

## **Love and Scandal in the MIA's Collection**

With a one-hour limit in mind, I decided to focus on select European art works from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. What unites these representations are wonderful stories, some more scandalous than others. Some of the stories revolve around real people and events, and others around gods and goddesses who act out their passions in very human ways. Let's begin with a late-16<sup>th</sup> century love story.

### **Agostino Carracci, Judith and Holofernes**

A love story? Yes. This intriguing painting, which has been on loan to the MIA since the 1980s, depicts on one level Judith and Holofernes. According to the Biblical apocrypha, Judith, an intelligent and beautiful Isrealite widow, seduced and killed the Assyrian leader, Holofernes in order to save her people.

This picture of Judith is, on another level, a portrait of a 16th-century Italian woman, named Olimpia Luna. In 1593 or 4, a year or two after Olimpia's death, her husband, Melchiorre Zoppio, commissioned this "portrait" from the respected painter, Agostino Carracci. Zoppio was a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Bologna and a prolific writer of philosophy and poetry. His marriage to Olimpia, though short-lived, was a passionate one.

Although Carracci never knew Olimpia Luna, whose Spanish surname means "Moon," and no other drawing of her existed, he evidently captured her likeness in this portrait. In addition, her identity is assured by the celestial motifs in gold brocade on her dress. In writings about his wife, Zoppio described a vision of Luna appearing to him in a dress just like this, adorned with pearls, divided by little flames denoting the falling stars. See the full moon with rays embroidered in a diamond-shaped pattern of pearls. Blue sapphires dance at the corners. They might seem a bit sun-like to you, but this may well be because Zoppio described Luna as his sun. In a poem, he wrote, "The world calls you Luna (moon)/ Yet to me you seem the Sun/ Due to the splendor of your face/ That conquers any mortal eye/ That you would care to fix with a playful eye."

Years after her death, Zoppio published a book of his consolations regarding his wife's death and absence. Over 300 pages reveal imaginary dialogues between himself and Olimpia, who appears to him in a vision, not unlike the image painted by Agostino earlier. He described the vision as a woman of normal height, with bright eyes, and skin the color of the milky way. In her he could see the first light of dawn. In the ensuing imaginary dialogues, Olimpia and Melchiorre discuss death in great depth, quoting ancient authors and early Renaissance poets. Naturally, Olimpia, encourages Melchiorre to complete his consolation by remarrying.

Zoppio made connections between her name Olimpia, which in its relationship to Olympus, home of the gods, connotes all variety of heavenly things. On the other hand, in the dialogues she describes Zoppio as one who is not serene and tranquil, but rather turbulent and cloudy. This might explain the fact that the decapitated head she holds is Zoppio's own! People in Zoppio's respectable and intellectual circles recognized their

friend (apparently the raised eyebrow and lips identify him) as the head of Holofernes in Olimpia Luna's grip, though few, it seems, knew just what to say about the portrait beyond the fact that it was an excellent likeness. What could they say?

The picture is a far cry from more traditional images, which portrayed Judith as a beautiful and often naked young woman, displaying Holofernes' head, or shoving it into a sack. (These examples are by Parmigianino, c. 1526, and Hans Sebald Beham, c.1526-30.)

Just why Zoppio chose to show he and his beloved in this way is not known. Given both Zoppio's and Carracci's penchant for allegory, one suspects he had a motive. Whatever that might have been is lost to us today—perhaps because those who chose to write about it at the time may have considered the matter too curious, or even distasteful to speculate upon!

### **Transition**

The next painting will also leave us much to speculate about. During the seventeenth century, many painters across Europe painted great ecclesiastical statements and high-minded allegories. But they also enjoyed opportunities to paint less complicated, but exciting, pictures of Greek and Roman gods to decorate the walls of wealthy patrons' homes.

### **Gaulli, Diana the Huntress, 1690**

Gaulli, called Baciccio (meaning "big kiss"), painted this daring portrayal of the goddess Diana in 1690 on private commission for the young Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni. In 1689 Alexander VIII raised his 22-year old nephew Pietro to the rank of Cardinal. Because the Ottoboni pope lived only a year and a half longer, Pietro never really got to enjoy the power his uncle had bestowed on him. This private commission is an unusual painting for Baciccio (1639-1709), best known for his religious paintings. It definitely raises some questions—and eyebrows!

