



'Such magnificence left me bewildered' Dresden's Gemäldegalerie

'The Royal Picture Gallery in Dresden is undoubtedly a trove of art treasures by the greatest masters that perhaps surpasses all the galleries of the world' – these were the words Johann Joachim Winckelmann wrote in 1755.¹ Even before that, in 1749, he had told his friend Konrad Friedrich Uden how impressed he was, stating: 'The Royal Picture Gallery is [...] the most beautiful in the world.'²

By the second half of the 18th century, Dresden's Gemäldegalerie was already a famous attraction that drew artists, intellectuals, and cultured travellers from all over Europe. Indeed, within a short period of time, its reputation had become legendary. This is all the more striking, as the collection, with its breathtaking quality, was essentially the result of only around 50 years of intense collecting activity that would continue to reverberate for centuries.

The beginnings of the 'Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister', as we know and admire it today, have their roots in the Kunstkammer of Elector August I of Saxony, who, in 1560, started collecting remarkable objects – curiosities – from the natural world, from the arts, the decorative arts, and from the sciences, specifically technical instruments. 'He was intently practical and prudent, enterprising – to the point of being brutally so – and very diligent in extending and consolidating his position of power. There was virtually nothing artistic about his character. [...] With the result that his Kunstkammer was mainly intended to be an institution that, with its riches and great variety, could represent glory and power in an impressive fashion.'³

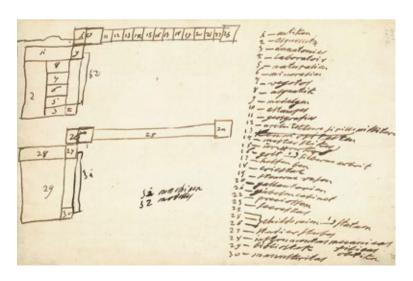
This idea continued to motivate the successive electors in their collecting activities. They, too, sought to increase the eminence of their dynasty (the Albertine line of the House of Wettin), and substantiate the Wettin's claim to power in the melee of European princes through the splendour of their precious collections. The most important paintings in this early Kunstkammer were works by Hans Bol, Lucas Cranach (both Elder and Younger), and Albrecht Dürer. Although some important paintings were acquired under the electors of the 17th century, it was Friedrich August I, Saxon elector from 1694 and - as August II (or rather 'Augustus the Strong') - King of Poland from 1697, who intensified the collection activities to an unprecedented degree. This king, who became known as 'the Strong' on account of his physical strength, purchased Roman antiquities, East-Asian porcelain, masterpieces of treasury art, and precious paintings, procured for him in Italy, Flanders, and the Netherlands on a grand scale. For example, Sleeping Venus, painted by Giorgione with the assistance of the young Titian, was just one of the fifteen paintings that the art dealer Charles Le Roy from Amsterdam delivered to the electoral Kunstkammer in 1699.

Collecting on a scale of this magnitude was only possible because the Electorate of Saxony was one of the wealthiest regions in the Holy Roman Empire. Rich reserves of valuable ores and minerals, a location at the crossing point of two important cross-continental trade routes of Europe, as well as, from the 18th century, certain highly developed manufactories, most notably of porcelain, contributed to the country's continuing prosperity.

Reorganization of the Collections under Augustus the Strong

In 1707 Augustus the Strong had the painting collection splintered off from the overall holdings of the Royal Collections, with the best paintings going on show in their own exhibition room in the palace. They were subsequently transferred in 1718 to the Redoutensaal (ball room), before making their way to the Riesensaal, or 'Giant Gallery', and adjacent rooms in 1726. The other objects in the Kunstkammer now formed the foundations of Dresden's other famous collections, such as the Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault), the Porzellansammlung, the Kupferstich-Kabinett with its drawings and prints, the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon with its historical scientific instruments and timepieces, and the Skulpturensammlung. For as early as 1717, Augustus the Strong, presumably inspired by impressions gained on his travels, had drawn up a 'functional sketch' for the division of the collection.⁴ The display criteria were now the collection items themselves and no longer historical classification or authorship. Subsequently, the ancient marbles were assigned to the collection of modern sculptures, and Chinese and Japanese porcelain was merged with the newly produced, precious Meissen wares.⁵

Augustus the Strong, sketch for an ideal museum building, c. 1717 Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden



Augustus the Strong's Collection of Paintings

Overseen by Baron Raymond Leplat, the king introduced a targeted acquisitions policy for masterworks of painting with the aim of significantly increasing the holdings he had inherited, both in terms of number and quality. The painting collection soon achieved a calibre that allowed for favourable comparison with other royal courts in Europe. With this targeted approach, Augustus the Strong collected Venetian masters including Giorgione, Titian, and Palma Il Vecchio; Bolognese artists, such as Francesco Albani, Agostino and Annibale Carracci, Domenichino, and Guido Reni; artists of the French school, such as Jean Marc Nattier, Nicolas Poussin, Simon Vouet, and Antoine Watteau; Flemish masters, such as Gillis van Coninxloo, Anthony van Dyck, Peter Paul Rubens, David Teniers the Younger, and Marten van Valckenborch the Elder: Dutch painters, such as Gerard ter Borch, Rembrandt, Matthias Stom, Adriaen van der Werff, and Philips Wouwerman, with a particular importance placed on the 'Fine Painters' (Fijnschilders) Gerrit Dou, Gabriel Metsu, Willem van Mieris, and Caspar Netscher. Furthermore, important works by the Spaniard Jusepe de Ribera and Joseph Heintz the Elder of Switzerland also found their way into the collection.

August III and the Emergence of the Gemäldegalerie as a Picture Gallery for Visitors

When Prince-Elector Friedrich August II took the throne after his father's death in 1733, he followed in his predecessor's footsteps not just politically but also as a patron of the arts. As his father before him, he was crowned King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1734 (thus ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) and, in these functions, bore the name of August III.

