

Welcome, Alexander J. Noelle

Assistant curator of European paintings and sculpture, 1500–1800



Alexander J. Noelle joined the CMA this past fall as assistant curator of European paintings and sculpture, 1500–1800. Noelle brings rich experience to the role, combining his specialized knowledge with a desire to facilitate new interpretations for visitors to the museum.

Holding both a PhD and an MA from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Noelle completed his doctoral work with a dissertation on the little-studied portraiture and patronage of Giuliano de' Medici, younger brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent. He earned a BA in the history of art and Italian from Vassar College.

Primarily, Noelle's focus of study has been Italian 15th- and 16th-century paintings and sculpture, but

his early experiences include work in the education departments of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College. Noelle has been a research associate in various postings at the Courtauld Gallery, studying Italian paintings and works on paper circa 1400–1800. He was also the publications and interpretive manager of exhibitions for the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University and was most recently the Anne L. Poulet Curatorial Fellow at the Frick Collection in 2017–2020, where he cocurated the first major exhibition on the Florentine sculptor Bertoldo di Giovanni. While he currently specializes in Italian artwork circa 1500–1800, Noelle has always pursued broad avenues of inquiry while reconsidering canonical context.

Noelle was drawn to the CMA for its dynamic exhibitions and for the incredible strength of the collection, specifically in paintings and sculpture. The resources for research and collaboration available, such as the Ingalls Library and Museum Archives and the world-class conservation department, were particularly attractive. Moreover, “the fact that museum admission is free is very important and very powerful,” Noelle shared. “I am thrilled to be at an institution committed to offering new narratives on centuries-old objects ‘for the benefit of all the people,’ per the CMA mission statement.”

Noelle conducts research and interprets objects through a complex approach. “We cannot usually ‘solve’ the questions posed by an artwork with a simple answer, thereby shutting down discussion,” he said. “What the CMA is skilled at doing, and what dovetails with my own methods, is the incitement of dynamic conversations from multiple perspectives. In my department, we aspire to inspire viewers to make their own discoveries and interpretations.”

As the collection is the cornerstone of all we do at the CMA, Noelle endeavors to develop displays in the galleries that showcase the importance and potential of our current masterpieces. In addition, he hopes to identify museum-quality acquisitions that spark new conversations, both with the existing collection and with the public.

OPPOSITE

Apollo Flaying Marsyas

c. 1691–1700. Giovanni Battista Foggini (Italian, 1652–1725). Bronze; h. 59.8 cm. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 2023.2

Meet the Staff

The Department of Conservation's preventive conservator



PHOTO: MCKINLEY WILEY

Laura Gaylord Resch is the Cleveland Museum of Art's assistant preventive conservator. Day to day, she manages the safety and preservation of thousands of art objects. Her work requires her to liaise between museum departments to care for the CMA's artworks, which helps maintain the accessibility of these objects for visitors' enjoyment.

"The CMA is one of the only American museums that has had the foresight and support to foreground the importance of preventive conservation. Having a conservator focused on the preventive care of the collection shows we are prioritizing the sustainable and careful use of our collection to ensure its longevity so that we can fulfill our mission of creating transformative experiences through art, 'for the benefit of all the people forever,'" explains Sarah Scaturro, Eric and Jane Nord Chief Conservator. Here, Laura shares more about her position and what makes preventive conservation crucial to caring for the CMA collection.

What is unique about the CMA having a preventive conservator on staff?

Preventive conservation has only recently emerged as a recognized specialty within conservation. For a long time, preventive care was split among staff members in conservation or collections management departments. Consolidating all those roles under one staff person is a recent innovation at museums in the United States.

What does a preventive conservator do?

An analogy I've been using to describe my role is that if this were the medical field, I would be a general practitioner. I'm looking at the health of the collection in a holistic way, across all sorts of material types and art media. And my colleagues in the conservation department are the specialists. If an artwork needs surgery, I refer it to one of them. My focus is on general collections care and material science to make sure everything is well preserved.

