shared most of their superb works of art with the public by lending them to the Metropolitan Museum and The Cloisters, The Brooklyn Museum, and other institutions in New York City. We are honored, therefore, to give our Centennial public their first opportunity to see the Guennol Collection as a whole.

THOMAS P. F. HOVING, Director

Trinity Enthroned. From the illuminated manuscript The Hours of Catherine of Cleves. Netherlandish, about 1440. Tempera, gold, and silver on vellum, 7 3/8 x 5 3/8 inches. All the objects illustrated in this article were lent by Mr. and Mrs. Alastair Bradley Martin. SL 69.82.7, G-fol. 82
**Grasshopper.** *Egyptian, late XVIII Dynasty. Painted ivory and wood, length 3½ inches. SL 69.40.4*

![Grasshopper Image]

This grasshopper is actually a box: its two sets of wings open to reveal a small cavity in the body in which kohl (eye paint) could be kept. It is an example of the small toilet articles shaped like plants and animals popular in the late Eighteenth Dynasty. According to John D. Cooney, who published this piece in The Brooklyn Museum *Bulletin* in 1948, it was probably made about 1350-1340 B.C., during the reign of the luxury-loving Tut-ankh-Amun. It displays superb craftsmanship in its construction and decoration: the body is skillfully carved from a single piece of ivory.

The piece is unusual in the occurrence of many protruding parts: outstretched wings (their checkerboard pattern is the Egyptian craftsman's translation of a living grasshopper's irregular markings into his own idiom of conventionalized design); antennae of opaque turquoise-blue glass, fragments of which remain; and dangling legs, indicated by six holes in the lower thorax. The legs were not meant for support, for on the underside of the head are the remains of a wooden peg that probably was attached to a base, which enabled the box to stand upright when not in use. The piece was obviously designed to be viewed from several angles, and sculpture intended to be seen in the round is also uncommon in Egyptian art.

**Plate.** *Attic, late VI century B.C. Terracotta, diameter 4½ inches. L 48.35.2*

On the floor of this plate an Amazon is shown carrying a dead companion on her left shoulder. Modeled on the scene of Ajax carrying the body of Achilles, this subject occurs on Amazon vases as early as the second quarter of the sixth century B.C. and continues sporadically until the end of the sixth century, sometimes as part of a battle scene, at other times as a composition in itself. One of the three Greek inscriptions in the background, repeated in the exergue, says “the boy is handsome.” The others are more specific and read “Melo is beautiful” (along the back and legs of the fallen Amazon) and “Korone is beautiful” (between the legs of her companion). Korone is also called beautiful on a black-figured lekythos in Lyons that has been attributed to near the Sappho Painter, and she is depicted on a red-figured cup in Berlin, the name-piece of the Thalia Painter. There her dress, action, and company make it clear that she was a hetaira, and the name, which means “crow,” was a common one in her profession. Melo is not shown on other vases, but is also known as the name of a hetaira. The name is connected with the Greek word for “apple.”

The underside of the plate is carefully turned. Two holes in the rim allowed the plate to be suspended when not in use. It is said to have been found many years ago in a tomb in Attica, together with a black-figured loutrophoros (a funerary vase) and another plate, decorated with a gorgoneion.
The popularity of hunting scenes as subjects for the decoration of silver plates in the Sasanian period is well illustrated by a number of examples in museums throughout the world. The archer in this scene sits astride an Arabian camel holding his bow ready to loose an arrow at the gazelles. Behind him is a small female who carries his quiver. The archer’s crown or headdress consists of a row of discs resting on a pearled band. His long hair falls in curls beside his face and a ball covered with a silk cloth rises above his head. He wears earrings, a necklace, shoulder straps that meet in a central roundel, a belt wound around his waist, and a sword belt around his hips. In all these details and in the style and fall of his garments, the figure is typical of a Sasanian king and not a noble or god. But if this is a king, he is not one who can be identified by his crown. There are no parallels on Sasanian coins for this crown. The closest is that of a late Sasanian queen Buran whose crown has discs but is otherwise totally different. Discs also decorate the bottom rim of tall caps worn by priests on Sasanian seals, and by the queen of Bahram II (A.D. 276-293) on a vessel with representations of that king and his family. Discs as ornaments on headgear were, therefore, used by Sasanian royalty and dignitaries from early times.