August III's collecting interests were particularly focused on drawings, copperplate engravings, and paintings. During his grand tour from 1717 to 1718, which took him through the Holy Roman Empire, Switzerland, France, and as far as Naples, he acquired considerable expertise and can still be regarded as one of the most important art collectors of the 18th century. As a genuine connoisseur of painting, he had a precise concept for the future development of the Electoral Collections and began the systematic expansion of the Gemäldegalerie's collection.

He had inherited a number of important paintings from his father, such as Sleeping Venus by Giorgione and Titian, Albani's Galatea on a Shell Chariot, Van Dyck's Drunken Silenus, The Realm of Flora by Poussin, Rembrandt's The Wedding Feast of Samson, and Reni's Christ with the Crown of Thorns. This had established the standard of quality that the son not only aimed at continuing but even exceeding. August III was especially fascinated by the art of Italy. He admired the art of the Venetians and their colorito sophistication and purchased masterworks by Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, as well as Palma il Vecchio, Francesco, Jacopo, and Leandro Bassano, Canaletto and Bellotto. His collection activities also focused on painting from the Emilia – especially the school of Bologna – with important groups of works by Francesco Albani, the late Guercino, Correggio, the Carraccis, Parmigianino, and Guido Reni.

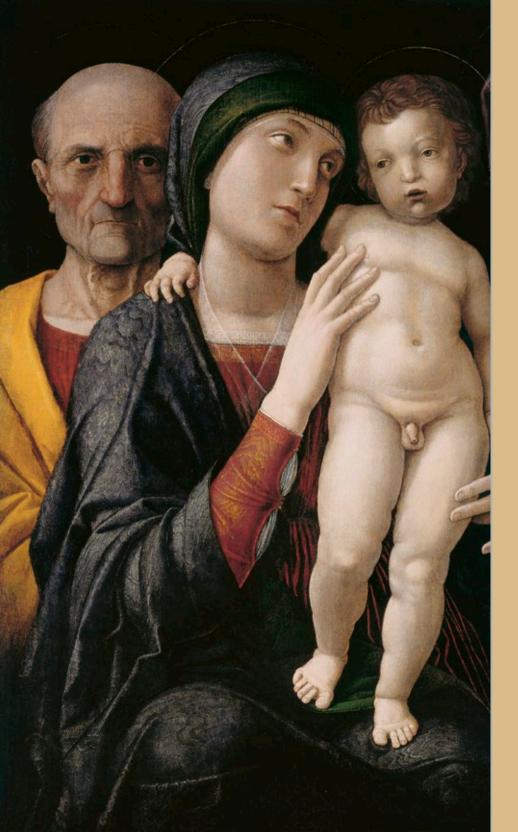


Anton Raphael Mengs
Friedrich August II, Elector of Saxony,
as Augustus III, King of Poland
(1696–1763), 1745
Pastel on paper, 55.5×42 cm
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

In keeping with the tastes of the 18th century, the collection's core was formed by the works of artists schooled on Raphael and Correggio as well as Titian – a mature, highly developed style of painting of the 16th and 17th century with clear figural outline, definition, and strikingly rich palettes. In contrast, the art of the early Italians of the 14th and 15th century was considered crude and therefore held in much lower esteem.

However, August III was not only interested in Italian art – he also acquired splendid French, German, Flemish, Dutch, and Spanish paintings by artists as diverse as Van Eyck, Dürer, Holbein, Lancret, Lorrain, Murillo, Poussin, Ribera, Rubens, Rembrandt, Ruisdael, Velázquez, Vermeer, and Watteau. Augustus the Strong had, furthermore, been extremely fond of small-scale Dutch and Flemish cabinet paintings and his son also shared this penchant. He too acquired a considerable number of works by the Leiden 'Fine Painters', including Gerrit Dou, Gabriel Metsu, Frans and Willem van Mieris, and Caspar Netscher who worked in The Hague. The quality of these works still surprises us today and is an indication of the connoisseurship of the king and his art-buying agents.

Another of August III's great passions was pastel painting. A special room, the Pastel Cabinet, was therefore set aside for the large and important collection of works in this genre in the Stallgebäude (the former royal mews). At the heart of the Pastel Cabinet were 157 pastels by Rosalba Carriera, making Dresden home to the largest collection of works by this female Venetian painter. In addition, the pastel collection possessed outstanding works by other artists, such as Jean-Étienne Liotard, Anton Raphael Mengs, and Maurice Quentin de la Tour. The Dresden Pastel Cabinet has remained in this form to this day, making it unique for the quality and breadth of its holdings.



Italian School

In the new hang, each of the three main Italian galleries is dedicated to a prominent aspect of the collection of Italian masters. One gallery is devoted to Renaissance altarpieces and features Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, one of the most iconic paintings of the period. His canvas is joined by four altarpieces by Correggio, as well as others. Another entire gallery is dedicated to Venetian painting of the 16th century, where visitors can see Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* alongside masterpieces by Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese. The last major gallery, the Baroque Gallery, features the emotionally charged canvases of 'the long 17th century', starting with Annibale Carracci and ending with Sebastiano Conca.

Branching off these three main exhibition rooms, the cabinet galleries present a chronological survey of the history of Italian art, starting with panel paintings on gold grounds from the 14th century. Works by Renaissance artists such as Antonello da Messina and Botticelli exemplify the newly discovered laws of perspective and formal innovations in the articulation of the figure. The stress Renaissance artists placed on harmony is countered by Mannerism, as typified by Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Rose*, with its more dynamic vernacular and figural conceptions. Completing the display are magnificent examples of Baroque art, featuring, for the first time, a cabinet show of genre scenes and still lifes. Two additional cabinet galleries trace the evolution of the devotional image and the portrait in Italian art.