Resch cleaning *The Thinker* outside the museum's south entrance, 2020



PHOTO: MCKINLEY WILEY

Do you hold a specialization in a certain area of conservation (paintings, textiles, sculpture, etc.)?

I completed my university coursework in art conservation at the University of Delaware. When I was going through that program, there was no such thing as a preventive conservator, and I figured I would be pursuing collections management. I ended up working in private practice helping institutions of varying sizes implement collection care policies, analyze climate data, and design storage spaces. We worked with a wide variety of institutions, including historical house museums and the National Air and Space Museum. It was a crash course in caring for art and artifacts of all material types.

Can you describe how you collaborate with other departments to ensure the best environments for CMA objects?

A huge part of my job is liaising with colleagues across the museum, and that's what I love about this work. I work closely with the facilities department, and we together ensure that humidity, temperature, and light levels are where they need to be to keep the artwork safe. I also work with our security team to understand how visitors are interacting with our collection. And I check in with our events staff to see if they're planning any large gatherings in the galleries so I can partner with them to ensure the collection's safety.

How many areas of the collection are you focusing on at one time?

All of them, all the time! I'm keeping in mind how different materials need different types of environments to remain stable. For example, metals need very dry air, and paper needs to be kept in a more humid (but not too humid!) environment. I have to consider all of these things in tandem throughout my workday. If an artwork needs a particular display environment, for example, we can do things such as utilizing specialized cases that have silica gel inside to adjust the humidity.

How does managing risk factor into your work with CMA objects?

Conservators are continually considering preservation versus access. An artwork is of no use to any of us if it just sits in the dark. Risk management is a collaborative conversation with the curatorial, education, security, design, exhibitions, and visitor services teams to figure out how we can keep objects safe and consider their material fragility, while also contemplating how something will be best viewed by visitors. I track incident reports and work with colleagues to find solutions if art in the galleries is touched by visitors. We try to figure out if folks are curious about what an artwork is made of, and if so, we work to add more information to the label to help people understand how something is constructed. It's a constant conversation.

Welcome, Erin Fletcher

The museum's new director of interpretation and adult programs



Erin Fletcher joined the CMA this past spring as the director of interpretation and adult programs. She is responsible for overseeing adult and academic programming, the museum's docent program, and the museum's interpretation team.

Fletcher comes to the CMA from Ohio Wesleyan University, where she served as the director of the Richard M. Ross Museum of Art. There, she worked on building connections between the university and the broader community, with a focus on lowering barriers to entry. She is excited to join a public museum where serving a broad audience is embedded in the mission.

"Engaging people through art is a passion for me, and this position is closely aligned with my values," Fletcher shared. With a background that combines socially engaged arts with curatorial and museum-education experience, Fletcher's goals at the CMA include nurturing programming and supporting exhibition interpretation strategies that are centered around visitor needs.

Fletcher oversees teams that impact many areas of the public's experience with the museum. To best engage with the community in Cleveland, she plans to leverage the commonalities between adult

and academic programming, the role of docents, and the strength of exhibition interpretation. She said:

The people on my team understand that it is important to create experiences for people who love art and that there must also be entry points for people in the community who don't have an art background. I am excited about our collective work to build trust and accessible entry points to our exhibitions for everyone who walks through our doors.

To illustrate, Fletcher shared that within the adult programs area, lectures and hands-on programs serve different but equally important purposes. For example, distinguished lectures bring in internationally recognized scholars and serve established audiences, while other programs, such as Artist in the Atrium, help build a bridge between local creatives, the general public, and the CMA. In these ways, the museum serves as a link in both local and global art communities.

Fletcher's interpretation team works to ensure all exhibitions can reach the broadest possible audience. One way of doing this is through community voice labels. Community voice labels are an opportunity for community partners to have their perspectives represented on our walls. In turn, these labels provide another point of connection to the art for first-time visitors. *New Narratives: Contemporary Works on Paper*, which is currently on view, features such labels.