The scene represented here is familiar to us from later Islamic sources. The Sasanian king Bahram V or Bahram Gur (A.D. 420-438), taunted by his favorite, Azadeh, changed a male gazelle to a female and a female to a male and pinned the foot of another gazelle to its ear. The first two feats, which are the only ones illustrated here, the king accomplished by removing the horns from a male animal with a single arrow and by shooting two additional arrows into the head of a female.
to represent horns. Illustrations of this same story exist in Sasanian glyptic art and on two silver plates, one possibly late Sasanian, the other post-Sasanian, in Lenin-
grad’s Hermitage Museum. In no instance is the crown worn that of Bahram Gur. The Guennol plate is the only rendering of this subject that, on technical and stylistic grounds, might be dated to the fifth century and the time of Bahram Gur. If this is not Bahram Gur, and the king here certainly does not wear the official crown depicted on Bahram Gur’s coins, then it must be some other royal figure.

The plate is made from a single silver shell to which separate pieces were added to form the highest parts of the relief. Such high pieces were either slightly raised by hammering or, possibly, carved solid. In both cases the parts were crimped in place and fastened under a narrow lip of metal cut from the shell. The rest of the design was either chased or engraved on the plate or carved in relief by slightly reducing the background surface. The rim of the vessel and the design, with the exception of the human faces and hands, are mercury gilded. Inside the ring foot, which is soldered to the reverse, is a dotted Pahlevi inscription giving the name Tahmak, according to Richard N. Frye.

ABOVE RIGHT

Rhyton. Iranian (Sasanian), vi or vii century. Silver, gilded, height 9\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches. L 60.20

Vessels in the shape of animals or parts of animals have a long history and were used for many millennia in the Near East before the Islamic era. This head of a saiga antelope, although it appears to be a sculpture in the round, was used to hold and pour liquid: there is a round hole behind the lyre-shaped horns and a short spout protrudes from the mouth. The piece comes from Iran, although its exact provenance is unknown. It is dated to the end of the Sasanian period in the sixth or seventh century A.D. largely because of the floral pattern on the plate at the back of the head and the strikingly unrealistic treatment of the head itself, the narrow elongation of the nose, the lines around the almond-shaped eyes, and the rigid whorl of hair on the lower jaw. There are a few other complete vessel-sculptures of animals or animal and human figures, including two representing less stylized saigas, also silver-gilt and dating from the Sasanian period.

The Guennol saiga is made of a number of separate pieces, such as the ears and hollow horns. At the back of the head, the plate with the floral design was soldered into place. As is usual on Sasanian silver objects, parts of the piece are mercury gilded, and there is a Pahlevi inscription under the animal’s chin.
Two torques and four coins. Celtic, about 75-50 B.C. Torques: gold, diameters 73/4 and 43/4 inches; coins: electrum, diameters approximately 3/8 inch. L. 53.43.1-11

Accidentally unearthed by foresters in 1864 near Frasnes-lez-Buissenal in southern Belgium, these torques and coins are part of the Frasnes hoard. They are Celtic, and the coins, associated with the Morini and Nervii tribes, are dated about 75-50 B.C. The torques are now thought to be from this period too.

Torques of bronze or silver were commonly worn by Celtic warriors, and many have been preserved. Mr. and Mrs. Martin's gold torques, however, are rare indeed and were probably worn by people of high rank. They are made of gold sheets formed around an iron core; wax and resin were stuffed into the thin space between the gold and iron.