The exhibition continues on the second floor with works from the 18th century. The central gallery is dedicated to Bernardo Bellotto (called Canaletto) and his famous views of Dresden and nearby Pirna. The five side galleries on this upper floor bring together works of the late Baroque and Rococo, representing the schools of Venice, Bologna, Rome, and Naples, including many by the then-living artists particularly appreciated by Friedrich August II. Rosalba Carriera occupies a prominent position in the Pastel Cabinet, as the Saxon elector owned the largest collection of works by the celebrated female artist. | AH



Giotto (Workshop)

Saint John the Baptist in Prison

c. 1330/1335Poplar panel; 89.5×44 cm Purchased from the Woodburn Collection, London, in 1860 Gal. no. 5

Giotto is the great innovator of painting. He lent the figures a true inner life for the first time and expressed the most varied feelings, such as joy, humility, dismay or mourning, in their gestures. His buildings demonstrate structures of spatial depth, even if these are not yet designed in accordance with the laws of central perspective, which would only be discovered a century later.

The panel is one of the oldest works of the museum. It shows Saint John the Baptist, who is viewed as the last prophet. When King Herod imprisoned him, John sent two disciples to Christ to ascertain that he was the Messiah. The painting portrays the return of the disciples, who tell him of the miracles of Christ (Matthew II: 2–I5). They, like John the Baptist, are distinguished by haloes, whereby the main figure remains clearly distinguishable by the elevated position. It is innovative how the painter makes clear in the gestures, the postures of the heads and the directions of the gazes, that the three are engaged in a dialogue. Giotto embroiders the scene as a narrative with the soldiers and the woman bringing food, and with the curious figure on the balcony. Also new is the physicality of the figures, apparent beneath the robes.

Traditional, on the other hand, is the painting on gold. This was reserved for the representation of divine persons and biblical stories, because naturalistic backgrounds only asserted themselves in the 15th century. | AH



Antonello da Messina

Messina c. 1430-1479 Messina

Saint Sebastian

c. 1478
Inscription bottom left on cartellino: [Antone]ll[us] [m]essaneus
Oil on panel, transferred to canvas; 171×85.5 cm
Purchased from the Endris Collection, Vienna, in 1873
Gal. no. 52

Antonello shows the martyr of Saint Sebastian, captain in the Praetorian Guard of the Roman emperor Diocletian (3rd century). Accused of helping persecuted Christians, Sebastian was sentenced to death. Although pierced by arrows, he miraculously survived. Rather than showing Sebastian's suffering, Antonello has instead focussed on his near-transfigured appearance. The upright pose of his beautiful body culminates in a heavenward gaze. Here the artist alludes to his salvation through divine grace: his martyrdom, often referred to as a second baptism, a baptism in blood, will be rewarded with a place in heaven.

The altarpiece was painted for the Scuola di San Rocco, a religious confraternity in Venice, founded in 1478, when the plague claimed the lives of fifteen percent of the city's population. The centre of the altarpiece was formed by a sculpture of Saint Roch, flanked by two panels of Saint Christopher and Saint Sebastian. All three saints were invoked for protection from the Black Death.

The painting is a remarkable testament to the art of the early Renaissance and shows off the artistic innovations of the age. The monumentalization of the figure is balanced by the delicate modelling of the saint's flesh, conveyed even under such dazzling light. Antonello has kept the viewing angle extremely low to display his skill in the dramatic recession of the building's facades. This panel is regarded as one of the artist's most important works. | AH



Veronese

Verona 1528-1588 Venice

The Adoration of the Magi

c. 1571 Oil on canvas; 206×455 cm Purchased from the Ducal Gallery, Modena, in 1746 Gal. no. 225 Along with Titian and Tintoretto, Veronese formed the triumvirate of painters that dominated 16th-century Venetian art. The *Cuccina Cycle* is one of his key works, painted in 1571 for the ballroom of the Palazzo of the Cuccinas, a merchant family of clothiers, on the Canale Grande. The series consists of three other large paintings: *The Wedding at Cana*, *Christ Bearing the Cross*, and *The Madonna and the Cuccina Family*.

All but the family portrait are devoted to stations in the life of Christ. The Adoration is the earliest scene in the cycle. According to the Gospels, wise men from the East presented gifts to the newborn Christ Child (Matthew 2: I-I2). Throughout the Middle Ages, the wise men evolved in legend into the three kings Gaspar (or Casper), Melchior, and Balthazar, often said to hail from the continents Africa, Asia, and Europe. The light of the star that has led them to Bethlehem now radiates off the Virgin and Infant. The oldest wise man genuflects to humbly kiss the Child's foot. Typical of Veronese's art is his manner of embellishing the main narrative with several minor, extra-biblical scenes. These include the two servants stowing away the box and the shepherds with ox and donkey. Further narrative elements take the form of the kings' exotic corteges, the young pages, and animals. With impasto brushwork, Veronese strikingly captures the materiality of the figures' clothing – particularly of interest to the Cuccinas, who made their fortune in the textile trade. | AH



Francesco Montemezzano

Verona 1555-1602 Venice

Reception of Maria of Spain by the Ragazzoni Family in 1581

c. 1583

Fresco, transferred to canvas; 463×415 cm Acquired as a bequest from Karl August Lingner, Dresden, in 1916 Gal. no. 248 A

On 20 September 1581, Giacomo Ragazzoni received Maria of Spain (1528–1603), widow of Emperor Maximilian II, at his palace at Sacile. To commemorate this important event in the family's history, a fresco was commissioned for the banqueting hall of Palazzo Ragazzoni. It was one of a cycle of six, portraying important events in the life of the owner.

