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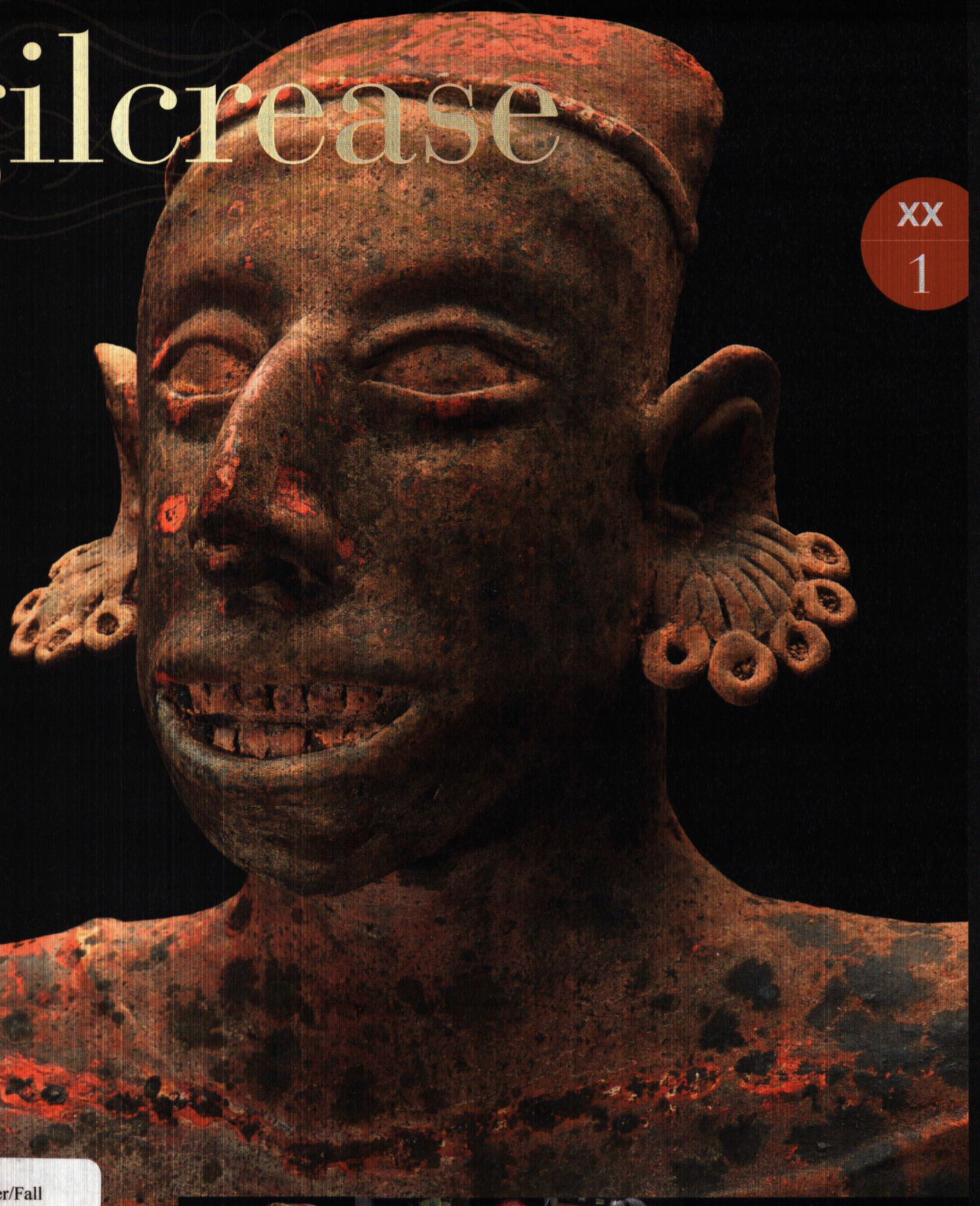

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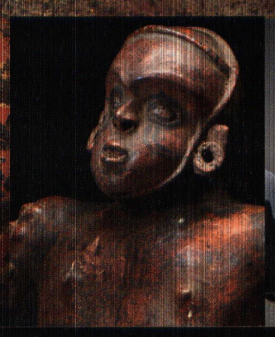





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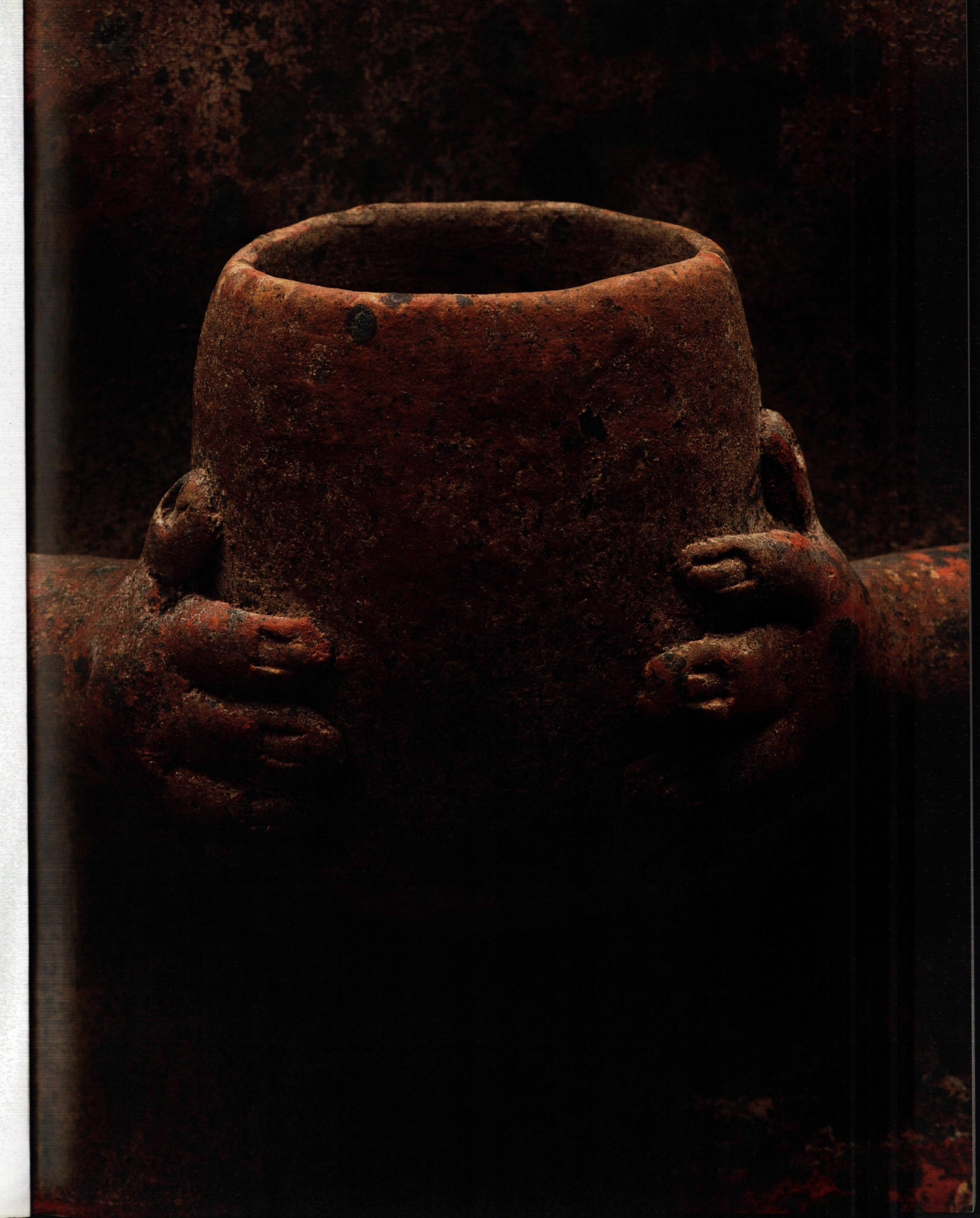

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Front cover: Nayarit female figure, detail. GM54.7770; see story beginning on page six for information on insets at bottom.

Back cover: "The Cat and the Fiddle" from *The National Nursery Book*. Frederick Warne & Co., New York and London, circa 1865.

Page one: Nayarit female figure, detail, GM54.7770. Page two: Senufo mask, detail (see page six for full image and caption). Contents page insets, clockwise from upper left: Olmec infant figure, GM54.7749; "Little Jack Horner" from *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes: A Collection of Alphabets, Rhymes, Tales, and Jingles; Daniel Webster* by Thomas Ball. Plaster, original plaster model. Boston Athenaeum photo by Jerry L. Thompson. *Mak-Hos-Kah, Chief of the Goways (White Cloud)* by Charles Bird King, GM0126.1198.

Facing: *William Shakespeare*. Graves, Henry & Co. after Vincent Brooks, 1862, chromolithograph, GM1576.142.

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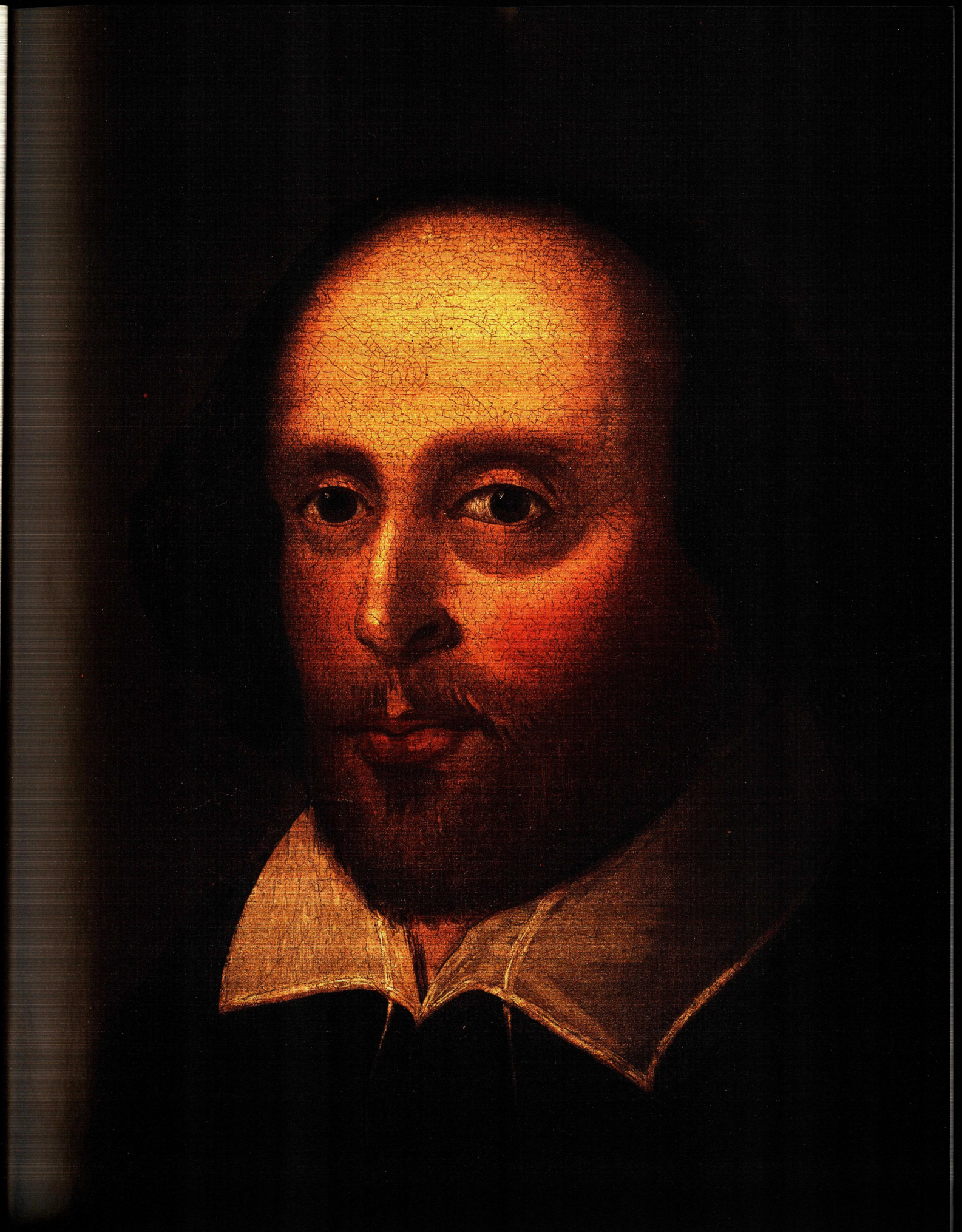