The larger torque, of unusually high quality, shows fine workmanship: its repoussé design of rams' heads with spiral horns and two other stylized animals are beautifully conceived and executed. The scrolls that form a lyre pattern are typical of Celtic design. It has been suggested that the undecorated, smaller torque was made for a woman or adolescent.

In addition to the four shown here, the Guennol Collection contains five more of the fifty-two coins from the Frasnes hoard. Typical examples of Celtic money, they are made of electrum, an alloy of gold and silver, and are stamped on one side with a stylized galloping horse.

This piece represents a type of statue that originated in the Auvergne and spread to neighboring provinces. The Auvergne, a mountainous region in southern France, is known for its conservatism, and these Madonnas are conservative too, in their adherence to an eleventh-century type—some “Auvergne Madonnas” are even dated to the thirteenth century—and in their use as objects of worship.

In sculptures of this type, the Madonna is not seen in her human capacity but as the Throne of Wisdom: the Christ child sits stiffly in a frontal position in the center of her lap, just as if he were seated on a throne. The Virgin’s head is emphasized: here, for instance, it is large in comparison with her body and delicately modeled. The head is often in better condition than the rest of the statue because it was not only painted more carefully but made of higher quality wood; it is joined to the torso by a dowel. The regularity of features, fine stylization of drapery, and tightly controlled design of the hair are all typical of this style.

These carvings were objects of great veneration: as cult images they were sometimes used in religious processions and some, such as the one at the pilgrimage center of Notre Dame du Puy, were associated with miracles. These truly hieratic images are Western art’s closest counterpart to Byzantine icons or sacred pictures.
Triptych. Mosan, about 1160. Oak, champlevé enamel on copper-gilt, émail brun, and silver-gilt, height 11½ inches. L 51.1

This artfully enameled triptych once bore a relic of the True Cross in the central cavity now covered by glass; the idea related to such relics—the redemption of man—is the theme portrayed. It is the Day of Judgment: on each side panel, angels sound trumpets announcing the rising of the dead, and in the lunette above the central panel Christ appears as the compassionate, redeeming Son of Man rather than as judge. Justice is the judgment figure here: she holds the scales on which man’s deeds are symbolized by three weights. Truth and Judgment, who call for man to be judged by his actions, stand on either side of the cavity, while Mercy and Piety, pleading for his salvation, kneel beneath Justice and hold up her scales. Outside Justice’s mandorla are busts of Almsgiving and Prayer as well as heads representing mankind, whose salvation is at stake.

The floral pattern on the reverse of the side panels was executed in the émail brun technique. An application of linseed oil to the heated copper formed a brown film; this film was partly removed to show the design in copper, which was then gilded. Art historians agree that this triptych is Mosan (from the area of the middle reaches of the Meuse River). Exactly where and by whom it was made is uncertain—it has been attributed to ateliers in Stavelot and Maastricht—but there is no doubt that the Martins own a splendid example of the small reliquaries cherished by worshipers in the Middle Ages.
Head of a Buddhist deity. *Japanese, Kamakura period, late xii-xiv centuries. Wood with traces of polychrome and gilding, height 27½ inches. SL 69.40.25a*

In the Kamakura period, Buddhism had become the religion of the people and was no longer the exclusive property of the court and monastery. New sects were established, and Zen was introduced when associations with China were renewed. Temples in Nara, which had been destroyed by war, were rebuilt and skilled sculptors were in great demand – some were brought from China – to fill these houses of worship with religious art.

Realism and naturalism, which assumed prominent roles in the sculptural style of this era, are evident in this work. Head ornaments of separate pieces of metal and a technique of portraying the eyes, known as gyokugan, appeared in this period. Instead of painted eyes, rock-crystal segments were set into the sockets from inside, as in this head, and the pupils were then painted from the inside. The eyes of this deity not only flash with vigor but are also bloodshot. The impression of strength is enhanced by the larger-than-life size and the simplicity and forcefulness of the carving.