A fresco is created by painting directly onto the damp surface of a freshly plastered wall. As the plaster dries, the pigments are indelibly absorbed into the plaster. Using the *strappo* technique, this thin topmost coloured layer can be detached from the render on the wall and transferred to a new support, such as canvas.

In this group portrait we see the empress, dressed in black and accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting, greeting the master of the house, who is bowing deeply. Next to him, his wife Piccabella is pointing to their two sons. Their eleven daughters are all dressed in white, and the youngest is carried by a nurse maid. Their curious hairstyles, with locks of hair twisted up to resemble a pair of horns, were indeed fashionable at the time. The three eldest daughters are clearly portrayed as married women, wearing more elaborate clothes and jewellery. Behind them stand their husbands. (In fact, the third-oldest daughter, Claudia, was only married in 1583, and so her husband's appearance in the fresco is anachronistic.) Immediately to the right, next to the master of the house, are his brothers Placido and Gerolamo. Gerolamo was a priest, as shown by his attire.



Annibale Carracci

Bologna 1560-1609 Rome

Saint Roch Distributing Alms

1594/95 Oil on canvas; 331×477 cm Purchased from the Ducal Gallery, Modena, in 1746 Gal. no. 305

The painting was commissioned by the Confraternity of Saint Roch in Reggio Emilia. It depicts a scene from the life of the saint, active around 1300. The young Roch donated his entire inheritance to the poor in Montpellier. He stands above the crowd before a row of columns, handing out gold coins. The plight of the poor is obvious. They are thronged in front of the saint, some on tiptoe, and look up at him beseechingly with outstretched arms. The sense of urgency is heightened by the sick man being wheeled in a cart, in the lower right. In stark contrast to this dramatic scene, in the left foreground of the picture a sense of calm has set in. Those who have received alms appear filled with childlike joy or silent gratitude, some are eagerly counting their coins.

With this history painting, Annibale Carracci demonstrated for the Confraternity of Saint Roch the meaning of charity in Christ's sense, when he said: 'Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth' (Luke 12: 33).

Annibale Carracci was a vanguard figure of Baroque art in Bologna. This canvas was quickly heralded as a milestone of its genre for its compositional density and rich blend of narrative threads. It has entered the annals of art history as the first large-scale, multifigure history painting of the Baroque era. AH



The Netherlandish School

The paintings of the Flemish and Dutch Baroque came to Dresden through the bold and far-reaching collecting activities of Augustus the Strong and his son August III. With *Bathseba* and *Old Woman with a Basket of Coal*, the collection boasts two major works by Peter Paul Rubens, now on display in one of the main exhibition galleries alongside portraits and head studies by his pupil Anthony van Dyck. Also active in Antwerp at the same time as Rubens were Jacob Jordaens and Frans Snyders, renowned as painters of histories and market still lifes. Their large-scale paintings fill the walls of the first main gallery of Netherlandish masters. Joining their ranks are Flemish landscapes of the 17th century, starting with the *Landscape with the Judgement of Midas* by Gillis van Coninxloo and Karel van Mander.

A centrepiece of the gallery as a whole and of its new hang are six works by Rembrandt, the luminary of Dutch Baroque painting, including his *Self-Portrait with Saskia*. The third main exhibition gallery contains works by all Rembrandt's students, represented by some key paintings from their respective oeuvres. The Dutch Caravaggisti form a separate group of their own, with Honthorst and his *Dentist* the most notable on display.

The gallery owns two works by the Delft artist Johannes Vermeer: his early Caravaggesque painting *The Procuress* and later *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*. In theme, his work shows an affinity with the group of *fijnschilders* ('fine' painters) of Leiden, who are represented here in a rich collection, stunning in both quality and number. Dutch and Flemish masters of the art of cabinet painting, including Jan Brueghel the Elder, Jan Davidsz. de Heem, and Adriaen Brouwer, are on view in the cabinet galleries, with their works arranged according to genre: landscape, still life, or genre scene. And with the presentation of portraits and history paintings from the 16th century, a hitherto little-noticed part of the collection is now revealed in a new light.

Meanwhile, Jan van Eyck's unique triptych of the Virgin Mary, part of a small, interesting collection of 15th and early 16th century panel paintings, now finds a new home alongside the magnificent Brussels tapestries of the 'Old Passion'. | UN



Jan van Eyck

Maaseyck c. 1390/1399-1441 Bruges

Triptych with Madonna and Child, Saint Catherine, and Archangel Michael with Donor

1437

Inscription in groove on bottom panel's frame:
Johannes De eyck me fecit et cmplevit Anno DM M"CCCC"XXXVII. ALC IXH XAN
Oil on oak panel; 33×27.5 cm, left wing 33×14 cm, right wing 33×13.5 cm
First mentioned in the 1754 inventory
Gal. no. 799

The unusually small triptych is evocative of an intricate piece of goldsmithing and was made as an object of private devotion for one of Jan van Eyck's contemporaries. The view is of a church interior resembling a Romanesque basilica. Virgin and Christ Child are enthroned on the central panel, in the exact place where the lay altar would have been in a medieval church, facing the donor, supplicant in prayer on the inner panel on the left. In keeping with Christian colour symbolism, Mary's delicate figure is clad in a blue gown under a generous red cloak of cascading drapery. The right panel shows Saint Catherine of Alexandria with her identifying attributes: a crown, book, sword, and wheel. Rather tightly squeezed into the left aisle are the donor, dressed in the fashions of the court of the Burgundian Netherlands, and the Archangel Michael. With the shutters closed, the outer faces of the panels show the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel in an Annunciation scene, painted in grisaille to give the illusion of ivory or alabaster sculpture.