Diana is the twin sister of Apollo—goddess of the moon (see her tiara) and of hunting. She is the daughter of Zeus, the supreme ruler of all the Greek gods, and chief among lovers in the ancient world. The product of Zeus's love affair with Leto, Diana's life was destined to be interesting. Enamored with his beautiful daughter Zeus gave into her every whim. Evidently it was her desire that she would forever remain a virgin. She also asked for a bow of silver, arrows, wood nymphs to join her in the hunt, and hounds.

Legend has it she chose to live in Arcadia among the mountains and woody slopes where she could spend her days enjoying the pleasures of the hunt and her pack of hounds. For centuries, Diana was revered for her chastity, and for being a strong, athletic, virgin huntress. Nonetheless, she stimulated some steamy representations in poetry and the visual arts. If we think of this picture as a 22-year old man's fantasy, it begins to make sense.

Typical of Diana pictures of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, as huntress she is shown with her tunic hiked up, bow and quivers, a stag at her feet, and in the company of her dogs. The stag might recall the story of the young prince Acteon who stumbled upon Diana at her bath. To punish him for seeing her divine self naked, she turned him into a stag at which point his own dogs tore him to pieces. Here, in contrast to this gorey story, she lies calmly against a tree, her foot gently grazing the restful stag. Her nymphs continue to pursue a boar beyond. But that's not all; they bathe, tumble and reveal a lot of flesh and various body parts. Not your standard hunt scene!

Here, Ottoboni's dogs, identified by the double eagle on the crest of the dog at left, admire the goddess. One of my colleagues has referred to this fellow as a breast "pointer." Over the centuries, Diana gained a reputation as the Lady of Wild Things, and the protector of the young—both human and animal, and thus became an important figure to women in childbirth. That surely must be why her breast is exposed! It has been suggested that an outfit like this, which bares the breast, would allow her greater freedom with her bow. (If you look closely in the background, you will see that the fashion was also available to lefties.)

The intimacy of the painting is disarming (no pun intended). This intimacy and the existing tradition of society women being portrayed in the guise of Diana, beg the question of this Diana's identity. Was she a personal favorite of the young Ottoboni? That Gaulli, highly regarded as a portrait painter, treated her face with such realism makes the question even more intriguing. Writers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century remarked upon the high quality of the painting, but gave no clues to the beautiful Diana's identity.

### **Transition**

17<sup>th</sup> century painters and patrons across the continent could not get enough of those gods and goddesses who provided an acceptable means of visually portraying erotically-charged subject matter. Venus, among the most popular, is the goddess of love, sensuality, fertility, and you name what else!

### **Nicolas Mignard, Venus and Adonis**

A seductress and an adulteress, she had many lovers and some children. She was as promiscuous as the male gods! When her husband Vulcan, god of fire found her in bed with Mars, god of war, it was too late. By Mars she fathered Cupid and Harmony. Next to images of Venus and Mars, the most popular images were those exploring Venus' love for the beautiful young mortal, Adonis.

Nicolas Mignard, in this painting in the MIA collection, captures in most vivid terms an event in Venus' relationship with the lovely Adonis. As an aside, Adonis was the son of an incestuous union between Myrrha and her father King Cinyras of Paphos in Cyprus. She, so shamed by her pregnancy pleaded with the gods to transform her. They turned her into a myrrh tree from whose bark the goddess of birth, Lucina, ripped the baby boy Adonis. He grew up to be a beautiful youth.

Venus became obsessed with him—so obsessed that she took up hunting just to be around him. Forsaking the company of her fellow gods on Olympus, she took to wearing hunting garments just like Diana's. Mignard clothed Venus in more royal attire—her sensuous ermine fur-lined, hot red garment daringly draped across her lap.

Adonis, however, loved the hunt, more than he did Venus. Here, she pleads with him to stay behind from the hunt, a scene not described in Ovid but very popular at this time period. Basically, she threatened him that the lions would get him if he wandered into the woods, but then left his side—no weak-woman pleading as the picture shows. He left for the hunt anyway only to be killed by a wild boar rustled from its enclosure by his own dogs. Venus sprinkled nectar over his blood, turning it into anemones—so sweet-smelling, but so fragile their petals can be blown off by the wind. Like Adonis, the flower is beautiful but short-lived. The flowers behind Venus here foretell the story's ending.