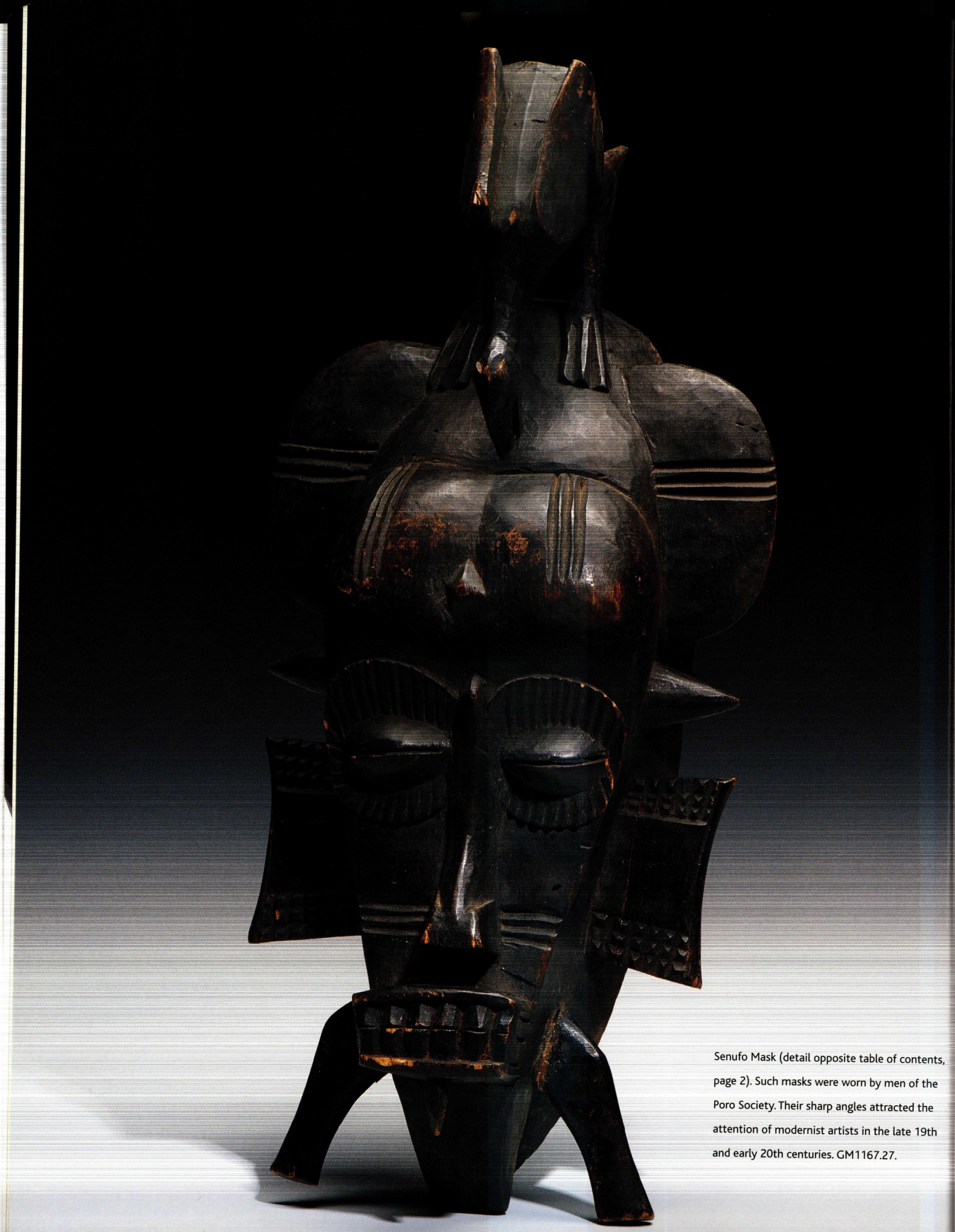

Senufo Mask (detail opposite table of contents, page 2). Such masks were worn by men of the Poro Society. Their sharp angles attracted the attention of modernist artists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. GM1167.27.

Old figures, new ways of seeing

BOB PICKERING AND CHERYL SMALLWOOD-ROBERTS

"Man . . . never perceives anything fully or comprehends anything completely. He can see, hear, touch, and taste—but how far he sees, how well he hears, what his touch tells him, what he tastes depends upon the number and quality of his senses." C. G. JUNG 1979, P. 21

"When I show someone a pond in the forest, I ask them, 'What do you see? Do you see the pond; do you see the rocks at the bottom; do you see the fish?' When they look, they only see the pond but when they see, they are seeing everything. Only a few see it all. I use this idea a great deal when I take people into the outdoors. I am looking for the observer that sees what is not supposed to be there. That is a true hunter."

SCOTT FRAZIER (CROW / SANTEE) DIRECTOR, PROJECT INDIGENOUS

Ancient art attracts. Artifacts from early human cultures may inspire, repulse, or make us curious about the objects and images from long ago. Many progressive European artists of the late 19th century were attracted to the angularity, the different perspectives, and roughness of tribal arts from around the world. Picasso, Gauguin, and Van Gogh among many others regarded non-western art as primitive or even "savage" but, at the same time, they viewed art from Africa, the Americas, and Asia as sources of inspiration (Rubin 1988, p. 2). While a previous generation frequently dismissed non-western art, the new artists recognized the genius of styles from many times and places. So-called "primitive art" suddenly became popular. Without doubt, the strong angular planes had a direct impact on Cubism, just as the colorful, flat ukiyo-e of Japan inspired Impressionist painters.

Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo were major forces in the art and politics of the early 20th century. Their influence extended well beyond their Mexican homeland. Indigenismo—the recognition and promotion of the first cultures and arts of the Americas—was a common theme for both artists. Together, they amassed a huge collection of Mesoamerican objects from many parts of Mexico. Rivera's Anahuacalli

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CHERYL SMALLWOOD-ROBERTS is a special collections research associate for Gilcrease, specializing in pre-Columbian ceramics of the Americas. She earned her BA in Fine Art/Anthropology from Cornell College and an MA in Museum Science and Management from the University of Tulsa.

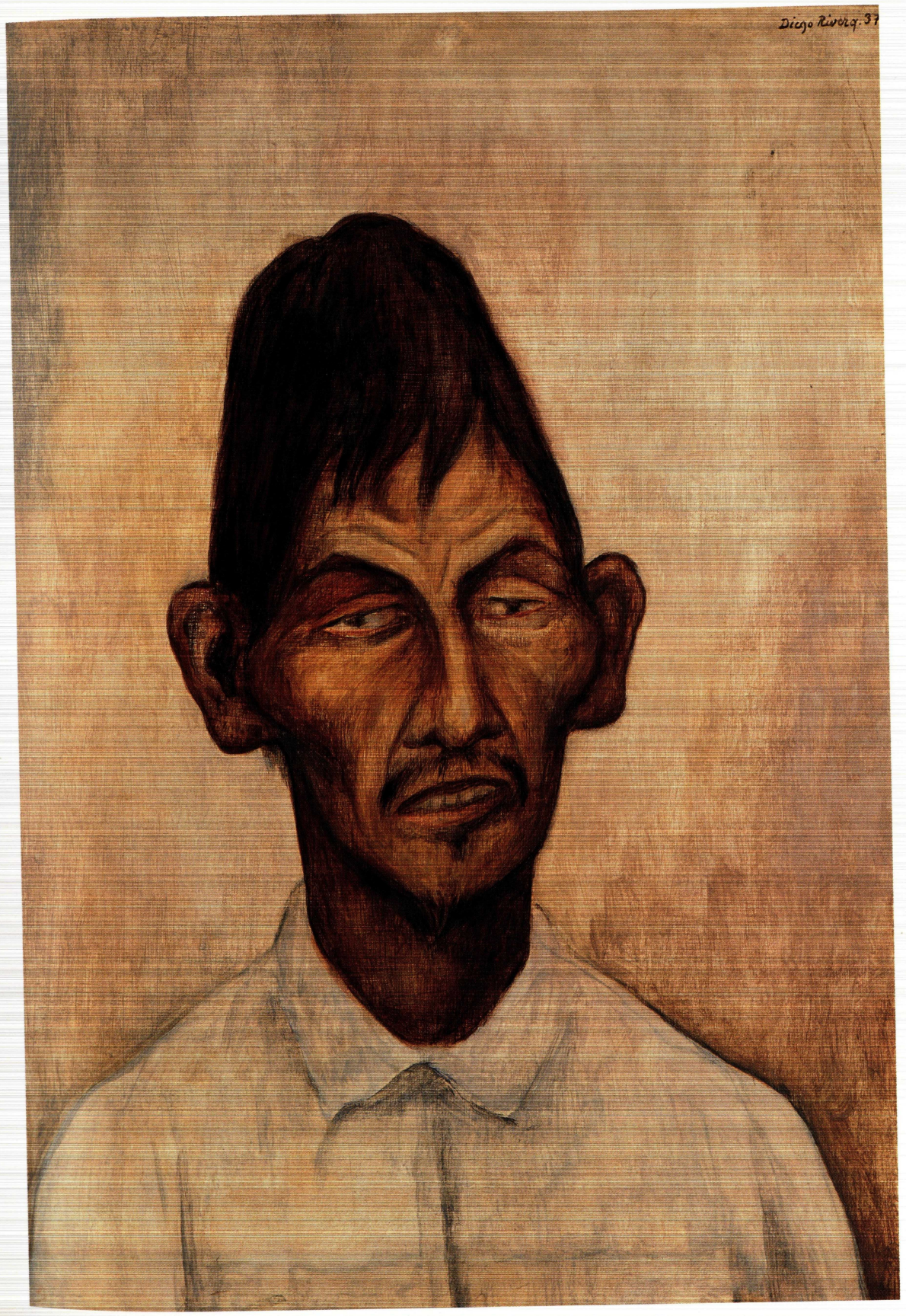


Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo on their balcony. Through the glass doors and under the balcony, pieces from their archaeological collection can be seen. Photo courtesy of Carol Williams/Florence Arquin Archive.



Right: *Carnival*, Alfredo Zalce. Print, 1979. *Carnival* combines pre-Spanish and colonial imagery to create a stark image of contact between cultures. GM14.930.

Facing: *Cabeza de Indio*, Diego Rivera. Oil on masonite, 1937. This painting is typical of those that honor the Indian peoples of Mexico. GM0147.2022.





Vendedora de Jitomates, Rufino Tamayo. Watercolor, 1940. Tamayo celebrated the traditional life ways of indigenous Mexican people. GM0247.1473.

museum holds an estimated 50,000 objects. Rivera's and Kahlo's art frequently drew on Mexican folk images to express the themes of indigenous strength, honor, and beauty. Rufino Tamayo's *Vendedora de Jitomates* combines simplicity and nobility in this common folk scene. Alfredo Zalce borrows pre-Hispanic and colonial images to create powerful black and white images.

In the 1960s, Kahlua, a brand of coffee liqueur, promoted its product using images of Mexican antiquities mostly from West Mexico and in the process created a pop culture phenomenon. The ads featured single or grouped Mesoamerican figures (Mesoamerican is a term used by archaeologists to denote pre-Hispanic cultures of Mexico and adjacent areas) coupled with sandy beaches and humorous balloon dialogue to create a kind of exoticism aimed at a young adult demographic. Jules Berman, who launched the very successful Kahlua brand, published a catalogue of his collection of pre-Hispanic art in 1973.

Artists and art historians frequently perceive figures from earlier cultures as *objets d'art* and ignore or are uninformed about the cultural and spiritual signficance of tribal images. While many prehistoric objects are finely crafted, referring to them only as art falls far short of recognizing their full importance. A personal anecdote illustrates. During the spectacular *Te Maori* exhibition at the Field Museum of Natural History in the 1980s, anthropologist and Maori elder Sir Sydney Moko Meade stated the dilemma. He wanted Maori art to be seen as a fully developed and refined world art. At the same time, he opined that seeing these important works only as art was to completely misunderstand their meaning.

SIR SYDNEY MOKO MEADE STATED THE DILEMMA. HE WANTED MAORI ART TO BE SEEN AS A FULLY DEVELOPED AND REFINED WORLD ART. AT THE SAME TIME, HE OPINED THAT SEEING THESE IMPORTANT WORKS ONLY AS ART WAS TO COMPLETELY MISUNDERSTAND THEIR MEANING.



This ad depicts a kneeling woman carrying a bowl on her left shoulder—a frequent posture among Nayarit and other types of Occidente figures. These figures gave the Kahlua ads an enticing exoticism. Private collection.

Looking at Mesoamerican objects

Today, most Americans know West Mexico by its beach resorts such as Mazatlán, Manzanillo, Puerto Vallarta, and Ixtapa. At the time of the Spanish Conquest, much of West Mexico was part of the Tarascan Empire. Nearly 1500 years before that (circa 200 BCE to 200 CE), native peoples used this ecologically diverse and rich region to create a culture that has long been known as the "shaft tomb" culture, a term that artificially emphasizes the importance of the tombs and the ceramic figures found therein. Beginning in the 1970s, archaeologist Phil Weigand and his Mexican and American colleagues began examining prehistoric sites in the region. Near the small town of Teuchitlán, the massive site of Guachimonton was found. Archaeological research at the site is adding new knowledge about these ancient people. The architectural pattern is defined as having a central circular stepped pyramid, surrounded by a circular plaza encircled by a raised banquette on which houses or temples were built. At Guachimonton, at least half a dozen of these circular complexes are linked to each other. In addition, at least two Mesoamerican ballcourts have been found.