Fletcher is grateful that art museums today are thinking about their relevance. "I appreciate the mission of the CMA, which is to serve all the people forever. I was raised by a public-school teacher and a librarian, so I deeply believe in institutions that provide a public service."

Welcome, Ada de Wit

The museum’s new curator of decorative art



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADA DE WIT

This August, the CMA welcomed its new curator of decorative art, Ada de Wit. Previously the curator of works of art and sculpture at the Wallace Collection in London, de Wit now brings her pragmatic wealth of knowledge to the CMA.

Studying art history in Poland, de Wit initially focused on European painting and architecture, but thanks to an inspirational professor became interested in decorative art. She found the very nature of decorative art appealing: such works exist not only as beautiful objects but also functional pieces that people can live with, use, and handle. She dedicated her first MA thesis to the field, gradually increasing the scope of periods, countries, and materials she studied. Soon after graduating, de Wit found a unique MA course in England on 18th-century French and British decorative art and historic interiors. This second MA helped her

to secure a curatorial job at the Wallace Collection in London, which is renowned for its 18th-century French furniture and ceramics.

De Wit brings two main areas of specialty to her role at the CMA: wood and precious metals. Her first MA thesis was on 19th-century silver from her home city, Wrocław, which used to be an important center of silversmithing in Germany. While working at the Wallace, she completed her PhD studies on 17th-century carved-wood decoration in the Netherlands and Britain. This required studying interiors of royal palaces, country houses, and churches, along with ship carving. At the Wallace, she also researched Asante gold (from current-day Ghana) and Chinese gold from the Qianlong period that involved technical analyses at the Goldsmiths’ Company Assay Office in London.

To gain a more practical knowledge of precious metals, de Wit completed a short silversmithing course, allowing her to appreciate precious metal items from new perspectives. Fascinated by the silver hallmarking system wherein items are often stamped with tiny marks that reveal the maker, the year, and the place where they were made, de Wit shared that “reading them is like doing detective work and I’ve always enjoyed that.”

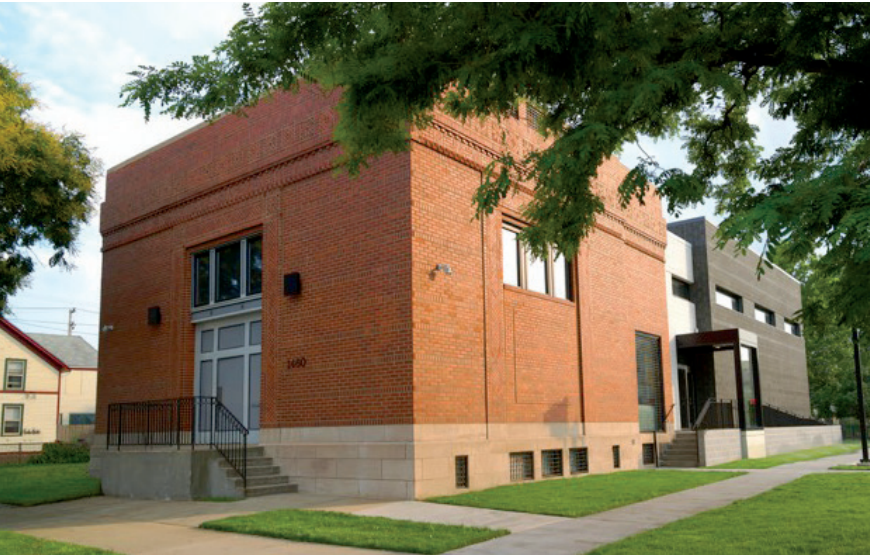
On coming to the CMA, de Wit expressed several areas of excitement about her move. She noted that “The fact that the museum has one of the largest endowments of any art museum in the US is very attractive because in practice it means that more can be done in terms of research, acquisitions, and programming. The CMA’s collection of decorative art is of international importance; the star piece for me is the silver tureen designed by Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier. It is thrilling that now I will look after it!”