Section from a handscroll of animal caricatures. *Japanese, Fujiwara-Kamakura periods, xii-xiv centuries. Ink on paper, 11¾ x 21¾ inches. SL 69.40.24*

There are four unsigned scrolls that, despite the variations in their style of painting, are traditionally attributed to the artist Kakuyu (1053-1140), a painter-monk also known as Toba Sojo. Authorities have placed these narrative paintings at the end of the Fujiwara period or in the Kamakura period.

One theory holds that these are works of social satire, another that they are pointed anticlerical documents. With no text accompanying the paintings one may speculate freely on their implications.

The scroll segment belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Martin is alive with fun and satire, and the animals, drawn with a freedom new to this period, show human expressions and actions. The deer appears to be escaping, pursued by a monkey carefully donning his hat before giving chase. A rabbit and another monkey are consoling the monkey whom the deer has just thrown: his hat is falling off and he looks as though his feelings are hurt. The landscape is used only as an indication of the setting and is done in the painting style of the narrative scrolls of the time. The facility and expressiveness of the ink drawing are an outcome of the skill perfected in the commission of Buddhist copybooks.
Hedgehog cup. Swiss (Zurich), 1522. Wood and silver-gilt, height 10 inches. SL 69.82.6a,b

Opposite Page

Hunting horn (reverse), and detail of the front, showing St. Hubert in the forest of Ardennes. French (Limoges), 1538. Enamel and silver on cow horn, length 12 inches. L 54.4

Also included in Mr. and Mrs. Martin’s collection are European works of art of the Renaissance period. The two examples shown here are characteristic of Swiss and French tastes during the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

The supercilious hedgehog is one of those naturally shaped drinking cups much in vogue in Switzerland. Their forms were chosen as puns on the owner’s name, or as allusions to house signs or guild emblems.

According to the inscription on the gilt band around the neck, the cup “came from old master Staﬀen Zaeller. 1522. [who] chose me as a welcome.” Like other cups of this type the hedgehog was designed to sit on its hind legs; the oval gilt base was added in 1611 by goldsmith Kaspar Zeller, a member of the same Zurich family as Stephen Zeller. Perhaps it was Kaspar who also added the escutcheon (whose design is considerably later than 1522), bearing the arms granted to Stephen Zeller in 1517.

Whereas this Swiss drinking cup has a single-mindedly popular appeal, the masterfully executed enameled hunting horn, signed LEONARDVS LEMOVICVS [Léonard Limousin of Limoges], is typical of French court art, though it is the only known example of a horn decorated with enamel. Dated 1538, it was made at a period when Limousin had first formulated his individual style, following initial attempts to emulate Dürer, and before the influence of the Italian artists at the court of Fontainebleau changed his style. There are four hunting scenes separated by narrow silver bands, painted in opaque and translucent enamel, and graded in scale to ﬁt the curvature and narrowing circumference of the horn. The major scene represents St. Hubert, patron saint of the hunt, in the forest of Ardennes, with the vision of a stag bearing a cruciﬁx between its antlers appearing to him.

The reverse of the horn is more subtly colored than the front. Its grisaille painting shows once more the astounding technical perfection of Limousin’s art. There are portraits of Cleopatra and of a Roman emperor, typical of the conventional imagery of the Limoges enamelers.

This exceedingly rare hunting horn formed part of the famous collection of Horace Walpole, who had acquired it about 1750. At the time his collection was dispersed, the horn was considered important enough to be illustrated as well as fully described in The Valuable Contents of Strawberry Hill. It was listed as lot 48 and sold on April 25, 1842.