Until the 1970s, most of the commentary regarding shaft tomb figures was descriptive and focused on creating a classification system of "types." Perhaps the first formal treatment of Occidente figures was published in 1946 (Toscana, Kirchhoff, and Rubin de la Borbolla). Although the work was important as a "first," its attribution of Occidente figures to the Tarascan Empire of the Spanish Contact Period is today considered to be incorrect. However, Kirchhoff did interpret some of the figures as depicting *naguals* or *nahualli*—spirit guides in the form of animals taken on by shamans. This may be the first recognition that the ceramic figures from the shaft tombs had layered meanings.

Hasso von Winning wrote extensively about Occidente figures. *The Shaft Tomb Figures of West Mexico* (1974) continues to be the best single reference on the subject. His volume *Anecdotal Sculptures* (co-authored by Olga Hammer, 1972) interpreted the shaft tomb tradition as images of everyday life. *Portrayals of Pathological Symptoms in Pre-Columbian Mexico* (von Winning 1987) surveyed the visual evidence for representations of many pathologic conditions. He contrasted the Occidente tradition with the religious and political art that typifies much of the art from Teotihuacan, Monte Albán, and the Mayan and Aztec cultures.

Peter Furst (1972, 1977) challenged Von Winning's perspective and became the foremost proponent of interpreting Occidente figures through the lens of shamanism and associated psychotropic experiences. He rightly points out that virtually all objects associated with mortuary behavior are completely or partially spiritual. While much of the previous literature on ceramic figures was mainly descriptive, Furst proposed that the meaning of the figures from the tombs transcended the everyday aspect of life and that literal interpretations were insufficient. For example, a figure of a woman carrying a bowl on her shoulder had a meaning beyond the obvious. This image is common and found in different styles of figures. Is the bowl simply a bowl or does the carrying of the bowl in this position signify something more?

Many Mesoamerican scholars have correctly noted that the human figures of the Occidente are different from those from other parts of Mexico. Most figures from the Olmec region, the Huasteca, Monte Albán, Teotihuacán, the Aztec, and Mayan empires are frequently depicted wearing very elaborate clothing and regalia. Many of these figures are deities or deity-impersonators. All of these figures represent formal state and/or religious artistic expressions. West Mexican human figures don't appear to follow that tradition.

THE HUMAN FIGURES OF THE OCCIDENTE ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE FROM OTHER PARTS OF MEXICO . . . MANY OF THESE FIGURES ARE DEITIES OR DEITY-IMPERSONATORS. ALL OF THESE FIGURES REPRESENT FORMAL STATE AND/OR RELIGIOUS ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS. WEST MEXICAN HUMAN FIGURES DON'T APPEAR TO FOLLOW THAT TRADITION.



Facing: Left to right: Mayan mold-made ceramic images often depict people surrounded by elaborate ritual images. Their meaning is not well known GM54.7758; Monte Albán figure. This figure and other similar ones represent Zapotec deities. Frequently they are part of the mortuary furnishings. GM54.2108; This head represents a priest or impersonator of the Aztec deity, Xipe Totec (*Shipay Tow-teck*) wearing the skin of a flayed ritual victim. GM54.7294.

Finely crafted ceramic figures of men and women were part of the mortuary objects found in Mayan graves on the island of Jaina (High-nah). GM54.3813.

This Olmec infant figure is an excellent example of ceramic skill. Infants were frequently included in political and religious art. GM54.7749.

Other Mesoamerican cultures also produced naturalistic, human figures that were used in different contexts. Mayan figures from the Island of Jaina and Gilcrease's *Olmec Infant* (previous page) are excellent examples. The Jaina figures probably represent the Mayan elite who were interred on the island of Jaina. Numerous Olmec infant figures exist in public and private collections. Their origins and meaning are obscure and not well studied; therefore it is difficult to determine their cultural significance.

THE CHALLENGE FOR 21ST-CENTURY RESEARCHERS IS TO GO BEYOND TYPOLOGY AND BASIC DESCRIPTION TO SEE IF THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF THESE FIGURES CAN BE ASCERTAINED.

New Research at Gilcrease

Current research at Gilcrease Museum looks at the Occidente shaft tomb figure tradition in new ways. Earlier aspects of the work were published between 1997 and 2005 (Cuevas and Pickering 2003, 2005; López-Mestas, Ramos, and Pickering 1998; Pickering, Ramos, Haskell, and Hall 1998; Pickering and Cabrero 1998; Pickering 1997a, 1997b and 1998). During this time, Mexican archaeologists found unlooted shaft tombs and studied their entire contents, not just the figures. They were further able to place the tombs in context of the entire sites in which they were found. These expressive and diverse ceramic figures they studied provide snapshot-like detail of the personal dress, body decoration, and adornment of people who lived between Guadalajara and the West Coast about 2,000 years ago. They also provide clues to past behavior, if we can decipher them.

It is probable that the combination of body postures, clothing, and accoutrements represented in these male and female figures have cultural and spiritual significance. Some elements are created in fine detail, which by itself suggests that such traits were important. The challenge for 21st-century researchers is to go beyond typology and basic description to see if the significance and meaning of these figures can be ascertained. For example, numerous hollow figures of females are depicted in a seated or kneeling posture with hands at the sides of an enlarged abdomen. This posture is found in different styles and with clothing and personal adornment characteristic of each style, yet the basic posture is the same. Do such figures merely represent a kneeling woman? Intuitively, these figures appear to represent pregnancy, but do they represent anything else? A first or successful first pregnancy? Coming of age? Marriage? The conception of a cacique/chief? Around the world, pregnancy and birth are important societal, not just personal events. Such figures (for examples, see the facing and following page) may commemorate this important transition.

Similarly, there are numerous ceramic figures, mostly in the Nayarit Style (defined as a style commonly found in the Mexican state of Nayarit) that depict a seated male with a tortoise shell instrument in the left hand and a deer antler baton in the right hand (an example follows on page 19). In the 16th-century *Codex Magliabecchiano,* an analogous painted image of a man playing the same combination of antler baton and tortoise shell is illustrated. The musician is said to have played during the funerary rituals for deceased leaders. One of the first steps in understanding the meaning of these figures is to determine the extent to which body postures correlate with gender, stylistic attributes, elements of clothing, body decoration, and accoutrement. Identifying these patterns is a key goal of this project. To date, nearly 2,000 figures from seven American museums comprise the sample.

While stylistically different, the similar postures of the Nayarit figures on the facing page and page 18 may denote pregnancy. Facing: GM54.8181; overleaf GM54.3997.



Both male and female ceramic figures represent diverse body postures, but not an unlimited number. Seventeen distinct and recurrent postures for males and for females have been identified to date. This small number suggests that the posture itself has cultural meaning that may be enhanced by body decoration, clothing, objects the figure carries, or in which hand the objects are held. Additional meanings may be construed by nuances such as the direction in which the figure's head is turned. Further, it suggests that the ceramicists followed a set of cultural rules as they constructed the figures. Perhaps the particular combination of clothing, personal adornment, and body decoration depict actual individuals, while the posture sends a message about the figure's larger cultural significance.

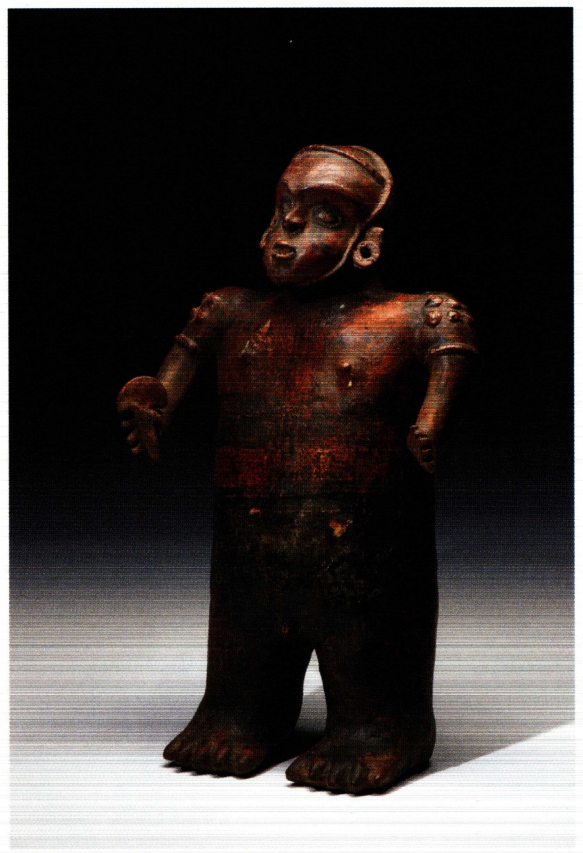


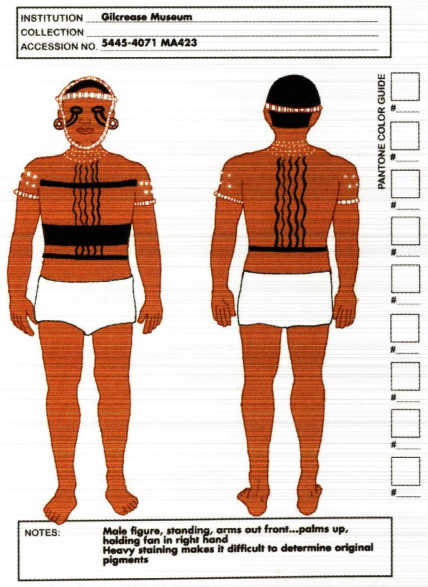
This Nayarit figure, made about 2,000 years ago, plays a tortoise shell instrument with a deer antler baton or rasp. Similar instruments were depicted in 16th-century codices. GM54.3901.

Good analysis demands detailed and accurate observation. Female and male figures have painted and possibly tattooed designs on their bodies. However, over the last two millennia, the details of color and design became obscured or faded. It can be challenging to look beyond the dirty surfaces or exaggerated appearances of West Mexico ceramic figures and see the real people they represent. Research assistants Aubree Hayden Karner and Cheryl Smallwood-Roberts applied their considerable artistic skills to take a deeper look. They illustrated over three hundred figures from the Gilcrease collection in more realistic human form. Close examination and interpretation was needed to craft these detailed drawings that were then digitized and colorized in Adobe® Photoshop®. Many of the ceramic artifacts have been judiciously cleaned, while others have calcium deposits that obscure much of the detail. Manganese dioxide (MnO_2), another deposit often found on ceramics from shaft tombs, appears to be attracted to some of the white pigments used to decorate the figures. Intense light and magnifying lenses frequently reveal white painted clothing and jewelry that is entirely covered with black manganese stain. A cursory examination easily misses the true color.

Careful illustrations can reveal details not seen in photographs. Dark manganese dioxide stains are attracted to certain white pigments used to paint details on artifacts like this Nayarit figure. Close observation allows us to detect the white briefs. GM54.4071.

Fabric clothing frequently is painted on male and female ceramic figures. In some cases, figures with similarly patterned clothes sometimes come from the same tombs. Perhaps the pattern is a familial identifier, much like a Scottish clan tartan. In many parts of Mesoamerica and South America, textile colors and patterns identified the

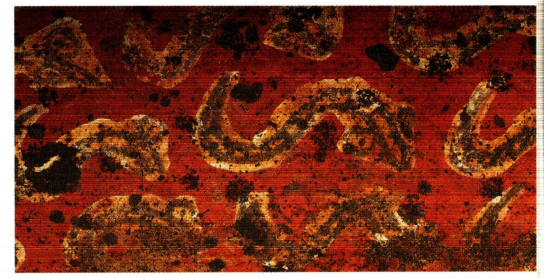




town and even the lineage of a person. If the people interred in the shaft tombs were dressed in their normal attire or wrapped in cloth, these elements have not survived the tomb environment, but the clothing depicted on the ceramic figures represents a virtual fashion catalogue of style. A spectacular monumental female figure in the collection wears a skirt patterned with serpents, and her partner sports the same figure on his cape. Could this be related to the mythic deity that evolved into the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, or "Serpent Skirt"? A son of Serpent Skirt, Quetzalcoatl—the feathered serpent—is first depicted at the Olmec site of La Venta, circa 1000–600 B.C., predating the shaft-tomb culture and virtually all other Mesoamerican cultures, yet some deities evidence long time depth. Once the postures and accoutrements of Occidente human figures are clearly identified, it may be possible to connect them with larger Mesoamerican traditions. Women rarely wear upper body clothing, with the exception of a small cape tied over one shoulder. Males wear a similar cape or a short-sleeved, vee-neck shirt, body armor, briefs, or an unusual scoop-shaped ornament on a belt.