Two doves linger nearby—symbols of love and peace associated with Venus. Venus is curvy and outright sexy, for any time period. She tugs on Adonis' garments. His hot pink shirt is curiously formfitting. To reveal his consummate skill as a painter of the human body (but also to heighten the sensuality of this figure), Mignard simply applies color over the muscled back of Adonis. The hot pink and orange of his clothing heighten the tension of the scene. In spite of Venus' eagerness, Adonis, big stick in hand (okay, spear), turns away from her.

Above the lovers we see Cupid playfully pulling back a curtain to reveal the drama to us. Lends a whole new meaning to "love is in the air," doesn't it? Another story of intrigue underlies the inclusion of Cupid in such pictures. While Cupid was embracing his mother, as he was accustomed to doing, he accidentally grazed her breast with a projecting arrow. This wound caused her to fall for the beauty of a mortal—none other than Adonis.

Mignard's clever composition, rich colors, and luscious treatment of fabrics throughout, contribute to the overwhelming sensuality of the painting. That we know nothing of the commission for this decorative picture adds to its intrigue.

### **Transition**

While one can not deny the latent sensuality of these gods, they appear chaste compared to those that came to dominate eighteenth-century parlors in France. The very public love affair of Madame de Pompadour and King Louis XV changed French society to say the least. Representations of the gods became more charged than ever before.

In the hands of Boucher, the primary painter to the king's royal mistress, the gods came to resemble beautiful young people loving one another in the open air of the countryside. Attributes were largely set aside, or placed unobtrusively. See for example, how in his pictures of Diana at her bath or Diana and Callista (where Jupiter takes advantage of Callista in the guise of the beautiful Diana), Boucher's titillating play between beautiful naked women overrides Classical meaning-making. Though intellectually conceived,

there is no doubt that sexual arousal was a goal of Boucher's and other rococo artists' mythological delights.

### **Boucher, Apollo and Clytie (tapestry)—not on view so I have deleted it**

#### **Transition**

Buyers of Boucher's tapestries preferred more familiar stories than Clytie's. Most of the tapestries on this subject, were, in fact, made for the royal family, supporting a hypothesis that the story was viewed internally as an allegory for Louis XV's notorious admiration for numerous beautiful women!

### **Boucher, St. John the Baptist**

Perhaps even more interesting is Boucher's beefcake interpretation of Saint John the Baptist. Painted for his patron Madame de Pompadour, for her chapel at the Capucines Convent, her ultimate resting place, Boucher's image of John is hardly saintly in his overt sensuality, here compared to a Vanity Fair photo of Brad Pitt. John lounges in the grass, his flesh seething with sensual energy.

During the 1750s, Madame de Pompadour, at the height of her powers (though mistress to the king in name only at this point), strove to prove her devotion to the Church. She commissioned a slew of religious works from Boucher. St. John was her patron saint (her real name being Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson) so, it makes sense that she would choose a picture of him for the altar of this chapel on the outskirts of Paris where her child was buried, and she would be. Ironically, the site of this convent ultimately became an amusement park.

Let's get back to Saint John. He lounges here in a wild, woody environment, protected by the evergreens above. Animal skins strategically cover important parts of his body, which lies against a hot red cloth. If you look closely you can see his reed cross and lamb, traditional attributes that identify this steamy young man. A group of angels hover above (just to get a peek?).

His hands are in a gesture of prayer. But, is his pose really one of sorrow and remorse? If we compare his pose to male lovers painted by Boucher, as seen here in a painting of Venus and Mars, and one of Aurora and Cephalus, there is little to differentiate it from the overtly sexual gods. The sensuality of this Saint could be Boucher's acknowledgement of traditional associations between St. John and Dionysus, the lusty Greek god of wine and fertility, of which the learned artist would have been aware. Or, perhaps, he is just another hunk, made to please the Royal mistress.

### **Transition to 2 prints not on view or to Garnier paintings**

Lest we begin to think that the saints and gods were the only ones having any fun in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, let's turn our attention to some pictures of very human men and women. Some very fun rococo pictures of lovers can be found in our collection of 18th century prints and drawings. Here are Fragonard's L'Armoire and Boucher's Lovers Surprised.