The composition of the triptych follows a complex geometric design that also includes the frames, painted and decorated with Latin inscriptions by Van Eyck himself. The texts used for the inscriptions on the altarpiece can be traced back to liturgical use in the church of Saint Donatian in Bruges during the 15th century – a church with which Jan van Eyck, who had resided in the city since 1432, had strong ties. | UN



Joos de Momper Antwerp 1564-1635 Antwerp

Mountain Landscape with Broken Tree Trunks in the River

c. 1618 Inscription bottom right: Mom[...] Oil on oak panel; 53×71.5 cm First mentioned in the 1754 inventory Gal. no. 870

This spectacular view of a mountain landscape, falling precipitously to the coast on the left of the picture, has been meticulously composed by Joos de Momper, down to the smallest detail. Following the traditional three-colour scheme of aerial perspective, the mountain ridges in the middle and far distance are clearly distinguished from the strange brown rock formations in the foreground. Precarious wood and stone bridges, shattered tree trunks, and treacherous paths pose real dangers for travellers through this inhospitable region. Dynamic contrasts of light and dark, large and small, near and far, heighten the dramatic effect. As Momper's contemporaries would have been well aware, this is not a realistic depiction of a geographic region, but an idealized image drawn from Momper's own experience of high mountains for the enjoyment of 'armchair travellers'. As such, it belongs to a painting tradition that stretches as far back as the famous landscape compositions of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Following the usual practice in Flemish workshops, the staffage figures are by another painter, in this case probably Jan Brueghel the Elder. | UN



Jan Wildens

Antwerpen 1584/1586-1653 Antwerpen

Winter Landscape with Hunter

1624
Inscription bottom left: JAN.WILDENS.FECIT.1624
Oil on canvas; 194×202 cm
First mentioned in the 1722–1728 inventory as a decoration for the Moritzburg hunting lodge near Dresden
Gal. no. 1133

Landscape painter Jan Wildens first surfaces in the historical records in the second decade of the 17th century, in his capacity as an assistant in Peter Paul Rubens's workshop, responsible for painting in the background landscapes in many of the most important histories by the great Antwerp master. Under the influence of Rubens, his painting style became more harmonious and monumental in scale. Even so, it was not until the mid-1620s, some time after his artistic collaboration with Rubens had come to an end, that Wildens accomplished his finest, independently executed landscapes.

The Dresden winter landscape – probably his best-known and most compelling composition – is, in every respect, exceptional within his oeuvre. Wildens depicts a hunter in the company of his hounds, a life-sized figure shown from an impressively close vantage point. He is walking through a winter scene dominated by a stand of trees, bare and compact, that fills the left half of the canvas. The cluster has a decorative character, almost like a still life, and provides a curious contrast to the mood of the flat, snow-covered landscape that stretches hazily into the distance. The elegant, young aristocrat, in an expensive fur coat and leather hat, presents the spectator with a slain brown hare. A Dutch poetry collection from the early 17th century draws parallels between the rabbit hunt and a suitor's pursuit of women. Therefore, Wildens's contemporaries might have also construed the overt display of the hare as an erotically charged allusion. | UN



Roelant Savery

Kortrijk c. 1576-1639 Utrecht

Before the Deluge

1620 Inscription bottom left: ROELANDT SAVERY . FE . 1620 . Oil on oak panel; 82×137 cm First mentioned in the 1754 inventory Gal. no. 932

Savery drew on the Old-Testament's Noah's Ark to combine animals in extraordinary diversity and number in a landscape painting. Beyond indigenous species, he shows interest in exotic beasts, reflecting contemporary tastes, reports from travelling Dutch and Flemish merchants and scientists, and illustrated animal books from the mid-16th century on. As a court painter to Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II for almost a decade (up to c. 1613), Savery visited imperial menageries in Prague, where he drew non-European animal species from life. In a woodland landscape Savery has gathered more than 150 recognizable species, mostly in pairs, resting in shade or congregating at pools. The imposing ark rises up in the blue-tinged distance. While animal pairs march onto the ark which will protect them from the flood, the animals in the foreground are still in a paradisiacal state, unconcerned about survival. The careful arrangement of specific species according to the chromatic accents of their plumage or fur unites the multipartite composition into an organic whole. The proud, long-maned, white horse in the central foreground was apparently modelled on the famous Spanish warhorse that Archduke Albrecht VII of Austria, regent of the Spanish Netherlands, lost to Maurice, Prince of Orange, during the 1600 Battle of Nieuwpoort. Savery has captured the elephants, ostriches, pelicans, and parrots in natural poses, clearly directly observed. By contrast, the rigid forms of the birds of prey, frozen in mid-flight, are not convincing and were obviously painted after stuffed specimens. | UN



The Spanish School

The Dresden Gemäldegalerie owns 34 Spanish works. Most of them date to the 17th century, when Spain's hegemony started to wane. But although the balance of power may have shifted away from Spain in favour of its northern rivals, the arts flourished, marking the Spanish Golden Age. The Dresden collection presents a quintessential survey of this school of painting, which is otherwise strikingly under-represented among museum collections in Germany, making the Gemäldegalerie unique. All the leading masters of the Spanish Baroque are represented, including three secure works by Diego Velázquez, previously in the ducal gallery of Modena and on view in Dresden since the 18th century. At that time his works were hardly known outside the royal collection of Spain. In addition, our collection of Spanish masters features three works by Bartolomé Estéban Murillo, two of which are on permanent display. Also on show at the Gemäldegalerie is one of the most important paintings in Francisco Zurbarán's oeuvre. That canvas once hung in the Galerie espagnole at the Louvre and was acquired at auction in 1853, when it went on sale in London along with other highcalibre works from the collection of the abdicated French king Louis-Philippe.