Looking beyond the stylistics of the ceramic figures reveals many subtle but important variations. Wearing a headband is almost universal for men but the bands vary from plain, single strands to multiple twisted fabric bands. Sometimes a sagittal band is included, extending from the forehead to the back of the head. Headgear on male figures also goes to extremes. An animal skin, complete from head to feet, is worn on male figures that appear to have some high rank. This may represent the coati-mundi or the Xoloitzcuintle dog, as both animals are depicted in effigy vessels of the period.

Many figures wear no clothing other than the headband, but most are adorned with jewelry, including earrings, nose rings, necklaces, and arm bands. These vary from simple rings to extremely ornate styles that may be signifiers of social status.



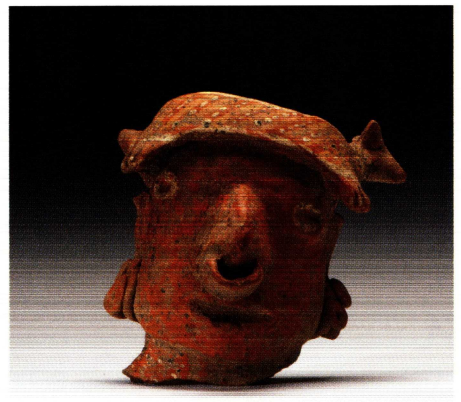


Pickering and Smallwood-Roberts using endoscopy to search for internal authenticity factors. These monumental Nayarit figures share the same design on their clothing—a serpent (detail above)—used in many Mesoamerican cultures. GM54.7769 (Male); GM54.7770 (Female). Photo of Pickering and Smallwood-Roberts by Eric Campos.

We can only speculate whether elaborate body and face art represents tattooing or ritual painting. Some figures are patterned over large areas, which probably represents paint, while less extensive patterns may be tattoos. The unusual round shoulder bumps found on many figures could represent a temporary application of clay or mud, or be scarification.

Though similar clothing and adornment often appear on the figures, the faces of each figure are artistically modeled with unique characteristics—unusually large noses, cranial deformation, distinct hairstyles, and even dentition—indicators that these ceramic figures are portraits of people from the past.

A truism in virtually all fields of research and certainly in this project is that every detail tells a story, if we can see it and determine its meaning. Modern medical tools enhance our eyes and provide new ways to see. Computed axial tomography (CT scans) shows details of construction. CT scans also reveal the extent of repairs or replacements on ceramic figures. The repairs are sometimes so good that they are virtually invisible to the unaided eye. However, they are obvious on the scans. Being able to see how a complex ceramic figure was constructed is important. For example, a group of the very popular and common Colima burnished red dogs was scanned. Some of the dogs were genuine and others were known to be of modern manufacture. However, the details of the exterior form and surfaces were very similar; that's the goal of those who make modern



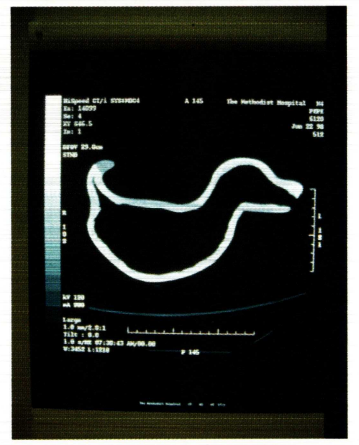
Above: This elaborate Nayarit headdress is crafted from the entire body of an animal, either the coati mundi, or Xoloitzcuintle dog. GM54.4061.



These Nayarit figures wear similar clothing and adornment, and both are nursing babies, but they clearly represent different ceramic styles. Note the similar patterns woven into their skirts that may indicate lineage, much like a Scottish tartan. Left: GM54.1720; right: GM54.1715.

copies. The CT scans of the large round bellies show the thickness of the walls and reveal buttressing to support the roundish shape. The analysis is still in progress.

Like most North American prehistoric pottery, vessels and hollow figures were created by coiling ropes of clay that were smoothed on both sides of open vessels, and typically only on the outside of figural works. Some clay slabs may have been incorporated into larger pieces for stability, and smaller pieces and accents were often made by pinching the clay into the desired shapes. Wares were slipped and/or painted, sometimes prior to and sometimes after firing. On broken pieces and sherds, the width of the core—a darkened area inside of the walls—indicate how hot the fire burned. A wide core indicates that the fire was not hot enough to burn off all of the carbonized material. No core indicates a higher firing temperature. It is possible to determine the age of pottery through thermoluminescence (TL) testing. TL is present in the minerals in pottery as energy from radioactive decay, which is released when heated. When pottery is fired, it loses all its previously acquired TL, and on cooling the TL begins again to build up. If the radioactivity of the pottery is measured, the dose rate, or annual increment of dose, may be computed. Cost and the destructive nature of this test limit the appeal of this technique.

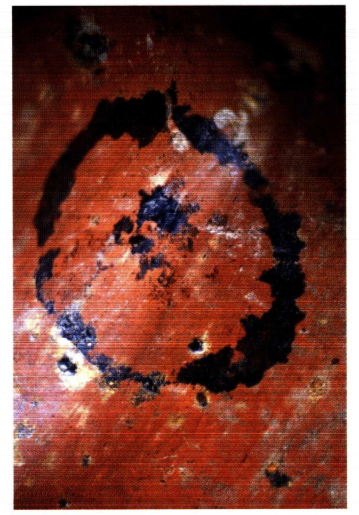


CT (computed axial tomography) scans are a nondestructive method for examining construction details of ceramic vessels.

The most helpful new tool used to extend the eye is the medical endoscope. In this case, helpful means endoscopes are non-destructive, accessible, easy to use, quick, and definitive. Immediately, looking at the interior of a vessel reveals methods of construction; edges of slabs of clay and how they are attached to each other becomes clear. Endoscopy demonstrates that some of the same indicators of authenticity found on the exterior are also found on interior walls. Like the CT, endoscopy reveals the repair history of an object, and it is much faster and easier to use. The scope sees glue used to mend a fragmentary vessel or patches of plaster or other material used to fill spaces where the original pottery fragments are totally missing.

Sadly, endoscopy exposed one of the most intriguing pieces in the Gilcrease collection as a pastiche of ancient and modern parts. A Colima burnished red dog wearing a human face mask probably is a piece purchased by Mr. Gilcrease from a prominent California gallery in 1952. It is virtually identical to a figure published in the 1890s. The presence of a human mask adds additional layers of cultural importance to this frequently found form. If genuine, this dog with mask would be important in understanding why animal figures, especially dogs, were entombed with the dead. Initially, the figure was thought to be complete, unbroken, and absolutely genuine. Examination by endoscopy told a different story. Inserting the endoscope into the vent hole at the ear revealed that everything behind the two prominent ears was genuine; the characteristics of age were there. However, looking inside the face revealed that the entire front of the figure, the whole mask, was made of a plaster-like material—it was a modern addition! This is a surprisingly sophisticated deceptive modification for the early 1950s. Museum records show that the piece was purchased for $1,000, a large sum of money in the 1950s for a clever deception.

Three features found on the exterior and interior surfaces of the figures provide trustworthy evidence of age and authenticity. Manganese dioxide deposits result from the action of manganese fixing bacteria. The deposits have a telltale form and are



Manganese dioxide deposits are black, vitreous, dendritic and opaque. Sometimes they occur in rings. The dark center in the ring may represent an organic deposit on which the manganese-fixing bacteria grew.



WE OFTEN THINK OF THE PAST AS BEING KNOWN AND SETTLED. YET . . . WE CHANGE THE PAST EVERY TIME WE LEARN SOMETHING NEW OR DISCOVER THAT SOMETHING WE HAD ACCEPTED AS FACT IS UNTRUE.

frequently found on archaeological specimens in West Mexico and beyond. Insect puparial remnants adhering to the surface of ceramic figures from the Huitzilapa tomb first were identified by the senior author in the 1990s. Additional research shows that these tiny remnants represent necrophilous (carrion-eating) insects that feed on deceased animals, including humans. The connection between the tombs, deceased humans buried within, and the presence of insects should not be surprising. The presence of root marks on the vessel surfaces also is an indicator of age. Roots can penetrate deeply into the soil and sometimes into the tombs themselves. The organic materials and liquids inside ceramic vessels might have provided nutrients for plants and accelerated root development.

The people who modify or create modern versions of ancient ceramic vessels are well acquainted with manganese deposits and root marks. They have developed various ways to simulate them. So far, replicating insect puparia has not been observed, although it is likely to be seen in the future. Endoscopic exams show that manganese deposits, insects, and root marks can be seen on the interiors of ceramic figures. Finding these clues deep in the interiors of a vessel strongly indicates authenticity.

Current research is successfully using technology to provide some new ways of seeing. The results are significant. As the project develops, other techniques for extending our observational powers will be utilized. Each new technique will provide new and more information that helps us understand the past. For example, dried organic residues frequently are encountered inside bowls and vessels. Future collaborations with the chemistry department at the University of Tulsa will attempt to identify these compounds. Knowing what the ancients placed with their deceased kin would be a breakthrough in understanding how these people prepared for the afterlife. Similarly, the analysis of paint on the figures will reveal how the paints were made and perhaps, who made them.

Looking at old collections in new ways keeps the museum vital and expands the envelope of our knowledge about the past. We often think of the past as being known and settled. Yet with new technology and by asking new questions, we change the past every time we learn something new, or discover that something we had accepted as fact is untrue. It is important for museums to support active research programs to keep learning and sharing that knowledge with our many audiences.

Facing: A Colima dog with a human mask from the Gilcrease Museum collection is nearly identical to one published in the1890s by archaeologist Leopoldo Batres. GM54.3462.

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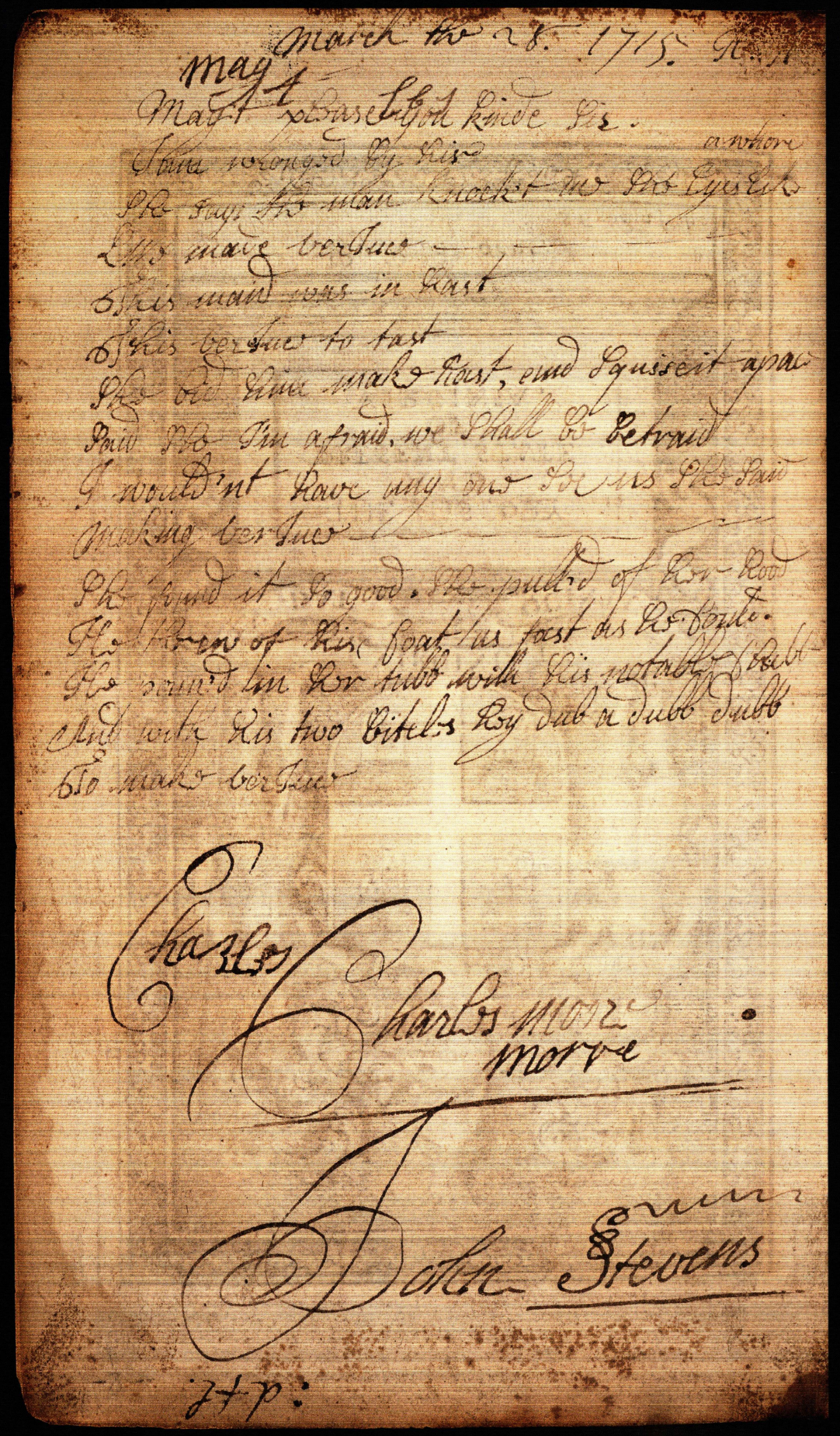


Things ain't what they used to be...