### **Michel Garnier, *The Poorly Defended Rose***

Now, let's step in—if we can bear to intrude—to an 18<sup>th</sup> century picture of a young man and woman—a painted version of a type of comedy so in vogue at that time. What's going on in this picture? We have a young man and woman in a sunny interior. He is definitely making moves on her, which she feigns to resist. The guitar tells us he is the proverbial music teacher there to teach this young lady a lesson. A hat, flung hastily, has landed over Cupid's head. He coyly peeks below its brim. The caged bird's cover is coming undone. If we didn't get the gist already, lying on the floor is a broken pitcher, a timeworn symbol of lost virtue.

And then there are those roses—sitting pretty in the sunshine about to be plucked. The young man aggressively grabs the thorny rose, while she grips his arm as though to restrain him. But the gesture is only half-hearted. Her eyes say so much more!

Despite such a rococo subject, Michel Garnier was a master of precision, so prized by the French Academy. Pictures like this and the painting *The Letter*, also in the MIA's collection, were by no means scandalous during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were not terribly moralizing either.

### **William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la-mode*, 1743-45, engravings**

The next set of prints we will look at are by the prolific English painter and printmaker, William Hogarth. Above all else, Hogarth was a social commentator. His set of prints called *Marriage A-la-mode*, a-la-mode being a catchphrase used contemptuously to mean “cheap and short-lived fashionableness,” brilliantly examine the arrangement of a marriage and its consequences. Six detailed engravings completed from 1743 to 45, comprise the series.

Drawing on the theatrical model of situation plays, Hogarth set out to create a set of prints, which he described as representing “a Variety of Modern Occurrences in High Life.” The advertisement he produced to promote these prints before they were completed said, “Particular care will be taken, that there may not be the Least Objection to the Decency or Elegancy of the whole work, and that none of the Characters represented shall be personal.” His earlier series had scandalously referenced known society figures.

Although it was Hogarth's intention to keep these prints decent, he packed them with scandalous details and innuendo. The first print of the series, called *The Marriage Settlement*, shows the final stages of the marriage arrangements—the woman's father looks over the settlement, as the Earl, the young man's father, receives the dowry. As they are about to sign, one of the lawyers courts the bride. The groom looks off, towards the next act of the play so to speak.

The pictures are all filled with rich details, too many to elaborate here. For example, the Earl takes pride in his ancestry as shown in the family tree. His crutch and bandage tell us he has gout, a common condition among the prosperous classes, which was considered a

consequence of excessive sexuality, as well as of gluttony. So, we are introduced to a family history of sexual promiscuity.

In the second picture, *The tête a tête*, the young married couple sit in their home in the early afternoon. The fact that the husband, Lord Squanderfield, is still wearing his hat and sword tell us he has just returned from a night out. The wife has been playing cards all night at a party in the back room. Her breakfast table, set for one, her state of partial dress, and her very relaxed pose, tell us that she has been on her own all day. The music book and unopened violins suggest she has had time for a music lesson—music being a “fashionable vice”! Perhaps the teacher (suitor) fled when he heard the husband returning home.

The young Squanderfield’s lap dog nearby excitedly sniffs at a woman’s cap in his pocket, decorated with the ribbon of an unmarried woman, signaling his infidelity. So, we know now that he is an adulterer and she enjoys the possibilities offered by this fashionable marriage.

In the third picture, called *The Inspection*, the lord and his street girl friend are visiting a doctor—a quack—to inquire about the ineffectiveness of the pills he has prescribed to treat their venereal disease. The big woman with the knife might be a procuress. The marks on her chest suggest that she was convicted as a prostitute. The implication that the procuress and doctor are in on a little business arrangement together is clear.

From the fourth picture, *The Toilette*, we learn that the Earl is dead, the couple now being Lord and Lady Squander. The teething coral on the chair shows the Lady has had a child, now months old. In her husband’s absence, Counsellor Silvertongue, who you may recall from the first image, is clearly her favorite and very welcome in her dressing room. She shows great interest in auctions and masquerades, places where lovers could meet in secret, but publicly.