Photographs at right: Charles Uht
Man-jaguar. Mexican (Olmec). Polished black stone, height 5 3/4 inches. SL 69.46

At the rise of civilization in Peru and Mexico more than three thousand years ago, the first great deity to be represented was the mysterious jaguar being. He appears in the elaborately stylized art of Peru as the human, animal, or bird form with feline attributes that is the theme of most Chavín sculpture (1000-300 B.C.). In the more naturalistic contemporaneous Olmec style of southeastern Mexico he is usually depicted as part-human, part-jaguar. Such dual images, as well as many more realistic Olmec figures, may not represent aspects of the jaguar deity directly but rather symbolic portraits of ruler-priests believed to have powers of transformation.

Broken at the waist, the figure may have been in one of the traditional Olmec kneeling poses, seated cross-legged or on a bench, or standing. The position of the arms holding a plummed or tasseled object, often seen in early Maya jades and stelae, is unknown in Olmec art except in a hillside bas-relief at Chalcatzingo in central Mexico. The costume and the shape of the head and facial features are unique. Even the size is unusual: only a few Olmec stone figures are known in the range between full-size sculpture and lapidary work.

So rare an object is hard to date precisely. It may be a creation of the little-known time between 600 and 100 B.C., when the ancient Olmec art style and beliefs were slowly changing before crystalizing into the regional variations of the Classic period.

O P P O S I T E  P A G E

Fragmentary head. Nigerian (Ife), XIII-XIV century. Terracotta, height 6 inches. SL 69.40.40a

The first example of the medieval African style of Ife known to have been seen by Europeans, this head from the Guennol Collection appeared a decade before the Frobenius expedition to Ife in 1910, which brought seven complete clay heads to Germany. Almost all the other known Ife sculptures are still in Nigeria.

Representations of people have a long tradition in African art, but all other African schools, both ancient and recent, preferred a more geometric stylization of the human form than is evident in this head. The necks of most Ife heads, including this one, have horizontal bands of fat, still a mark of beauty at Ife. Unique to medieval Ife is the soft, lifelike modeling of both bronze and clay heads, whose subtle facial curves are enhanced by the rippling pattern of parallel lines covering the entire face except the mouth. Royalty were often depicted with such vertical striations. Although these incised lines apparently represent scarifications, they also suggest the veil of beads worn by the Oni, or king of Ife, to hide his face from the gaze of ordinary subjects. Clay and bronze portraits of the Oni, however, usually include a beaded crown, absent in this head. The Oni, believed to be descended from the gods, was spiritual leader of all Yoruba peoples of western Nigeria and neighboring Dahomey, and evidently possessed the finest court atelier of medieval Africa, centuries before the rise of the famed kingdom of Benin. This head may have formed part of a group of figures portraying hierarchical court scenes, as are found in more recent West African kingdoms. The regal serenity expressed in this rare head well befits an idealized portrait of a noble in the court of Ife. It embodies the best qualities of classic Ife style as beautifully as does any other known piece, notwithstanding its fragmentary condition.
Man with Grapes. American (Maine), xix century. Painted wood, bone, wire, height 15 inches. SL 69.40.43

The Man with Grapes was found in Wells, Maine, where very likely it was made as a barroom figure or tavern sign. This stylized subject is typical of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century shop symbols made by talented but un schooled craftsmen. The figure is made of wood painted a dark green with bone inset for the eyes and wire branches holding the cluster of grapes together.

The sculptor demonstrated familiarity with an early tradition for the subject, contemporary inspiration for the outfit the man wears, and a primitivism popular through the nineteenth century in his rendering of detail. Men with grapes were used on tavern signs for eighteenth-century English pubs: two men carrying an enlarged cluster of grapes between them were shown as an illustration of the biblical tale of Two Spies from the history of Moses (Num. XIII, 23). Reducing the subject to a single man was a logical simplification by someone acquainted with the earlier sign but not its symbolism. In spite of the stylization, the clothing reflects male fashions of the 1870s. The short jacket with padded shoulders, the tight trousers, the boots with squared toes and high heels resemble designs in fashion plates early in that decade. The artist concentrated on abstracting the masses of the man’s clothing rather than on the facts of anatomy. He has achieved a powerful, simple statement that is American folk art at its best.