CHRIS ROBERTS

In L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go Between*—which unfolds during one glorious summer in the early 20th century—the narrator thinks back on the events of that summer, reflecting that "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." His words could apply to an individual's past or to history in general. Human needs and feelings—love, duty, patriotism, desire (the subject of Hartley's book)—may be constant, but modes of expression change and much can be learned by observing the past through the window of the present.

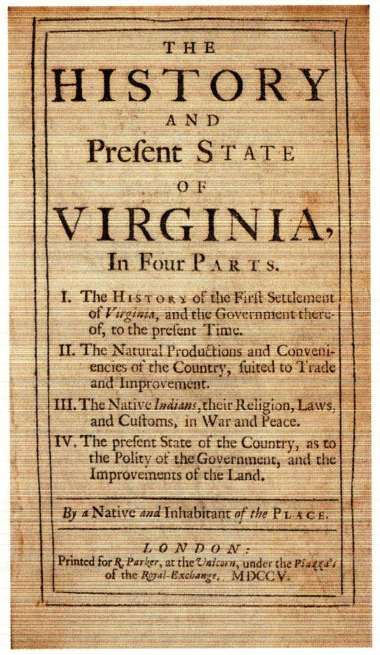
This short essay hopes to do that by ruminating on a piece of doggerel scrawled in a history of Virginia (published in 1705 in London). It was written by Robert Beverley, Jr., also known as R. B. Gent, who modestly based his authority to write it on the simple fact of his being an inhabitant of the region, an interested amateur, and what today we might call a "blogger," though in paper and ink, not digital media. Indeed he was one of the first white men to see parts of Virginia and his descendants still reside in the state. In 1703, Robert Beverley spent eighteen months in London chasing up a legal matter. Presumably homesick and certainly in response to an earlier publication (Oldmixon's *British Empire in America*), he wrote and published the four-volume history.

The book in itself is interesting, but it is a handwritten inscription dating to 1715 and still visible on the title page of the Gilcrease copy that draws our attention. Here is a window into that "foreign country," the past. The inscription refers to something called "rub a dub dubs," unlikely to be London slang for public houses (rub a dub pubs) since "pub" is a much later arriving term. Nor necessarily does it link to the nursery rhyme "Rub a Dub Dub," as the earliest known written reference to that is 1798. If they do allude to that nursery favourite, however, that throws up an interesting conundrum, and the scribbling on this historical document becomes itself a useful piece of history.

Nursery rhymes can shift associations over time. Before considering the verse inside the Gilcrease copy of the *History of Virginia*, it might be worth looking at different versions of this rhyme, starting with the child-friendly one below.

Rub-a-dub-dub,
Three men in a tub,
And how do you think they got there?
The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker,
They all jumped out of a rotten potato,
'Twas enough to make a man stare.

CHRIS ROBERTS is a London writer and tour guide who has written books on London's bridges, lost words, sport, and superstition, as well as the history of nursery rhymes. He is responsible for publishing and editing the 21st-century penny dreadful *One Eye Grey* (stories from another London on Kindle) and popularising the London Liars' walking tours. Current projects include co-hosting the cult radio show *Cafe Calcio* which deals with football (that's soccer to American readers) in a cultural context.


THE
HISTORY
AND
Present STATE
OF
VIRGINIA,
In Four PARTS.

I. The HISTORY of the First Settlement of *Virginia*, and the Government thereof, to the present Time.
II. The Natural Productions and Conveniencies of the Country, fuited to Trade and Improvement.
III. The Native *Indians*, their Religion, Laws, and Cuftoms, in War and Peace.
IV. The preſent State of the Country, as to the Polity of the Government, and the Improvements of the Land.

By a Native *and* Inhabitant *of the* PLACE.

LONDON:
Printed for *R. Parker*, at the *Unicorn*, under the Piazza's of the *Royal-Exchange*. MDCCV.

The History and Present State of Virginia in Four Parts, Robert Beverley. London, 1705. GM2576.2066. The flyleaf of the book, facing page, bears an inscription dating to 1715 that is the earliest known version of the rhyme "Rub a Dub." Above is the book's title page.

It is part of an English nonsense verse tradition as well as a, sometimes conscious, attempt to nudge adult rhymes into being more child friendly. Earlier versions of the rhyme make no reference to men in tubs. One earlier version runs:

Hey! Rub-a-dub! Ho! Rub-a-dub! Three maids in a tub,
And who do you think were there?
The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker,
And all of them gone to the fair!

That rhyme is a clear allusion to the fondness some men have, even respectable small business types involved in the baking, meat packing and lighting sectors, for attractive women in states of undress.

Having read and deciphered some of the scrawled lines in the *History of Virginia,* I would say there seems little doubt as to which side of child / adult divide the author (or authors, as two names appear under the text) occupies, only why they chose that particular place to record their verses. The verses appear to tell the tale of a chap and lady getting quite involved with each other. However there is just enough confusion to suggest an alternative reading of a man wronged by a woman.

The Battle at Bunker Hill. George E. Perine after Trumbull, engraving. Gilcrease Archival Collection.



As I discovered while researching my book on the history of nursery rhymes, there is a danger in assuming a thing is true just because it looks possible, or even logical. In fact it was often the strangest meanings that turned out to be correct, rather than the ones that seemed likeliest on the surface. An example of this is "Yankee Doodle." The best known version of this rhyme, but certainly not the original, runs

Yankee Doodle came to town,
Riding on a pony.
He stuck a feather in his cap,
And called it macaroni.

The song was initially popular among British forces during the War of Independence as a mocking appraisal of American soldiers' ability to fight (or indeed dress themselves). After the battle at Bunker's Hill, American troops themselves adopted it as a favourite marching song and threw it back at the Brits, to the annoyance of one British officer, who complained "It ['Yankee Doodle'] is now their paean, a favourite of favourites, a lover's spell, the nurse's lullaby." They even played it victoriously when the British army signed surrender documents. So here is early proof that the American public possesses a decent amount of comic timing and a good sense of irony.

But the story goes back farther. "Yankee Tootle," or "Yankee Doodle," was originally an English take on a bit of American folk music composed for flute or whistle. The words, added later and secondary to the tune, were ad-libbed in the manner of a rapper, just to keep the dance hall jumping. If you cannot hear it as a dance-hall tune, try setting the following version from 1775 to a reggae rhythm and reading it out loud.

Yankee Doodle keep it up,
Yankee Doodle Dandy,
Mind the music and the step,
And with the girls be handy.

After independence in 1776, many verses were added to the American version extolling U. S. military prowess, while in Britain satirical equivalents were in circulation, amongst them the well known "macaroni" lines cited a few paragraphs above. To give some idea of how many versions there were, a play written in 1787 called *The Contrast* contained a line about "Yankee Doodle" in which one character says that he only knows 180 verses but that his sister knows the full set.

Even the four best-known lines are subject to alternative wordings ("speckled pony" and "Kentish pony," for example), but the core story remains the same: man rides into town on pony, man sticks feather somewhere, man calls it an Italian dish. That he rides a pony rather than a horse might suggest relative poverty, and sticking a feather in his cap is certainly an attempt to put on airs. Of course, he could be riding a pony just because "horse" doesn't rhyme with "macaroni," but that rather begs the question of why it would need to rhyme with macaroni.

Macaroni is a well known Italian dish but it was also the name given to themselves by a bunch of fashionable youths who appeared in London in 1770 and were at their peak a few years later. The Macaronis were chiefly young men of noble birth who, after taking the Grand Tour of Europe, returned to Britain with fresh ideas about clothes and art, much in the way folk today return from the Far East with tribal tattoos and new philosophies. These ultra-dandified young men sported huge wigs supported by natural hair bunched on the shoulders and were fond of ornate tight jackets that hugged the figure, with trousers to match. Like the much later Mods and Punks they took London by storm and had an influence way beyond their original numbers, to the point where even clergymen started combing their wigs and subtly altering their clothes to more closely resemble the Macaroni style. Amusingly, in an age of industrial alcohol consumption and the absence of any anti-narcotic legislation, the Macaronis' drug of choice was tea and capillaire (a syrup prepared with maidenhair fern). Oh, and of course a certain type of pasta, which they tried to include at every mealtime.

So we see that the most popular surviving lyric is essentially a putdown by the cosmopolitan British of a hayseed colonial who thought he was quite the dandy and that, by sticking a feather in his hat could emulate the trendy peacock youth of London town. The lyricist was deriding the "Yankees" with a phenomenon we still see today as bored suburban teenagers think they are quite ghetto when they don the supposed apparel of the inner city, while others should remember that a few piercings and creative use of eyeliner do not a Marilyn Manson make.



DESPITE ITS MANY VERSIONS, "Yankee Doodle" is relatively straightforward once the word macaroni is understood. The changing meanings (and sometimes pronunciations) of words are often the key to understanding old rhymes. The "Ballad of Cock Robin" contains a line where an owl promises to bring a shovel, which the modern ear doesn't scan as a rhyme until one learns that shovel was, until the late 16th century pronounced "*showel,*" which does rhyme with owl. The use in this context suggests a rhyme constructed before the pronunciation of shovel changed around 1600.

Who'll dig his grave?
I, said the owl,
With my pick and shovel,
I'll dig his grave.

Some verses, though, make sense today in a different way in the context of the present. While "Baa Baa Black Sheep" is discouraged at play groups for carrying racist overtones, the rhyme's hidden meaning has nothing to do with race. It is one of the oldest of all the well known rhymes (only "London Bridge," "Ladybird Ladybird" and a handful of others predate it) and refers to the taxation system of the Middle Ages in



London, Southwark, and Blackfriars Bridges. W.H. Bartlett after Rogers, 1850, engraving. GM1526.1105.

Facing, inset: "Mother Goose" from *My First Picture Book.* Joseph Martin Kronheim. George Rutledge & Sons, London, circa 1871.

England. The lines about masters and dames allude to the monarch and the church whilst the little boy is the farmer who loses two-thirds of his crop. The rhyme coincides with periods of agricultural unrest in England and is a rarity in actually offering some sort of social commentary of times past.

There is a tendency, however, to read meaning into rhymes where history offers scant support for such. Rhymes from the Tudor and Stuart periods in England (1500–1700) are particular targets for this, since they were periods ravaged by civil and religious wars and saw the birth of a modern use of propaganda for political purposes. Many rhymes take on different meanings over time, as people read stories into them that, like any other piece of tradition, support political ends.

Just occasionally though there is evidence of deeper meaning as in little "Jack" Horner who turns out to be Thomas Horner, steward to the Abbot of Glastonbury during the reign of King Henry VIII. Shortly after the dissolution of the monasteries, Mr. Horner settled into a very comfortable house once occupied by ecclesiastical types, as noted in this rhyme from the period.

Hopton, Horner, Smyth and Thynne
When the abbots went out, they came in.

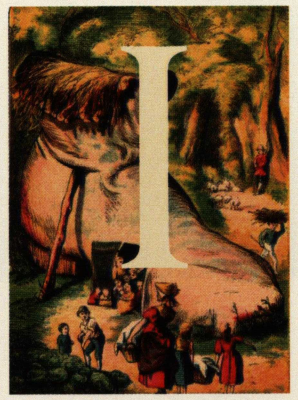
"Little Jack Horner" from *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes: A Collection of Alphabets, Rhymes, Tales, and Jingles.* Illustrated by Sir John Gilbert, John Tenniel, Harrison Weir, Walter Crane, W. McConnell, J.B. Zwecker, and others. George Routledge & Sons, New York, 1877.

Inset below: "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe" from *My First Picture Book.* Joseph Martin Kronheim. George Rutledge & Sons, London, circa 1871.

By 1540 eight hundred fifty convents and monastic houses in England had been taken over by the Protestant gentry and their assets liquidated. The better known version of "Little Jack Horner" tells of how this came about:

Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner
Eating his Christmas pie.
He stuck in his thumb,
Pulled out a plum
And said "What a good boy am I!"





IN A SIMILAR WAY "Oranges and Lemons" was once a guide to different church parishes in London whilst "London's Burning" tells the story of a great fire. Though not, it would appear, the 1666 Great Fire of London, as the rhyme is one from the 19th century, originating around the time of the Great Fire of Tooley Street. This conflagration destroyed the southern waterfront between London and Tower Bridges and led to the creation of the London Fire Brigade in its modern form.

What makes the search for meaning harder is that many nursery rhymes are just nonsense verse made up of pleasing sounds detailing ordinary events.

It is not improbable that once somebody's son called John did go to bed with his trousers on and his mother elected to commemorate the event with "Diddle, Diddle Dumpling, My Son John." The difficulty is, once one starts seeing meaning one can find it anywhere, and people have been looking a long time. As with conspiracy theories today, if one starts with the assumption that there is an ulterior meaning, it is much easier to find one.