Just under half the paintings of the Spanish school still in the collection today were accessioned prior to the Seven Years' War. These include nine paintings by or in the style of Jusepe de Ribera, long active and revered in Naples and whose works no important European art collection of the 18th century could afford to be seen without. In 1741 a painting by El Greco, then all but forgotten, entered the collection as a 'Venetian work'. Its correct reattribution followed more than a century later and it is now the only painting securely attributed to the artist in Germany. In our new hang, selected works of the Spanish School are on display in three side galleries on the first floor, including one acquisition from 2006, a Baroque still life of flowers by Juan de Arellano. | IYW



Doménikos Theotokópoulos, called El Greco

Candia/Heraklion, Kreta 1541-1614 Toledo

The Healing of the Blind Man

c. 1570 Mixed media on poplar panel; 65.5×84 cm Acquired in Venice in 1741 Gal. no. 276

The artist shows the biblical story of the healing of the blind man as though acted out on a stage. Jesus strides towards us on the left, identifiable by his aureole, as he runs his fingers across the eyes of the blind man kneeling before him. The right half of the picture is taken up with a group of gesticulating men, busy pointing at and discussing the unfolding events, which all four gospels retell, albeit with diverging accounts. In the story, an argument breaks out among the Pharisees, because the healing has occurred on a Sabbath. It is unclear whether, in the men on the right, El Greco has depicted the Pharisees or Christ's disciples. He has demonstrably used one-point perspective, with the resulting recession emphasized by the tiled ground and Italianate architecture. The landing of the stairs provides a springboard into the picture space. The composition and rendering of the figures also reveal the influence of Italian art, particularly the Venetians Tintoretto and Jacobo Bassano. This is hardly surprising, as the artist did indeed travel to Venice, in 1567, after first training as an icon painter on the island of Crete, hence his more common name, 'El Greco' (The Greek). After Venice, El Greco was active in Rome, before eventually settling in Spain. In Italy he learned the new painterly techniques of the Renaissance, such as modelling the flesh through colour, the use of light effects, and the laws of perspective. Building on this foundation, El Greco developed an expressive style in Spain, which had an inspiring effect on early modern artists. | IYW



Jusepe de Ribera Xàtiva 1591-1652 Naples

The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence

c. 1625 Oil on canvas; 206 × 154 cm First mentioned in the 1747–1750 inventory Gal. no. 686

In dramatic chiaroscuro the artist depicts the moment immediately prior to the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence. The deacon from Aragón is shown wearing only his loincloth, his bare body standing out starkly from the dark background. Raising his right arm, the condemned cleric directs his gaze skyward, mouth ajar – seeking redemption and support. By shifting the focus to the moment *before* the martyrdom, Ribera shows Lawrence in dialogue with God, hoping for salvation. But the executioner has already seized Lawrence's arm, while his robes are being taken away by a young servant in the foreground.

According to historical accounts, Saint Lawrence was executed on a red-hot gridiron in the 3rd century, at the order of the Roman emperor Valerian. In the picture two servants are busy stoking the fire, whose faint light, however, kindles associations of hope rather than of annihilation, in a glimmering prospect of resurrection and immortality through martyrdom. Ribera's composition on the martyrdom of Lawrence was copied a number of times, with at least eight direct reproductions known to us. Of all known versions, only the one in Dresden shows Ribera's specific way of achieving the strongest plastic and painterly effects through a dramatic chiaroscuro. The painting was probably brought to Dresden via Hamburg by Carl Heinrich von Heineken in 1742.

Francisco de Zurbarán

Fuente de Cantos 1598-1664 Madrid

The Prayer of Saint Bonaventure concerning the Election of the New Pope

1628/29

Oil on canvas; 239×222 cm

Purchased from the auction of the Louis Philippe Collection at Christie's, London, in 1853 Gal. no. 696

This work belongs to an eight-part cycle on the life of Saint Bonaventure produced for the church dedicated to him in Seville. Zurburán painted the four pictures located on the Epistle side, while the four on the Evangelist side are the work of Francisco de Herrera the Elder. Declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588, Bonaventure is the most important philosopher and theologian of the Franciscan order. For this reason, scenes from his life were chosen to decorate the church of San Bonaventura in Seville, which was affiliated with the Franciscan college of the same name. The subject matter references an event in 1271. The papacy had been unoccupied for three years and the College of Cardinals was unable to agree on a new pope. At Bonaventure's suggestion, Teobaldo Visconti was finally elected, becoming Pope Gregory X. In the foreground, the saint is shown in genuflection. In the otherwise dark room, he and the crown lying in front of him on the table, the papal tiara, are illuminated. In the upper left, an angel of the Lord appears before a golden background, communicating His will by pointing. In the background on the right are six red-robed cardinals from the papal conclave, with a group of three men in contemporary clothing - possibly benefactors of the order - occupying the middle ground. The appeal of the painting - conceived in a tenebrist style with a low viewpoint stems from the planar figural arrangement and stark colour contrasts of red, black, and gold. | IYW





The French School

As 'the Sun King' Louis XIV became the living embodiment of centralized rule in France and his courtly absolutism a model for all the princely and royal houses of Europe. Besides increasing economic and political sway, his long period of rule saw a flourishing in French literature, music, and art. As a consequence, French painting of the 17th century started gaining in importance, after more than a century of Italian dominance. At the heart of the Gemäldegalerie's collection of French masters lie stellar works by Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain. Both artists settled in Italy to hone and ultimately perfect their styles. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are Poussin's The Realm of Flora - a seminal work of French painting - and Lorrain's Coastal Landscape with Acis and Galatea. The display also features pictures by Nicolas Tournier and Valentin de Boulogne, some of the most important representatives of French Caravaggesque painting – for these artists, too, were active in Italy, where their painting style was clearly influenced by the Roman paintings of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio and his immediate followers.