De Wit hopes to make the collection at the CMA more visible and accessible for visitors and scholars, and to establish regular international collaboration: “At the local level, I would like to make Clevelanders more aware of the treasures the CMA has and boost their sense of pride in their hometown museum. But the first step for me will be to learn about the collection, the CMA, and the Cleveland cultural scene, and I am very excited about the future.”

Transformer Station Joins the CMA

With thanks to the Bidwells

Hingetown’s Transformer Station has officially joined the CMA as a satellite location dedicated to contemporary art. This acquisition came after 10 years of a successful working partnership with art collectors Fred and Laura Bidwell, the founders of Transformer Station. Since 2013, the CMA and the Bidwells have partnered on critically acclaimed exhibitions such as *New Histories*, *New Futures* and FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, to offer fresh, engaging programming outside of University Circle.



Transformer Station’s original façade was built in 1924. The Bidwells added on a modern addition in 2011 but retained the original grandeur of the railway building.

History of the Space

Built by Cleveland’s one-time private transit provider the Cleveland Railway Company, Transformer Station’s original building is one of 16 substations built to manage Cleveland’s public transit in the early 20th century. The original façade of the building was constructed in 1924 and was where the facility converted power for the Detroit Avenue streetcar line. That transit line was an active corridor on the west side and carried 19 million riders during its peak years.

The original building was used as a transformer station by the railway company until 1949, when the City of Cleveland offered it for auction. From the early 1980s until 2010, it housed an artist’s foundry. Upon its purchase by Fred and Laura Bidwell in 2011, it underwent renovations and a

contemporary addition—all the while ensuring that the original space, masonry, and ironwork were restored and maintained with historic integrity.

The Generosity of Donors

Longtime patrons of the arts in Akron and Cleveland, the Bidwells felt compelled to buy the old transformer building after decades of amassing a significant, privately owned photography collection. Upon ownership, they started planning programming that would engage and transform the west side of Cleveland and quickly partnered with the CMA to do so on a larger scale. The last decade has proven beneficial for the community in Hingetown and has allowed the CMA to present new and experimental contemporary art projects in a dedicated space.

Vibrant Programming

The CMA ownership of Transformer Station kicked off with the opening of the exhibition *Blow* by Japanese artist Tabaimo in July. *Blow* is a four-channel, immersive video installation that blurs the lines between fantasy and reality, combining digital animation with traditional Japanese symbolism to present a layered art experience, meant to be experienced both cognitively and sensorially. This show runs through February 3, 2024.

The CMA plans to utilize Transformer Station as a hub to present the work of emerging artists, share time-based media, host live music performances, and create dynamic social experiences. The CMA is grateful for the collaboration and generosity of the Bidwells in allowing us to advance our mission to provide transformative experiences through art, for the benefit of all the people forever.

Mahler's Resurrection

The composer's seminal work now on display at the CMA

Andria Hoy, archivist for the Cleveland Orchestra and Moyna Stanton, CMA paper conservator, discussing Mahler's elegant handwriting in pen and ink on the manuscript's professional staff paper



Now on view in the Monte and Usha Ahuja Founders Rotunda (200) at the Cleveland Museum of Art in collaboration with the Cleveland Orchestra, Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 in C minor ("the Resurrection") represents one of the greatest Western compositions of the 19th century. While musically it portrays the composer's vivid exploration of the struggle between death and life, the manuscript itself helps tell the story of the CMA's long-standing partnership with the Cleveland Orchestra, as well as the impact a generous donor can have on preserving history for future generations.

Mahler's Symphony No. 2, better known as the Resurrection, consists of an unbound bifolio handwritten manuscript of 232 pages. This manuscript is one of the purest examples of Mahler's written hand in existence, and includes his own alterations and notes, from the time of his composition of the piece between 1888 and 1894. Running approximately an hour and a half, the Resurrection symphony is an epic musical conception that surpasses pieces by Mahler's