Nursery rhymes, like the rhyme in the *History of Virginia,* more often offer commentaries on everyday life rather than allegories about affairs of state. The point is that human behaviour remains constant but how we view it varies and sometimes a short rhyme can give us a different insight but sometimes there is little trace of anything. The vocations of the gentlemen in "Rub a Dub Dub" are still practised today. Even if not every high street boasts a candlestick maker we at least know what one is but what of the lost trades of the era for whom no rhyme makes reference? What of the flying stationers and linker boys? Who speaks of toshers, pure finders or night soil men? All of whom earned a wage on, near, or under the streets of 18th-century London and, in some cases, other cities.

Several of the above dealt in what might euphemistically be termed waste management, with the night soil men responsible for the emptying of cesspits and the sale of the contents to farmers for manure. Pure collectors patrolled the streets picking up dog dirt, so called "pure," which was used in the leather industry to tan hides. The toshers meanwhile roamed London's sewers and lost covered rivers searching for anything that might prove valuable from cloth to coin. These remarkable men evolved their own folklore around rats. One rodent in particular—a giant female rat known as Queen Rat—they thought capable of shapeshifting into a beautiful woman and seducing any man she liked. She would reward her lovers with good fortune and a large family the firstborn of whom would be a daughter with one grey eye and the other blue.

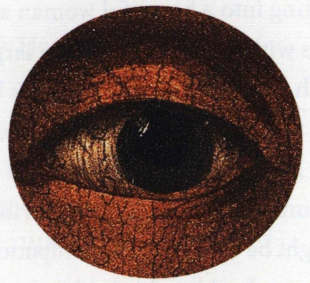
We move now from dark and filthy tunnels to murky and muddy streets. In an era of limited street lighting and vigorous nightlife Linker boys escorted people through the streets carrying a flaming torch or link. In daytime the amusingly titled flying stationers haunted those same streets and, whilst they might be extinct as an occupation, their descendants are everywhere. Much as dinosaurs evolved into birds, they have taken wings and flown. Rolling news, blogging, whole sections of advertising, pressure groups, public relations, spin doctors, industry think tanks, gossip columnists and tabloid journalists—all are the bastard offspring of the flying stationer, or at least touched by the same genius. Flying stationers sold newspapers of their own composition, and were a subsection of a much wider tribe of people who lived by their communication skills. Flying stationers didn't run, let alone fly but they were very mobile across England. Essentially they span tales, spread gossip, influenced opinion, gathered information and were a conduit of communication throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

Rhymes, books, gossip, communication, and stories bring us back to the words scribbled by hand in the 1705 edition of *History of Virginia*. Although the hand annotation of books links the 21st century to the 18th, we are on the cusp of a change as people begin to "notate" digitally rather than with pencil or pen, in marks that are fleeting. Even though hand annotation of books is technically vandalism and not something that, as a trained librarian, I would actively encourage, I do feel a certain leniency towards it, in part because it lasts over time. Nor am I alone in this response. For example, in 2013 Joe Orton's "amended" library books have been exhibited by Islington libraries. This is very same institution responsible for putting the noted 1960s playwright on trial for the offence of defacing library books that resulted in a jail sentence for him in 1962.

So even if the inscription in the *History of Virginia* "amended" the volume in which it is inscribed, is more than a little risqué, and contains old-fashioned attitudes toward gender politics, perhaps we should not be too harsh on John Stevens and Charles Moore. By following what may be a dying tradition, they have allowed us a glimpse into their world.

"Shakespeare's West"

KIMBERLY ROBLIN



THE STUDY OF HISTORY is not passive. It is an active reconstruction and sometimes a re-imagining of themes, lives, and tendencies across time and space. Some connections and similarities are clear. Others are less obvious, but arguably even more interesting.

In the late 16th century William Shakespeare was on the move, as were many in England. He left his small town of Stratford-upon-Avon for the opportunity and appeal of London. With a population of some 200,000 that was increasing daily, Shakespeare's London was at capacity. Having no room to expand outwards, the city expanded up in a vertical patchwork of multi-tiered buildings that lined the dirty and crowded streets.

Meanwhile, the British Empire moved across the Atlantic Ocean in search of wealth and power along the shores of a world so unknown to Europeans it was simply called "the new." An earlier attempt at establishing a colony at Roanoke had ended in mysterious failure and now crown and private companies alike raced towards a successful settlement. This was the sum, the total, of what William Shakespeare would have known of the West: It was a ragged coastline hemming a land of indeterminate size, shape, and inhabitants. He could not know of the vast open prairies, the desert mesas and canyons, the mountains—a region, a mythology, marked by human drama that was worthy of any play.

And there's the rub. The connection. Shakespeare is unquestionably the most famous of all playwrights, yet his works are not based on original themes and circumstances. Unrequited love, treachery, the folly of youth—these were not his creations, but archetypes of the human experience, retold and reconfigured for centuries. Shakespeare simply adapted and recast them for his audience.

Following in this tradition, we apply his words to art created centuries after his death depicting a landscape he did not know. He did not exist in a vacuum, nor did the themes of which he so famously wrote. They were not confined to the European continent or the 16th and 17th centuries. They were the same themes that played out across the American landscape as human beings strove, suffered, and rejoiced. In this context, Shakespeare's words not only describe and connect to Western imagery, but seem made to do so.

KIMBERLY ROBLIN received her BA and MA from the University of Oklahoma. She has worked extensively with the anthropology, art, and archival collections at Gilcrease Museum since 2005, focusing on research and exhibitions, and is a regular contributor to *Gilcrease Journal* and other museum publications.



"SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY?
THOU ART MORE LOVELY AND MORE TEMPERATE."

SONNET 18

Rural Courtship. Daniel Ridgway Knight, oil on canvas. GM0126.2352.



"If you prick us, do we not bleed?
If you tickle us, do we not laugh?
If you poison us, do we not die?
And if you wrong us, shall we not
revenge?"

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT 3, SCENE 1

The Old Apache. Bert Geer Phillips, oil on canvas. GM0137.2445.

"The miserable have no other
medicine but only hope."

MEASURE FOR MEASURE. ACT 3, SCENE 1

The Mourners. Joseph Henry Sharp, 1911, oil on canvas. GM0137.354.



"A PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR HOUSES."

ROMEO AND JULIET. ACT 3, SCENE 1

The Spirit of Famine. Edwin Willard Deming, oil on canvas. GM0127.1916.

"ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD."

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT 2, SCENE 7

Mak-Hos-Kah, Chief of the Goways (White Cloud). Charles Bird King, 1825, oil on wood. GM0126.1198.



"That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."

SONNET 73

Too Old for the Rabbit Hunt. Oscar Edmund Berninghaus, 1927, oil on canvas. GM0137.524.



"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

HENRY IV. ACT 3, SCENE 1

Indian Chief. William Robinson Leigh, oil on canvasboard. GM0137.995.



"This castle hath a pleasant seat."

MACBETH. ACT 1, SCENE 6

Laguna Pueblo. Thomas Moran, 1919, oil on canvas. GM0137.1105.



"We have seen better days."

TIMON OF ATHENS. ACT 4, SCENE 2

The Camp Cook's Troubles. Charles M. Russell, 1912, oil on canvas. GM0137.913.



"What dreams may come."

HAMLET. ACT 3, SCENE 1

Superstition. Ernest Blumenschein, oil on canvas. GM0137.531.



"All that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity."

HAMLET. ACT 1, SCENE 2

Burial Procession—Penitente Ceremonial—Near Taos. Bert Geer Phillips, oil on canvas. GM0137.2083.

The Dealer and Daniel Webster

ANN BOULTON

Above: *Henry Clay* (detail). Thomas Ball. Bronze. Original model 1858, date of bronze cast unknown. GM0826.94.

Facing, inset: *Daniel Webster* (detail). Thomas Ball. Bronze. Original model 1853, date of bronze cast unknown. GM0826.93.

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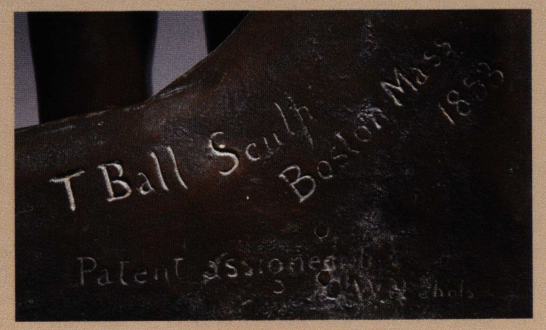
George Ward Nichols

A small-statured man who grew up one of eight children with an absent and underemployed father, George Ward Nichols may have felt he had a lot to prove. And prove it he did, so well that on his death in 1885 in Cincinnati at age fifty-four some obituaries referred in glowing terms to his education at all the "best schools"[1] and his fine Boston upbringing as the son of a "ship captain and owner of merchant ships."[2] Whether an intentional misrepresentation by Nichols or merely an assumption based on his life's lofty trajectory may never be known.

His papers, undoubtedly voluminous as befit the art critic, journalist, diarist, author, and world-class networker that he was, were likely gleefully burned by his wife following his sudden death from tuberculosis while she and their teenage children were conveniently out of town. Her subsequent and nearly immediate marriage to her long-time boyfriend indicates that Maria Longworth Nichols Storer was not one to follow the rules.

Gilcrease Museum owns two bronze sculptures by the artist Thomas Ball (1819–1911), portraits of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay dated 1853 and 1858 respectively. The models and the rights to reproduce them were sold by the artist to George Ward Nichols (1831–1885) shortly after they were completed. Thereafter, all decisions regarding the number of reproductions, their size, materials, and finish, as well as their marketing and price were controlled by Nichols alone. At the time, this arrangement was common in France, where the person owning the right to reproduce sculpture is called a *fabricant*. It was unknown in this country prior to Nichols' purchase. The sculptures' inscription, "patent assigned to G.W. Nichols"— in letters nearly as large as that of the artist's signature—served as a warning to pirates and an advertisement for the art dealer, and it reflects the size of Nichols' ambition. What follows is the story of George Ward Nichols, Thomas Ball, and their *Daniel Webster.*









Above left and detail below left: *Daniel Webster.* Thomas Ball. Bronze. Original model 1853, date of bronze cast unknown. GM0826.93.

Above right: *Henry Clay.* Thomas Ball. Bronze. Original model 1858, date of bronze cast unknown. GM0826.94.

Facing, top: George Ward Nichols. Photograph by Van Loo as reprinted in *The Graphic, An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper,* Cincinnati, Sept 26, 1885. College of Music of Cincinnati Records, Mss 1044, Cincinnati Museum Center.

Facing, bottom: *The Story of the Great March* (title page). George Ward Nichols, 1865. GM2726.181.

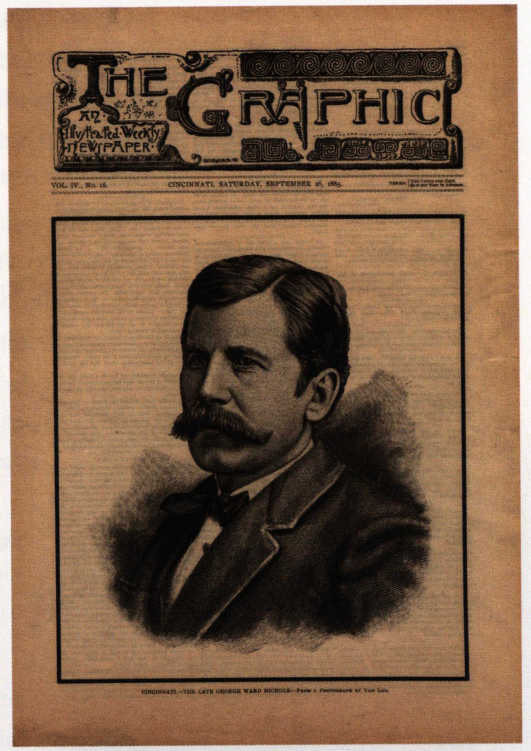
Nichols' accomplishments during and after the Civil War are fairly well documented: He first came to national attention in 1865 with the publication of the diary he kept during his tenure as aide-de-camp to General William Tecumseh Sherman on his famous March to the Sea. Following that he became a frequent contributor to *Harper's Magazine* and created the legend of Wild Bill Hickok in one of his articles. This did not endear him to the citizens of Springfield, Missouri, who were outraged by his condescension and alleged tall tales.