Many intermediate steps are suggested between this and the next print called *The Bagnio*, a reference to a type of room rented by lovers for evening trysts. Lord Squander has sought out his wife and her lover with the intention of a duel. Inexperienced in the art of dueling, Silvertongue kills Lord Squander. Here we see him leaping from the window to his imminent arrest.

*The Lady’s Death*, the final scene in this 18<sup>th</sup>-century soap opera, shows the lady back in her father’s home at the moment where she has died from poisoning herself, following the news of her lover’s execution. Her father, who has called in the apothecary and physician, sneakily takes off her ring, to put it safely in the cupboard.

### **Transition**

In spite of their overt references to sex, adultery, and the seamier sides of life, Hogarth’s prints were extremely successful. It is interesting, in comparison, that the seemingly innocuous sculpture we will look at next, rocked the French Salon of 1785!

### **Augustin Pajou, Psyche Abandoned**

One has to wonder now what response Augustin Pajou anticipated when he exhibited the full-scale marble of his sculpture, *Psyche Abandoned*, at the Salon in 1785. The MIA has a reduced-scale version of this once-controversial sculpture, created years after its initial exhibition. In 1782 he had received one of the most important commissions of his lifetime to create a pendant sculpture to Bouchardon's famous sculpture called *Cupid Carving a Bow from Hercules' Club* in the Royal Collection. Pajou, wishing to make a beautiful counterpart, chose as his subject Psyche at that moment when Cupid abandoned her after she sneakily learned of his identity. They had been spending many nights together in the dark, Cupid having forbidden her from seeing him. Against his warnings she snuck into see him one night as he slept. Unfortunately for her, he awoke when hot oil from her lamp dripped onto his exposed body. He abandoned her forever.

In correspondence with the King's director of collections, Pajou requested discretion regarding the price he would have to ask for his Psyche. He explained that he would need to hire "women who can charge me whatever price they like, as beautiful ones cost two or three times more than the models we usually use." He intended to bring his figure of Psyche to perfection.

At last, he showed the wailing Psyche sitting on a bed decorated with myrtle and roses surrounding a butterfly, a symbol for the soul (the meaning of her name). Her oil lamp hopelessly spills, having been cast aside. The dagger, which she brought along in case she discovered her lover to be a horrible monster, also lies below, another instrument of her disgrace.

The full-scale plaster (now lost) of the sculpture, described in the Salon catalogue as having been "made for the king," received a great deal of notice by the critics. Its central placement at the entrance to a main courtyard helped to draw attention to it.

The statue's complete nudity was definitely a topic of conversation though it was not considered overly shocking by most. The local curate, however, successfully petitioned the archbishop of Paris to have the work removed five days after the Salon opening on account of the nudity. A much-discussed scandal ensued.

Pajou decided to exhibit the sculpture in his own studio nearby, where crowds of people gathered to see it. As one writer noted, "The remedy has furthered the illness, as all of Paris ran and continues to run daily to M. Pajou's studio to see the statue 'under the counter,' as it were. On top of this, the poor curate has been overwhelmed with epigrams posted on the door of his presbytery."

The critics had a lot to say. One writer wrote: "Being perfectly aware that the statue had been removed because of its nudity, I went [to the artist's studio] with a kind of bias against the decency of the execution. ...After having carefully and lengthily studied it...I barely noticed the nudity, or rather, although she is nude, the veil of modesty seemed to cover her entirely and forbade one's imagination to stray toward any indecent thoughts



much more successfully than a drapery would.” This writer went on to say that modesty was respected and that the intent of M.Pajou was honest and the expression touching.

While some critics responded to the “truth and beauty” of the forms and also defended Pajou’s intentions as decent, others just could not accept the naturalism of Pajou’s sculpture. Now, remember, he hired the finest models to assure her beauty! Critics were troubled by her face, which they considered too Parisian and not Antique enough. One wrote, “She has a French face, her pose and features are mannered, she has contorted herself to preserve her modesty, and mainly looks annoyed.” The comtesse d’Albany wrote in a letter, “Some mannered sculptors have been compared to the Greeks; I’ve seen a Psyche who looks like a chorus girl from the Opera.”

They also criticized the bodily proportions, speculating that Pajou had used a model too old for the subject of Psyche. One critic felt her proportions were “overly generous for the kind of young girl we imagine Psyche to be. Her foot is also surely too small for her body.” They felt she should look not like a 25 year old (or even a 21 or 22 year old), but like a nubile young woman in Greece.

