

Featured Gems

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Coffee Shop Notes

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Imagine having a collection of approximately a thousand pieces of artwork, most of which was created by deaf and Deaf artists. Now imagine that 70% of them are not freely accessible, being sequestered in climate control vaults and only available by request and the trouble of archival staff who have to take the time to put on white gloves and carefully extract the piece for viewing. This is the general picture of the artwork collection at Gallaudet University.

It is one of André Pellerin's jobs to oversee the art collection at Gallaudet University. Through the support of the Art Department and the Archives, he recently made it possible for people to view some treasures from the art collection in the Archives. This landmark show, GALLAUDET TREASURE: ART FROM OUR ARCHIVES, opened on Wednesday, 18 February, at the Washburn gallery, and will run through 12 March.

The featured pieces represent a range of art periods, from the 19th and early-middle 20th centuries, and include some renowned Deaf artists such as Regina Olson Hughes (botanical illustrator), Olaf Hanson (architect), Morris Broderson, and John Carlin (who was the first deaf American artist to study abroad). On the opening day of the show, Pellerin gave a gallery talk during which he shared insights and intriguing facts about the pieces on display. He will give another talk at noon on Tuesday, 2 March.

Here are some of the tidbits which Pellerin shared, along with corresponding images which he kindly gave permission for display. [Note: the gallery lights were set at minimum, to preserve the artwork, which due to their ages, are fragile. In the following photographs, you may notice white spots which are reflections from the lights.]

1. *Hughesia Reginae*, by Regina Olson Hughes. Highly respected in the field of botanical illustration, and having been honored with a doctoral degree from Gallaudet College in 1967, she was also honored by having a genus and species of orchid named after her. Here is a watercolor of the flower. <http://www.rit.edu/~srs1351/TTM/WABhughes1.jpg>

2. *Untitled*, by Regina Mary Olson. Hughes painted this portrait of a ship when she was 10 years old. Observe the fine handling of color and shading. <http://www.rit.edu/~srs1351/TTM/WABhughes2.jpg>

3. *Txisturlari—Basque Musicians*, by Ramon de Zubiaurre. This oil canvas dates from 1905. One fascinating thing about this piece is that there is another canvas on the back. Pellerin turned it over to demonstrate. There is also a 3rd canvas hidden between the two; hopefully, one day restorative efforts may uncover the contents. <http://www.rit.edu/~srs1351/TTM/WABspain1.jpg>

4. *Dutch Village Scene*, by John Carlin. This 1860 oil canvas was painted just before the American Civil War, and demonstrates skillful mastery of light and perspective. The image here is an up-close detail of the characters. <http://www.rit.edu/~srs1351/TTM/WABcarlin1.jpg>

5. Camp Brightwood, Col. Henry S. Briggs, 10th Reg.t Mass. Volunteers, by John Donovan. This lithograph, which was created in 1861, depicts the scene at a training camp of soliders during the early days of the American Civil War. <http://www.rit.edu/~srs1351/TTM/WABcivil1.jpg>
This portrait of the camp is a classic example of the period's prevailing patriotic sentimentalism, and one tendency of lithographers back then was to include themselves in the image. Try to find the artist in the previous image or take a look at this up-close detail.
<http://www.rit.edu/~srs1351/TTM/WABcivil2.jpg>

Special THANKS go to Andre Pellerin for giving me permission to take photographs of selected artwork. All photographs were taken on tripod, without the use of camera flashes, and the color was digitally corrected as much as possible. Please do not re-distribute images in the public, and when referring to them, please remember to cite their sources, and credit the artists for their work. More information on the artists and their bodies of work can be readily obtained from sources such as Deborah Sonnenstrahl's DEAF ARTISTS OF AMERICA and Harry Lang's DEAF PERSONS IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES.

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