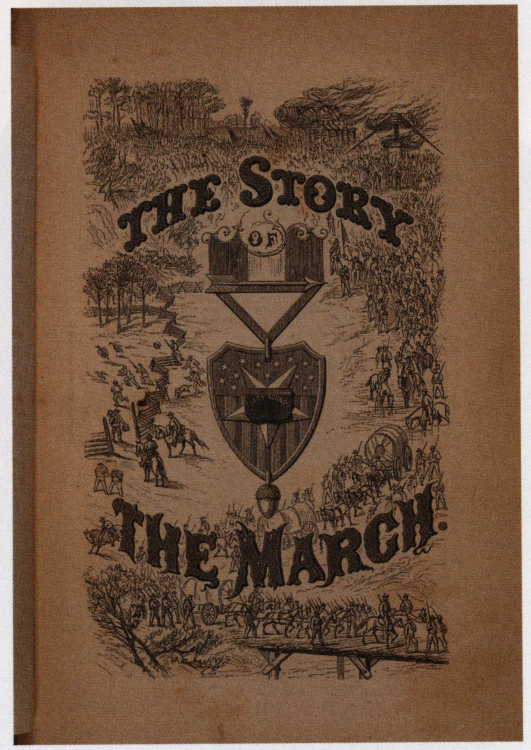
His marriage in 1868 to the daughter of millionaire Joseph Longworth of Cincinnati relieved any lingering financial worries and freed him to help create in Cincinnati many of the cultural institutions that he surely had yearned to be part of during his hardscrabble boyhood in Boston. These included the May choral festivals, the Opera Festival, the Art Academy of Cincinnati (formerly McMicken School of Design), the College of Music, the art museum, the symphony and very likely an underappreciated role in the founding of the Rookwood Pottery with his wife, Maria (*Ma-rye-a*) Longworth Nichols. He wrote several books, including *Art Education Applied to Industry* and *Pottery: How it is Made.* He was president of the College of Music at his death.

Nichols had apparently wanted to be an artist himself. The high point of his adult pursuit of this dream probably occurred about 1867 in New York City when he listed his profession as "artist" in the city directory. His best-selling Civil War diary earnings (70,000 copies sold the first year) likely permitted him to commit all his time and energy to painting by that year. However, his true genius was as a promoter, something that finally must have sunk in for the newly married Nichols, as evidenced by the kinds of activities he chose in Cincinnati after leaving New York.

Still, he exhibited his own paintings at the Cincinnati Academy of Fine Art in 1868 and at the National Academy of Design (the premiere U. S. venue for American artists at that time) in 1871 but never became a member and is not listed as ever having been a student there. His obituaries frequently mention that he "studied with Couture"[3] so clearly this is something he liked to talk about. Thomas Couture, the French painter, was a magnet for American art students who wished to study painting in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century.

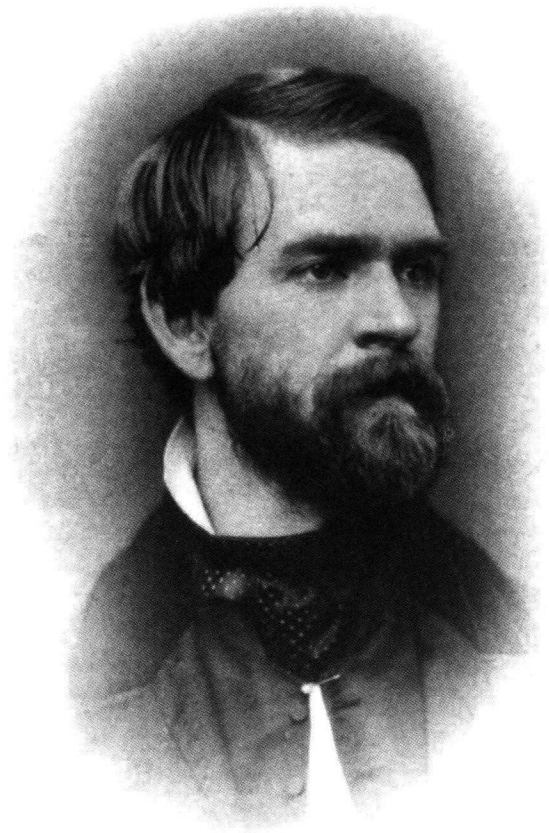
Did Nichols really study with Couture? This remains to be discovered. His name does not appear on any lists of Couture's American students. The artist Thomas Satterwhite Noble, a close friend of Nichols and one of Couture's students for three years in the late 1850s, mentions in an undated letter that he and Nichols first met at Couture's studio when Noble was a student there and Nichols appeared for a visit. Did this "visit to" become "studied with" in Mr. Nichols' personal narrative? Noble's letter does at least document





Nichols' presence in Paris at this time. It seems likely that he did spend some months in Europe in 1859. By then Couture was taking students for periods as short as a month, so perhaps Nichols did study with him briefly.

The earliest year of Nichols' documented art activities is 1853 when a George W. Nichols appears in the Boston City Directory as an engraver working at 92 Tremont Row, the eastern border of Boston Common. Engraving, an activity of great importance for illustration in newspapers and other publications prior to the invention of the halftone process, employed large numbers of artists in the mid 19th century and was a common entry point for aspiring artists lacking the means to study, without pay, for years in the studio of a master. The address of his employment is relevant; it is on the same street as the art studio of Thomas Ball, who was also listed in the 1853 city directory.



Thomas Ball. Unknown Photographer. Daguerreotype c. 1850 as reprinted in his autobiography. Location of daguerreotype is unknown. *My Threescore and Ten Years* by Thomas Ball, Google books.

Nichols and Thomas Ball

Did Nichols know Thomas Ball at that time? Ball was about a decade older than Nichols and by 1850 had established a fairly successful miniature portrait painting studio. This line of work for artists was soon to be swept away by photography; however, although the daguerreotype was ascendant, it had yet to completely obliterate the painted miniature. Ball would have been Nichols' social equal, having suffered the death of his own father at age twelve, which forced him to quit school and find work. Also like Nichols, he briefly found work as an engraver but did not prosper in that role. Neither Nichols nor Ball would likely have been privy to the exalted Brahmin circle of artists surrounding the painter William Morris Hunt, Boston's star artist at that time.

Ball and Nichols also shared another passion: music, and particularly the choral arts. Both sang bass and Ball was a widely known soloist by this time. It seems nearly certain that Nichols would have been aware of Ball, if for no other reason than his well-publicized performances. Years later, Nichols sang bass for the Harmonium Society in Cincinnati and was the founder (along with his wife) of the May Festival, the biannual choral festival in Cincinnati that was probably modeled on similar events held in Boston in the 1850s.

However, it is clear that Nichols and Ball were not close, as Ball describes Nichols in his memoir as "a shrewd art dealer,"[4] as opposed to a warmly held friend. But there is no doubt that in 1853 Nichols handed over $500 in exchange for Thomas Ball's plaster model of the statuette of Daniel Webster and the right to reproduce it. Nichols was twenty-two years old. Could he already have become a "shrewd art dealer"?

At the Crystal Palace

New York City's Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1853, a copycat of the 1851 London exhibition of the same name held, in addition to vast halls of industrial and agricultural products, the largest assemblage of art in the United States to that time. Ball's *Daniel Webster* was present in plaster and it seems possible that this was Nichols' first opportunity to view it. We know that he bought it "the first day it was seen."[5]Assuming this was on the first day of its exhibition at the Crystal Palace, the purchase would have taken place on July 14, 1853. By August 9 the paperwork had been completed so that the patent originally taken out by Ball could be transferred.[6] Nichols may have been living briefly in New York at the time as he is described as a New York resident in the patent paperwork.

Whether Ball exhibited the sculpture publicly in Boston prior to its viewing at the Crystal Palace remains unclear. Later, in 1858, his companion sculpture, *Henry Clay,* was first exhibited at N. D. Cotton's art supply store on Tremont St. in Boston, so it seems possible that the Webster had been first exhibited there too. It is interesting that Ball's memoir does not mention the Crystal Palace Exhibition or his sculpture's appearance there, although this was his first time to exhibit at such an important venue and the sculpture won an honorable mention. This leads one to believe that perhaps Nichols had already purchased the sculpture and had it placed in the Crystal Palace exhibition in order to drum up sales.

The Official Catalogue of the 1853 exhibition lists "Statuette of Daniel Webster, composition.—T. Ball, des.—Geo. W. Nichols, sculp. Boston, Massachusetts."[7] ("des." meaning the one who designed it and "sculp." surely referring to the person in charge of reproducing it—terms borrowed from engraving). Another guidebook for the exhibition specifically mentions that the sculpture would soon be available for sale in plaster and Parian ware (a kind of ceramic). This is just the type of free promotion at which Nichols was a master.

Five hundred dollars was a hefty sum in 1853. For comparison, one could travel to Europe, stay two years, and return all for $1,000. Nichols almost certainly did not come up with this kind of money by saving his earnings as an engraver for whom the average salary was only a few dollars per week. Perhaps it was a loan, maybe from his older brother. John Ceavey Nichols was George W.'s elder by seven years, an older child of John B. Nichols and Esther Todd Ward Nichols. Unlike his father, John C. seems to have made his way as a warfinger and lumber merchant. Apparently, the engraving and art-buying business wasn't going so well at first for George W. because in 1854 he is listed as employed in lumber at Fiske's Wharf, the brother's business, so perhaps this was in payment for the loan. Other male siblings worked for John



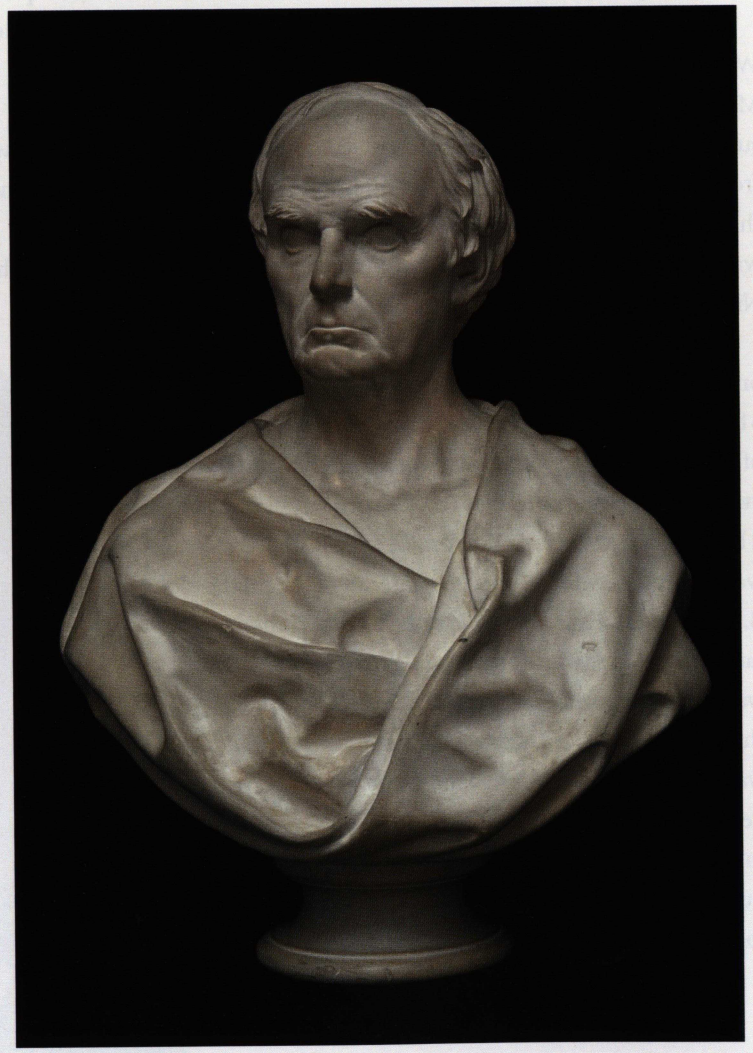
Daniel Webster. Thomas Ball. Bronze. Original model 1853, date of bronze cast unknown. GM0826.93.

Ceavey Nichols at various times, and so he seems to have acted as a father figure (and ready source of income) to the younger boys. Their father had died in San Francisco in the cholera epidemic of 1850, presumably while seeking his fortune in the gold rush.

Perhaps Ball's description of Nichols as "a shrewd art dealer" was more a reference in hindsight to what he later became than to what he was at the time of the purchase of the sculpture. An engraver turned lumber go-fer doesn't evoke special art market acumen. But with the Daniel Webster statuette, Ball kicked off a successful career as a sculptor, and Nichols launched an art business that lasted at least until he married and probably well after. Connections made through the sale of the Webster sculpture influenced the rest of his life.

Nichols' ferocious promotion of the Webster sculpture undoubtedly aided Ball's career even though Ball made no further money from the sale of copies. Ball left for an extended stay in Italy in 1854, financed in part by the Webster sale. While he was away Nichols produced and sold hundreds of copies of the Webster made in plaster, Parian ware, and bronze, every one a free advertisement for Ball on the home front where his patronage lay. At least 200 bronze casts were made over the years at the Ames Manufacturing Company in Chicopee, Massachusetts. This was the first bronze sculpture to be mass produced by an American foundry. Although the number





of the far cheaper and more ephemeral copies made in plaster and Parian ware is undocumented, they surely would have greatly exceeded the production in bronze.