The collection also features numerous works by artists active during the reign of Augustus the Strong and his son, Prince-Elector Friedrich August, later King August III. These include an impressive state portrait (on display at the very start of the exhibition) by Hyacinthe Rigaud of Friedrich August as a youthful prince-elector, painted during his sojourn in Paris before he took the throne. As painter to the court of Saxony, French-born Louis de Silvestre was also the author of numerous portraits. But his immense oeuvre also includes monumental decorative paintings, for, among other places, Dresden's Residenzschloss. Forming an additional collection highlight are works by the painters of the *fête galante* (courtship party) – foremost among them Antoine Watteau, as well as Jean-Baptiste Pater and Nicolas Lancret. | 144W



Valentin de Boulogne

Coulommiers 1591-1632 Rome

The Cardsharps

c. 1615/1618
Oil on canvas; 94.5 × 137 cm
Acquired from the Imperial Gallery, Prague, in 1749
Gal. no. 408

With this scene of two young gamblers at a wooden table, we descend into the lowlife world of petty crime. Influenced by the style of the Caravaggisti, Valentin de Boulogne chose this popular subject because it lends itself to presenting a tense atmosphere in a tenebrist style. The two protagonists' faces are illuminated, while their surroundings remain shrouded in darkness. Behind the player on the right, a rapier at his side, we see the hooded figure of an older man with a ruddy face who is indicating by hand sign the opponent player the value of the card to be played. The unsuspecting young man is still pondering his next move while coins glint on the table before him. The opponent on the left holds a card in his right hand out of sight. His leaning posture reveals that he is merely waiting his turn to lay down the winning card.

By arranging the players in the immediate foreground and making the table edge seem to protrude into the viewer's space, Valentin involves draws us into the action and uncover the conspiracy unfolding before our eyes. The figural composition and fall of light underscore the choreography of gestures and the actions of concealment and disclosure. Although the figures' faces are well enough defined to be portraits, in this moral tale they in fact embody archetypes of the greenish young man and the fraudster. | IYW



Nicolas Tournier

Montbéliard 1590-1639 Toulouse

The Guardroom

c. 1620/1625
Oil on canvas; 169×239 cm
First mentioned in the 1747–1750 inventory
Gal. no. 411

Several soldiers have gathered around an ancient sarcophagus. A single light source outside the picture space illuminates the nine figures within but leaves the rest of the room dark. In the near-centre sit four card players, while to the right two men play dice, standing. These two figural groups are framed, left and right, by two soldiers in armour and a spectator in turban and beard. Tournier has selected a frieze-like arrangement, setting the players at almost the same head height and thus emphasizing the figures' different expressions, states of mind, and characters.

Like Valentin de Boulogne, Tournier worked in the Caravaggesque manner. His works are notable for their dramatic chiaroscuro, individuation through gesture, glance, and facial expression, as well as the figures' realistic depiction with portrait-like features. Tournier was active in Rome from 1619 to 1626, where he studied the art of Caravaggios most important follower Bartolomeo Manfredi and his artistic environment. It is possible that Tournier was even active in Manfredi's workshop and appropriated his visual language. Together with Valentin de Boulougne, he brought Caravaggism to France. | IYW



Nicolas Regnier
Maubeuge c. 1588–1667 Venice

Saint Sebastian

before 1625
Oil on canvas; 134×98 cm
Purchased from the Ducal Gallery, Modena, in 1746
Gal. no. 409

According to Jacobus da Varagine's Legenda aurea, Saint Sebastian served as an officer under emperors Diocletian and Maxilimilian, and was martyred for his refusal to disavow his Christian faith. Regnier depicts him bound to a tree and wounded by arrows. The youthful figure of the saint, who is dressed in nothing but a loincloth, stands out starkly against the dark background. Though seated, his body is twisting in a dynamic pose reminiscent of a figura serpentinata, with the inclination of the head and his upward gaze signalling the struggle for ascension. This is a symbolic reference to the redemption of the saint and his connection with God. Through the composition, restrained palette, and use of light, Regnier's depiction of the muscular body of the young man exudes an aesthetic and sensuous allure. This idealized depiction of the tormented martyr is supposed to inspire the viewer to follow the example of his unwavering faith. Regnier was one of the most important followers of Caravaggio, and this painting was indeed at one point attributed to him. Régnier received his training in Antwerp by the Flemish painter Abraham Janssens. He went to Rome and, through Bartolomeo Manfredi, adopted the style of Caravaggio, one of whose most important followers he is. Indeed once this painting was attributed to the Milanese master, active in Rome. | IYW



Nicolas Poussin Les Andelys 1594–1665 Rome

The Realm of Flora

1631 Oil on canvas; 132×181.4 cm Acquired in Paris in 1715 Gal. no. 719

In this picture Poussin unites several figures from the *Metamorphoses* of the ancient Roman poet Ovid. The core theme of Ovid's mythological epic is passion, which results in a miraculous transformation. The *Realm of Flora* shows figures who, upon dying, were metamorphosed into flowers. To the left of the dancing goddess Flora, is Narcissus, staring lovingly at his reflection in a jar of water. And narcissuses are indeed starting to bloom beside the jar on which the nymph Echo has placed her hand. Behind Narcissus reclines Clytie, abandoned by Apollo and transformed into a sunflower. Her longing gaze follows the chariot of the sun as it crosses the sky. To the right of Flora are two beautiful young men: Adonis (whose blood, dripping from the hunting wound, blossoms into an anemone) and Hyacinth from whose head blue hyacinths sprout. A pair of lovers lies before them: Crocus and the nymph Smilax. She is being metamorphosed into a bindweed vine, he into a crocus. Just outside the circle stands Ajax, a hero of the Trojan War, falling on his sword. A carnation blossoms at his feet in his moment of self-slaughter.