Another wrote, “Her hips, thighs, feet, and arms are larger in proportion than her torso and other parts.” Some felt she was just too curvaceous. One felt the big thighs and too-narrow ribcage were too much assets of a modern woman who wore a bodice and skirts. Others felt that she just was not graceful enough to be Love’s lover, that her sorrow was not innocent enough, and that the sculpture could not, at this stage, compare with its intended pendant by Bouchardon. But they all seemed confident that Pajou would, of course, fix all this in the marble. It would seem, however, that he did not.

Nonetheless the marble sculpture met with praise when exhibited in 1791. One critic still found firmness lacking in the chest and some unpleasant wrinkles around the eyes reproachable. Another still found her gestures too affected, her knees fat, her head too French, and felt that her expression was one of physical rather than emotional pain. Others considered her hair too voluminous and her face simply not pretty enough. The criticisms were pretty much the same ones lodged at the sculpture six years earlier.

Stylistically the sculpture, in its naturalism, demanded that the modern spectator interact with it in a way heretofore considered inappropriate. The bronze statue in the MIA replicates the controversial sculpture in nearly all its details. The quality of the ornamental details is unbeatable. Pajou continued to rework the composition during his lifetime in order to capitalize on taste and market changes. The fact that there was a market for the sculpture at all certainly suggests that many Parisians did not mind decorating their homes with an over-aged Psyche with big thighs and too much hair!

### **Transition to Girodet, Mlle. Lange**

One could say that at this point the scandal stopped being scandalous. This could not be said of the scandal caused by the next art work we will consider.

When Anne-Louise Girodet de Roucy Trioson accepted a commission to paint a portrait of actress Anne-Francoise-Elisabeth Lange, he likely had no idea that he would ultimately paint the subject of an infamous salon scandal. Though Girodet's portrait of the actress was well-received by the critics reviewing the salon of 1799, Mlle Lange and her friends derided it on the basis that she felt it did not flatter her. She demanded he remove the portrait from the salon, saying it compromised her "reputation as a beauty." She refused to pay more than half. He sent her the portrait back shredded. Two weeks later he returned to the salon with this painting of her, in the same frame as the original—though definitely doctored. Exhibited for just two days, *The New Danae* was all the rage. It would prompt his master, Jacques Louis David to say, "Either he is insane or I no longer understand the art of painting."

He certainly complimented Mlle. Lange's body and her face is beautiful—goddesslike even. Girodet represented her as Danae, one of the many mortals visited by Zeus in a disguised form—in this case as a shower of gold. She grabs at the gold coins, missing one, knocking the dove of fidelity to its death. The young amor at Lange's side, represents her daughter, Palmyre. Like her mother, she wears peacock feathers, symbols of her vanity. If the message was not clear enough, Danae holds a cracked mirror in her hand—unable to see herself as she really looked.

Other details of this cryptic allegory refer to three main players in her love life—as public as any actor's today. First there was Leuthrop Beauregard, a once-rich winegrower in trouble with the law, who had been rejected by Lange. Here he is represented by this theatrical mask with vines growing from it. The coin in his eye and the lewd satyr like face refer to an event in which he was reputed to have offered her a lot of money for 12 hours of her time. The horns suggest cuckoldry and the snail chewing away at the vines, the loss of his fortune. As in real life, this man has been relegated to the discard pile.

The actions of Mlle Lange and her daughter here refer to another well-known story and lover. The father of her child, Hoppé, had paid her a substantial fee upon their separation to educate their daughter, on the condition that she quit the theatre. She took the money but returned to the stage. Thus we see mother and daughter grabbing for the gold. He had even taken her to court in an effort to gain guardianship of the child.

Equally public was her marriage to Michel-Jean Simons, a wealthy banker and army contractor. Reputedly his rich father came to Paris in an effort to end his son's marriage to the actress. Instead he fell for one of her friends and both father and son married young actresses. The turkey, associated with both stupidity and vanity wears a wedding ring and drops a flaming torch on a scroll. This refers to a comedy in which a young man asks his father to finance his relationship with a courtesan. The father says yes on the condition he spend a night with the woman. Girodet's suggestion was clear.