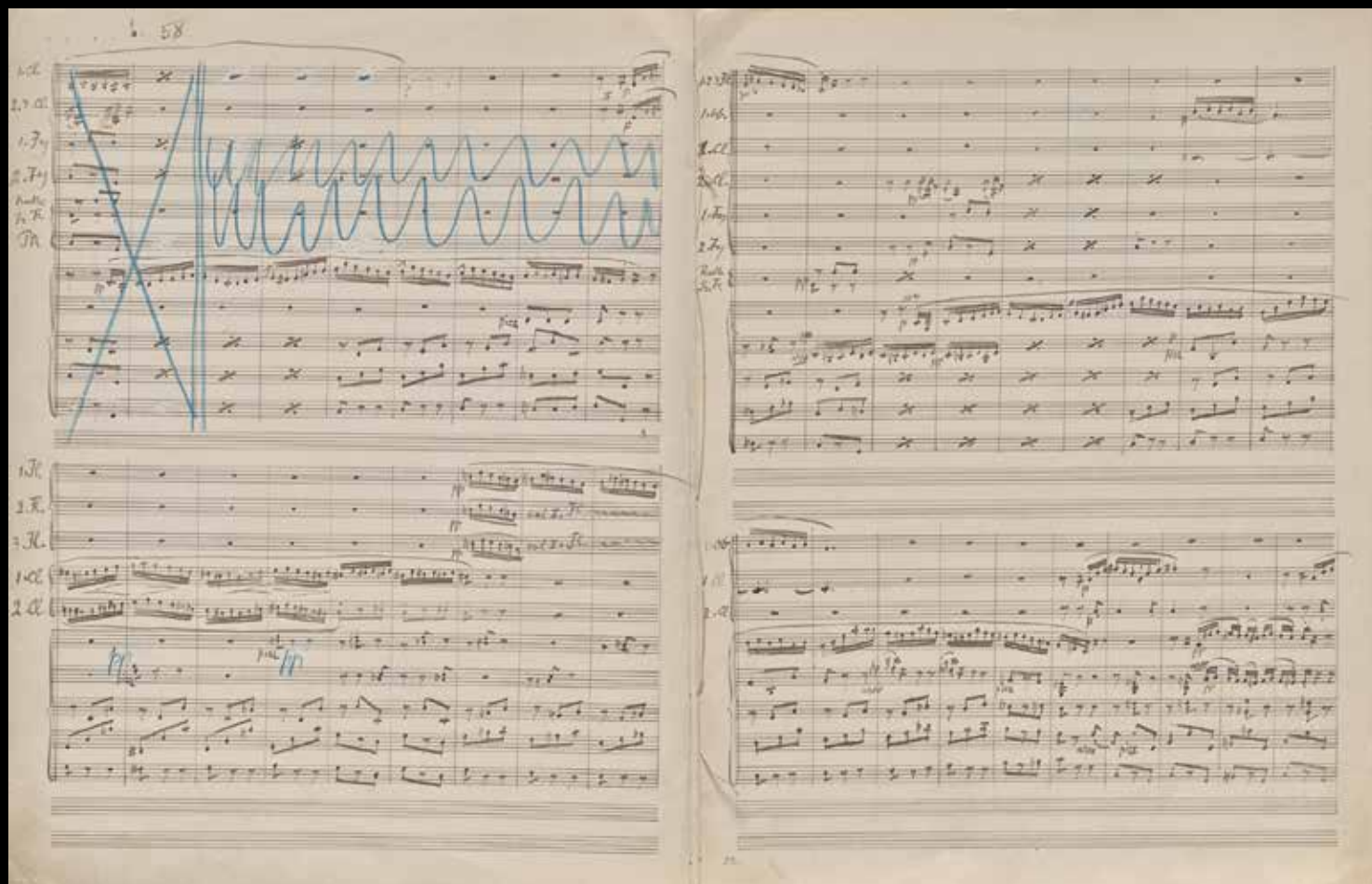
contemporaries.

In the ominous key of C minor, the piece captures the struggle of the human spirit in its attempts to overcome death, in all its terrifying incarnations. These ideas wind throughout the entirety of the composition, culminating in the final movement, in which Mahler explores sounds associated with Christian imagery of the last days: a voice crying in the wilderness, the last trumpet, and the final resurrection of mankind. By the time he composed his second symphony, Mahler had been conducting operas for 14 years. This certainly informed the scale and grandiosity with which he approached the work.