The painting was commissioned by the Sicilian nobleman Fabrizio Valguarnera, who was in Rome in 1631. Poussin has chosen bright, intense primary colours for the robes and, with his emotional figures and varied poses, has made love, death, and the mutability of all physical being the subject of his painting. |



The German School

The collection of the German school of painting unites disparate painters often only with the German language in common. From Bohemia, Austria, Holland, France, or Switzerland, they all spent active periods in Germany or the German-speaking world. Unlike in other schools, especially the Italian, our German collection's strength is less due to Augustus the Strong or his son King August III's collecting activities, as many of the German panels had hung in the Saxon Kunstkammer since the late 16th or 17th century, before Dresden's Augustan age.

The collection starts with altarpieces from c. 1500, still rooted in the late medieval tradition, with Albrecht Dürer's devotional pictures thereafter marking the dawn of the new Renaissance style. From 1505 on, Lucas Cranach the Elder created an array of pictures, secular and ecclesiastical, in Wittenberg. With 58 panels, the Gemäldegalerie boasts the largest Cranach collection in the world. In a reflection of the humanist ideas of antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, artists north of the Alps made haunting portraits that probed the subject's interiority. The 16th century saw Mannerist touches start to appear in German painting, in the unusual colour treatment of natural forms and figures set in tense poses, and soon this figure style would dominate art at the many German princely courts.

Caravaggio's tenebrism had a seminal influence on Baroque painting in the 17th century, also in the north. During the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), many artists were forced to move their workshops to less war-ravaged regions, such as Italy or the Low Countries, and were inspired by those styles and practices. When the picture gallery in the royal mews opened in 1748 and King August III converted to Roman Catholicism, German painters once again received commissions for biblical scenes and images of the Virgin and saints. But they also treated the pomp and ceremony of the Saxon court and, increasingly, the scenery around Dresden. In the last third of the 18th century, new accessions of works by then-living artists showed classical mythology scenes, natural land-scapes, and architecture. Intense works of portraiture characterized the Enlightenment age and pointed to 19th-century art. | RE

Albrecht Dürer

Nuremberg 1471-1528 Nuremberg

The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin

1495/96

Oil on softwood panel; 188.5×136 cm (total), each approx. 63×46 cm Entered the Kunstkammer from the estate of Lucas Cranach the Younger in 1588 Gal. nos. 1875-1881

Upon his return from northern Italy in 1495, Albrecht Dürer was able to gain one of his first major clients – the Ernestine elector of Saxony, Friedrich the Wise. Commanding great political authority, Friedrich was embarking on extensive plans to modernize his electoral seat of Wittenberg, summoning renowned artists to the north. The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin was Dürer's first piece painted for Wittenberg's Schlosskirche. It depicts seven scenes from the life and Passion of Christ, which Mary, as his mother, had to endure: The Circumcision of Christ, Flight into Egypt, Christ among the Doctors, Christ Carrying the Cross, Crucifixion, Christ on the Cross, and Lamentation. The work originally included The Virgin as Mother of Sorrows (now in Munich, Alte Pinakothek) around which our smaller panels were likely grouped. The pendant piece, the Seven Joys of Mary, has not survived.

Lucas Cranach the Younger died in 1556 and his estate, which interestingly included numerous works by Dürer, entered the collection of the Kunstkammer in Dresden in 1588. The central Marian panel was, however, not among them and eventually accessioned in Munich in 1804. The large panel was thus evidently sawed apart prior to 1588, leaving us unable to reconstruct the original configuration with certainty. Several copy drawings made by the Cranach workshop around 1550 and now preserved in Erlangen show six of the scenes of sorrow, but also serve as a visual record of many other works by Dürer in the Saxon city of Wittenberg. | RE







Johann Alexander Thiele

Erfurt 1685-1752 Dresden

'Caroussel Comique.' Procession in the Zwinger 1722

Before 1725

Oil on canvas: 106 x 168 cm

Supplied by the artist in 1725; assigned to the Society of the House of Wettin A.L. in 1924; reacquired by the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Saxony in 1999; gal. no. 3604

•

'Caroussel Comique.' Entertainments in the Zwinger 1722

Before 1725

Oil on canvas; 106 x 168 cm

Supplied by the artist in 1725; assigned to the Society of the House of Wettin A.L. in 1924; reacquired by the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Saxony in 1999; gal. no. 3603

Johann Alexander Thiele created these opulent pendent scenes to commemorate the carnival procession and following races held at the Zwinger in Dresden in 1722. They provide a vivid representation of festival culture during the reign of Augustus the Strong, document the architectural situation, and feature some buildings then only in the planning stages. The participants are costumed as stock types from Italian commedia dell'arte. A detailed description of the same year states the participants by name. In Procession, King Augustus leads the parade himself, dressed in red and riding a white horse. In Entertainments Thiele presents the tournament, where riders have to strike figures representing the four elements: fire, water, earth, and air. When certain figures are struck, fireworks, birds, or animals are released, or water is sprayed in the air.

Thiele captures both views from a raised vantage point – in *Procession* from the Glockenspielpavillon overlooking the Elbe Valley to the west, with the Kronentor gate on the left and the Wallpavillon opposite us. The architectural complex is continued in *Entertainments*, this time as seen from the Kronentor gate, with the perspective of a two-storey building surrounded by colonnades. This palace extension was planned by Pöppelmann but never realized. For these pictures, Thiele also drew on engravings of entertainments of the French court. Augustus made use of courtly entertainments to project his status and perform both ceremonial and political functions, and personally arranged events down to the very last detail.

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

SANDSTEIN