A statue of abundance shows Mlle. Lange as a household divinity. A mouse and moths crawling towards her are burned by her flames. A cob web in the upper left is another indicator of her propensity to entrapment. Notice also the rat trapped next to Beauregard's head.

The themes continue in the four medallions on the frame, spiteful allegories that replaced the original allegorical medallions which were apparently inspired by her talent and beauty!

A quote from Horace's *De Arte Poetica* (vol. 4) explains the satirical medallion on the upper left. Translated, it reads, A lovely woman on the top ends in a fish below, a symbol for duplicity in love. Notice she too holds a mirror!

The quotation on the top right, also from Horace, translates, "Are you suppressing a laugh, friends?" Above is a most curious creature indeed with an ostrich neck and head, turkey tail, aquatic bird feet, and a woman's breast. But what about the two masculine heads (one with horns)? A squirrel, whip in hand, drives the ugly monster. Again building on Horace, the aspects of the creature refer to her voracity, stupidity, and murky origins. One scholar reads the two heads as her husband and his father being dominated by her with the whip.

The lower left medallion shows butterflies—some attracted to flowers, but others to gold. This is a reference to Virgil's *Eclogues*, quoted below—"Each man's desires lead him on." My favorite medallion on the lower right pokes fun at Mlle. Lange's aspirations to fame. An illustration to La Fontaine's fable, The Frog that aspired to be as grand as the ox, is contrasted with Louis XIV's motto "Not inferior to most." While the sources might seem obscure to us today, they were much better known in Girodet's day. It is a very intelligent and witty painting.

The fact that he represents the whole eerie setting in such precise detail is a bit unsettling. It is so warm, but so cold, so real, but unreal, so inviting, but so repulsive if you look really closely!

Did Girodet accomplish anything through this spiteful painting you might wonder? According to one biographical source, Mademoiselle Lange was forced to give up her theatrical career. While Girodet's name became prominent in fashionable Parisian circles, others condemned him for his poor taste. In a poem he defended his artistic use of satire: He wrote, "In righteous anger, his irritated paint brushes will avange his insulted honor and pride." It is said that he put the painting away, never showing it to anyone again.

### **Transition to Carpeaux, Three Graces (but scandal is really about his Opera's La Danse) from which this sculpture derives)**

Let's jump ahead a century to another scandal that shook up Paris. A relatively small, but glorious, sculpture by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux in the MIA's collection gives us entrée into one of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century's most memorable art scandals. The realistic nudes sculpted by Carpeaux for the façade of the grand new Paris Opera, which inspired him to produce this tabletop version later, drew the attention of many Parisians. He wanted the over life-sized sculptures to boldly (and bodily?) express the idea of Dance—but in a way many considered too sexually charged for a public monument. *La Danse*, by far one of the most

controversial sculptures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was discussed, disparaged, lampooned, defended, caricatured, and praised. It was scandalous!

Carpeaux in the early 1860s, had gained entry to the Imperial family, becoming the unofficial court sculptor to Napoleon III. He was also friends with Garnier, the architect chosen to build Paris' new Opera, a building which promised to be a symbol of the Second Empire. When Garnier invited his friend to create one of the four sculptures for the Opera, he couldn't have expected that Carpeaux would create a sculpture so unique and outright shocking.

Those who had not heard of Carpeaux most certainly knew his name after his monumental sculpture, *La Danse* was unveiled. To begin with, Carpeaux's sculpture stood out from the others since he disobeyed the strict guidelines set forth for the sculptures (by the architect Garnier). Here are the other sculptures—pretty straightforward.

But Carpeaux's breaking away from the design was the least of peoples' concerns. The critics and public were outraged by the realistic nudity of the dancing female figures. Their natural poses, gleeful smiles, and sense of abandon, made them appear too unabashedly human and naked. Despite Carpeaux's references to Renaissance greats like Raphael and Michelangelo, and his contemporary Francois Rude, these were not viewed as appropriately "Classical" nudes. The inclusion of the faun and putto, so common in Academic images, did not sway his critics either.

The women could not be said to represent anything—they simply evoked uncontrolled dance. It was clear he modeled them after living, breathing, real women—and not good women! The sculpture was deemed a moral threat to the nation, even. Although artistic nudity was very commonplace in Paris' Salons, the very public nature of the Opera façade led critics to see these nudes as filthy and immoral. They described it as base, pitiful, and vulgar.