After pausing efforts on the piece for almost a year, Mahler found himself at the funeral of a close friend. A choir performance during the service came as the inspiration Mahler needed to finish his piece. He described the pivotal moment as a conception from God and immediately set to work finishing his epic composition.

Purchased anonymously in 2016, the manuscript for the symphony was later revealed to

Pen and ink, graphite pencil, and notably, blue pencil, were Mahler's tools for edits and annotations on the score



have been bought by Dr. Herbert G. Kloiber of Vienna, a noted media executive, philanthropist, and trustee of the Cleveland Orchestra. With a provenance that can be traced back to Mahler's widow, Alma, the manuscript has at various times been on deposit with such great institutions as the Gemeentemuseum and the Morgan Library and Museum. Longtime collaboration between the Cleveland Orchestra and the Cleveland Museum of Art has led to this special opportunity for the manuscript to be on view for second time in Cleveland,

the first being in the orchestra's Severance Hall after the gift by Dr. Kloiber was announced to the orchestra in September 2022.

Selections from the autographed full score of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 will be on display in the museum's rotunda through February 11, 2024. Accompanying this exhibition will be the reinstallation of the museum's marble *Terpsichore Lyran* (*Muse of Lyric Poetry*) by Antonio Canova, which has been off view since March 2023.

Given by the Heusingers

Works from the Seifū Yohei studio

The Heusingers in front of *Season of hope and courage; Myosotis sylvatica* (woodland perennial); common name, *forget-me-not* by Maggie Denk-Leigh, associate professor and printmaking department chair at the Cleveland Institute of Art



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HEUSINGERS

James and Christine Heusinger's gift to the museum is one of the finest collections of work by Seifū Yohei III and other generations of the Seifū Yohei studio that can be found outside of Japan. Theirs is a story of generosity, long-lasting relationships, and decades of museum membership.

When did you first become involved with the Cleveland Museum of Art?

We became regularly involved when Robert Bergman was the director in the 1990s. We became members around that time and joined the Print Club of Cleveland. Each time we come back to the museum, we become more and more interested in what is going on and have upgraded our membership several times over the years. We just love it.

Tell us about your interest in Japanese art and how you started collecting the work of Seifū Yohei III.

In the late 1970s, we lived in Buffalo and began to take an interest in Asian art after trips to Toronto. Artworks such as ivory carvings piqued our interest, and eventually, we began to collect Japanese ceramics as well as prints. Through a string of connections and friendships, a dealer reached out to us with a piece of Yohei III pottery, and gradually, various dealers helped us expand our collection. We traveled to England to visit new friends who were art experts and ultimately connected with Edward Kawanabe, who became the key person helping us collect. Our relationships were the driving force to building a beautiful collection.

What about Yohei III's artwork resonates with you personally?

The first time I [Jim] saw one of his pieces, it just grabbed me. I couldn't believe it. It was so ethereal, so special, so different. I was stunned. Yohei III was the first ceramist to be named an Imperial Household Artist, designated by the emperor of Japan in 1893, and is considered the premier ceramist of his period. He was noted for perfection in his work. He wouldn't export his ceramics, like other artists of his time, so his work was not collected in the same way other Japanese artists' was. He was known for unusual and rare glazes. One of the pieces we gifted to the CMA is finished with what may be a colloidal gold glaze, which is a glaze of his invention and very rare.

What do you hope this generous gift will contribute to the CMA?

Because the Seifū studio did not focus on supplying the export market, Yohei III's work has been less known outside of Japan. Even within Japan, scholarship on the studio has been limited, as few works are in public collections. By collecting the way we did, we sort of rediscovered Yohei III, and it's opened the door for scholars. And over the years, we have quite literally opened the doors of our home to let people study our collection! We hope that our gift will enhance the CMA's permanent collection and further strengthen the scholarship around Yohei III.