Much attention in the press was given to trying to figure out just what kind of Dance it represented. For the most part they concluded it could only be associated with the kind of dances performed at public dance halls—licentious dances like the can-can. Critics concluded that the women must be courtesans, frenzied with drink, their flesh used, soft, and swollen. One critic wrote, "They stink of vice and reek of wine." It was way too realist and way too modern for many. Contemporary critics saw the figures as sweating because they were so realistic. To see the Opera sculpture became a matter of urban spectacle. As much as people complained they came in droves to see it.

Here are a few caricatures that capture some of the concerns surrounding the sculpture and its potentially dangerous influence. In one, the gentleman pulls his woman away, explaining to her, "Don't look, it excites them even more!" Here a woman asks her daughter, "where did you learn to dance like that?" She replies "from the statue in front of the opera." In another, a mother explains that they can now take their daughter to the Valentino Ball, for she just looked at Carpeaux's group.

The scandal became even more scandalous when one night someone threw ink over the left side of the sculpture. Many publicly suspected that Carpeaux was responsible for this outrageous act, believing he had it done to ensure his sculpture would remain in the limelight. He didn't help his case much when he fought for exclusive rights to sell pictures of the sculpture. In this cartoon you can see a sculptor replacing marble with a hunk of coal to avoid the inconvenience of ink. A direct blow at Carpeaux's integrity.

Among critics, only Emile Zola praised the sculpture as an honest representation of the very public enjoyment of sexuality among society people during the Second Empire. But most viewers would not admit to seeing it this way. Public outcry was so huge that the Emperor did, in fact, commission someone else to produce a new sculpture. This is the model for Charles Guméry's *Dance*, produced in 1870. But, Guméry died, and, then the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and Carpeaux's sculpture remained until they moved it inside.

Carpeaux, always eager to profit from his work, capitalized on the sensation surrounding the sculpture. He actively produced reproductions in different scales of various figures in his sculpture—the non-controversial ones first. He made excerpts of the Genie of the Dance, the Amour figure, and, as the MIA sculpture attests, of the female figures of the Dance. In 1872-73 he began to issue this complex sculpture from his studio in a variety of media.

The small sculpture provides fabulous views no matter from what angle you view it. The living, breathing women are so full of movement in the round. Their flesh is so palpable—they beg to be caressed. The fact that a private market for this scandalous sculpture existed is interesting. Imagine the same gentlemen who shouted in public to have the Opera sculpture removed, admiring the beauty, excitement, and sensuality of these figures in the privacy of their own homes. Some critics had taken the position all along that Carpeaux's dancers would be acceptable for a private collector or even for a dance hall, somewhere where such private language was permissible. It was this same mentality that made sculptures like Jean-Baptiste Clesinger's *Bacchante and Faun*, also in the MIA's collection, so popular for private collectors. Such was the hypocrisy of the Second Empire.

Over the past hour we have explored the sensational stories of gods and mortals. But, of course, we have just begun to explore the possibilities of our theme of love and scandal, latent in the MIA's collection. I hope you will visit the galleries to become more intimately acquainted with those whose stories we have told today, but also with others like William Etty's candy-coated *Cupid and Psyche* or Prud'hon's more intellectual and sensational *Love and Friendship*. Consider what made Rodin's *Age of Bronze* so scandalous when he first exhibited it, or imagine the scandal that would have ensued if Caillebotte had exhibited his very realistic painting, *Nude on a Couch*.

**Note: Include a discussion of Rodin's Age of Bronze and its Scandal** –no notes here because I did not cover it in my lecture. Without the Girodet out we should have time to incorporate Rodin.

### **Conclusion**

I will leave you this afternoon with an extraordinary, yet intimate, painting that tells the love story of two relatively ordinary people. In 1913, Pierre Bonnard, in his *Dining Room in the Country*, used brilliant colors and kitty cats to express his love for Marthe, his longtime companion and wife-to-be. Nothing scandalous about this one. But on this day dedicated to lovers, his deeply personal expression of love, seems like a fittingly pleasant counterpart to Zoppio's more bizarre testament of love for his wife with which we began our exploration of love and scandal an hour ago.