Their timing was impeccable. Ball had modeled an earlier bust of Webster mostly using daguerreotypes but got a look at the man as he passed by the studio one day, "going home to die."[8] Apparently he did not have the social capital necessary to arrange a sitting of Webster as so many other artists had done. Webster died on October 24, 1852. His lengthy career as an orator and politician gave him the kind of celebrity that today is reserved for film and sports stars. Webster's image is arguably the most reproduced of all national heroes, including even Washington. Indeed, no fewer than three other sculptures of Webster were exhibited at the Crystal Palace exhibition in New York in 1853. Nichols and Ball must have understood that his death had created a huge market for images affordable to the middle class.

The idea for multiples likely came from Ball himself. He had already attained much local success reproducing earlier sculptures in plaster, including one of Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," his first successful sculpture modeled in 1851; the first Webster bust, for which he immediately had orders for nearly one hundred plaster copies[9]; and small busts of his friends in Boston music circles. These last were very popular with the subjects' friends and family, and Ball had a number produced in plaster. Pirates got



Facing, left: *Daniel Webster.* Thomas Ball. Parian ware. Original model 1853, date of Parian ware cast unknown. Smith College Museum of Art, Northhampton, Massachusetts.

Facing, right: *Daniel Webster.* Thomas Ball. Plaster. Original model 1852, date of plaster cast unknown. Boston Athenaeum photo by Jerry L. Thompson.

This page: Daniel Webster. Albert Sands Southworth, (1811-1894) and Josiah Johnson Hawes, (1808-1901). Daguerreotype. c. 1850. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of I. N. Phelps Stokes, Edward S. Hawes, Alice Mary Hawes, and Marion Augusta Hawes, 1937 (37.14.2).

hold of the molds, and his plaster friends were seen on the streets of Providence, Rhode Island, being marketed as a recently executed murderer and his victim. This was an impetus for the patent he took on the Webster. As Nichols' attention was surely fixed on the Boston choral music scene, at least as a lurker if not as a participant, he must have seen these plaster reproductions.

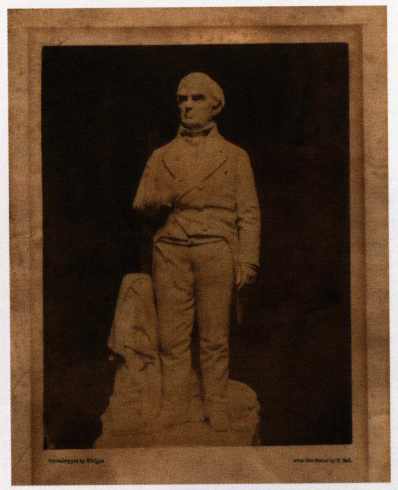
In addition to the Crystal Palace venue, Nichols maneuvered to place plasters on exhibit in Boston at the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association Exposition in September of 1853, where it won a gold medal, in New York in the Governor's Room at City Hall in October, and later in the Boston Merchants Exchange. All three venues would have provided maximum exposure to those with the means and interest to buy copies. With Nichols' purchase of Ball's statuette of Henry Clay in 1858, the lack of an art gallery of his own must have become pressing.

Ball v. Powers

Around the same time developments regarding the erection of a large sculpture of Daniel Webster in Boston must have further spurred demand for Ball's Webster statuette. Whether this was orchestrated in part by Nichols or just a happy coincidence remains to be discovered. Upon Webster's death a movement to commission a larger-than-life bronze for placement on the Massachusetts State House grounds resulted in the selection of Hiram Powers of Cincinnati as the sculptor. He was at the peak of his fame with the recent record-breaking tour of his *Greek Slave,* a marble sculpture depicting a naked woman in chains. By contrast, at the time of Webster's death Ball had only a nascent reputation as a sculptor.

The project was snake bit from the git-go. Delays in the modeling (in Italy) and production (in Germany) of Power's bronze Webster were exacerbated by the sinking of the ship containing the first cast. By the time the second cast arrived in Boston nearly six years had elapsed during which time hundreds of copies of Ball's statuette had been sold, and many Bostonians wondered why their hometown sculptor had not been selected for the large work in the first place. For some reason, six years had not been enough time to choose a precise location and construct a base for the sculpture so it was temporarily placed on exhibition at the Boston Athenaeum where it was resoundingly jeered. Someone (perhaps Nichols?) erected a bronze cast of Ball's statuette next to it at the Athenaeum so all could compare their homey's work to that of Powers. Powers lost in the court of public opinion.

The main objection seemed to be that the Powers version appeared to have no body beneath the baggy clothes. An incident described in Ball's memoir regarding his modeling of a statuette of George Washington suggests that Ball used clay to first model his Daniel Webster naked and then added clay clothes. This could account for the better rendering of anatomy beneath the clothes. By contrast, Powers modeled and carved his Daniel Webster directly in plaster using special patented files of his own creation to remove excess plaster. However, daguerreotypes of Webster confirm that his clothes were in fact baggy, wrinkled, and ill-fitting, so perhaps the Powers version was just too realistic.



Daniel Webster. Thomas Ball. Daguerreotype by John Adams Whipple, as published in *The Photographic and Fine Art Journal,* November 1854. Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D. C.

Facing: *Daniel Webster.* Hiram Powers (1805–1873). Bronze, erected 1859. Massachusetts State House in Boston. Library of Congress.



Daniel Webster. Marcus Ormsby or George M. Silsby. Daguerreotype c.1852 as reproduced in *McClure's Magazine* May, 1897. Location of daguerreotype is unknown. Department of Special Collections and University Archives. McFarlin Library. University of Tulsa.

Facing: *George Washington*. Thomas Ball. Bronze. Cast 1868. Boston Public Garden. Library of Congress.



An anonymous pamphlet appeared (Nichols again?) adding fuel to the fire by demanding that the Committee of One Hundred, responsible for the Powers commission, reject the sculpture in favor of Ball's depiction of Webster. While most of the One Hundred were on summer vacation, a small minority rescinded their earlier vote to place Powers' statue in front of the State House. Edward Everett, the famed orator and head of the One Hundred, was compelled to publish his own flabbergasted summary of the preceding events, to argue for reinstatement of the sculpture and to temporarily resign from the Committee. Once the entire Committee reconvened the earlier vote was overturned, the tempest abated, and Powers' work was finally erected where it stands today at the Boston State House.

Nichols' role remains undocumented and an argument against it is timing. Most of the shenanigans occurred in the spring of 1859 when Nichols seems likely to have been in Europe "training with Couture." Regardless, the value and impact of free publicity surely was not lost on Nichols and enlarged his bank account if nothing else. Ball was embarrassed by the entire episode because Powers was a close friend and mentor in Florence. If Nichols was involved this may well have been the reason for Ball's chilly description of Nichols years later as "a shrewd art dealer." Ball's hometown made it up to him later with a fine commission of an equestrian George Washington for the Boston Public Garden, where it stands today and for which he is best known.

Art Gallery at Last

Nichols must have returned from his Daniel Webster-financed Paris sojourn intent on opening an art gallery. If the training with Couture remains undocumented, the time spent networking with artists does not. By late 1859 he had opened a gallery and store called T. W. Parker & Co. on a very fashionable section of Broadway, the most fashionable street in New York, briefly occupying number 839, then 763 and finally 756 near Tiffany and Goupil (later Knoedler) gallery. He soon had painter Edwin White's huge *Washington Resigning his Command of the American Army* on view, with an admission price of 25 cents. White had been in Paris earlier in the year finishing the commission by the State of Maryland for placement in its State House where it hangs today. No doubt Nichols made arrangements while in Paris to show the work briefly before it went to Annapolis.



The artist Worthington Whittredge in his autobiography recounts the amazement among his circle of artists in Rome upon learning from the *New York Herald* that the artist Frederick Church was raking in $600 per day in 25-cent admission fees in the spring of 1859 for a viewing of his painting, *Heart of the Andes*. According to Whittredge, the artist had arranged for special gas lighting behind reflectors of silver and brought in enormous palm leaves all the way from the Andes. Even though 12,000 people came to see it in three weeks, simple division suggests Church made more like $1,000 per week, still a handsome sum. Inspired by Church, it seems Nichols had found another lucrative angle that he worked on several different occasions in the following years.

The line between popular entertainment and art was vague in the mid 19th century. Nichols advertised his art shows in the entertainment column of the newspaper alongside of Barnum's circus, exhibitions of Siamese twins and the like. Church's dramatic presentation of his painting had included seating as if for a play or concert, and visitors brought opera glasses, the better to see the very detailed flora and fauna. Nichols also offered seats and given his marketing savvy must have provided other crowd-pleasing embellishments. White's painting included almost seventy portraits of founding fathers and Revolutionary heroes, and it is easy to imagine opera glasses trained on these as well.

By January of 1860 only months after its opening, Nichols renamed his gallery. There is little doubt as to the reason behind its new name, Crayon Art Gallery. Nichols had made arrangements with *The Crayon* journal, the leading art journal of the period, to handle their business affairs. Renaming the gallery after the most important art journal of the day just made for good business.

Nichols as Art Critic

Simultaneously with the creation of his galleries, Nichols was hired by the *New York Evening Post* as its art critic. Standards for journalism in this era were different as most newspapers did not even pretend to offer balanced political reporting. Still, Nichols' blatant promotion of his gallery and the artists he represented via his anonymous column is shocking even by the standards of the day. The *New York World* also sometimes ran his biased art commentary.

Nichols has been credited with jump-starting the languishing career of the painter George Inness through his vigorous promotion. A survey of his art columns from late 1859 through 1861 indicate that although he did promote Inness, he spent far more ink on other American artists who remain obscure today. The little-remembered painter George Loring Brown not only got more lines but also was the artist Nichols featured in three different widely advertised shows that carried 25-cent admission fees, seats, and the like.

Nichols surely displayed Ball's *Daniel Webster* and *Henry Clay* in his gallery, although he never mentions the statuettes in his writing, perhaps because they were old news by that time. He did keep Thomas Ball in mind, though, with direct references to him in May and July of 1860 and again in February of 1861, as well as an indirect plug in June, 1860, by way of an insult to poor Powers' Boston Webster. "Our mother country seems quite as unfortunate in the way of public statues as we are, notwithstanding such monstrosities as Mills' Jackson and Washington or the retributive figure of Webster in Boston."[10]

In May 1860, he wrote, "T. Ball, the sculptor, has just completed a spirited statuette called the "Minute Man" which is to be put in bronze, 15 feet high, and placed near the battle ground at Lexington. It represents a farmer who startling from his work at the signal of alarm with coat half on, his rifle in his left hand, is pointing with his right in the direction of the advancing enemy. The figure is splendidly modelled (sic) and artistically rendered. It is infinitely more representative and significant than the stupid figures of Justice, Liberty, etc., that form the stock of most monumental sculpture."[11] (This sculpture was never erected due to the Civil War interruption of sculpture production. Ball's student, Daniel Chester French, is responsible for the Minuteman statue finally erected at Lexington.) In July of the same year, he reported: "Ball, the Boston sculptor, has removed to a large atelier which has been erected for the purpose of modelling (sic) the equestrian Washington for the city of Boston and the colossal statue of Webster for the city of New York."[12] The following February, Nichols updated his readers: "Ball's statue of Washington is progressing finely, at Boston, and give (sic) promise of being a noble and strikingly beautiful work of art. The artist has a studio built for the purpose near the Chickering factory, and is now busy modelling (sic) the horse."[13]

Nichols' gallery seems largely to have been stocked with paintings by American artists as well as those of France, Belgium, and the Dusseldorf school, and he also provided studio space to artists. He sold engravings of paintings some of which he published himself. The only sculpture for sale that made his column was a bust of Lincoln. In a typically anonymous advertisement he wrote, "Volk the sculptor, during the exciting canvass in Illinois between Lincoln and Douglas, made a fine bust of the former, copies of which are on exhibition and for sale at the Crayon Art Gallery, 756 Broadway. Numerous friends of Mr. Lincoln call it a perfectly characteristic likeness."[14]

Although Nichols returned from a business trip to London in the summer of 1861 to make an announcement covered by the *New York Daily Tribune* that he was soon to open an art gallery in London, there is no evidence that he ever did. The war was going badly for the North, and the art business was in sharp decline as patrons became increasingly distracted by the war. That November he announced in his column, "The Crayon Art Gallery in this city has undergone a change in the way of occupation, although still devoted to the interests of the fine arts. Mr. Seitz, the dealer in engravings, has moved there from his former stand. Few of our readers are aware of the fact that there has been, these many years past for sale in this city so rare and costly a collection of classical engravings as may be found in the stock of Mr. Seitz. Now they are placed in a convenient location—by the way, all the art attractions are centering around tenth street—our connoisseurs will soon find them out. Mr. Seitz will distinguish a genuine impression of a Longhi or Morghen or Albert (sic) Durer, as surely as a cleaver lapidary will select the priceless diamond from the deceptive paste."[15] By April he had joined the army.

Left: *General John C. Fremont*. John Buttre after Rockwood. Engraving. GM1526.610.

Right: *General William Tecumseh Sherman*. Artist Unknown. Engraving. GM1526.842.





Captain Nichols

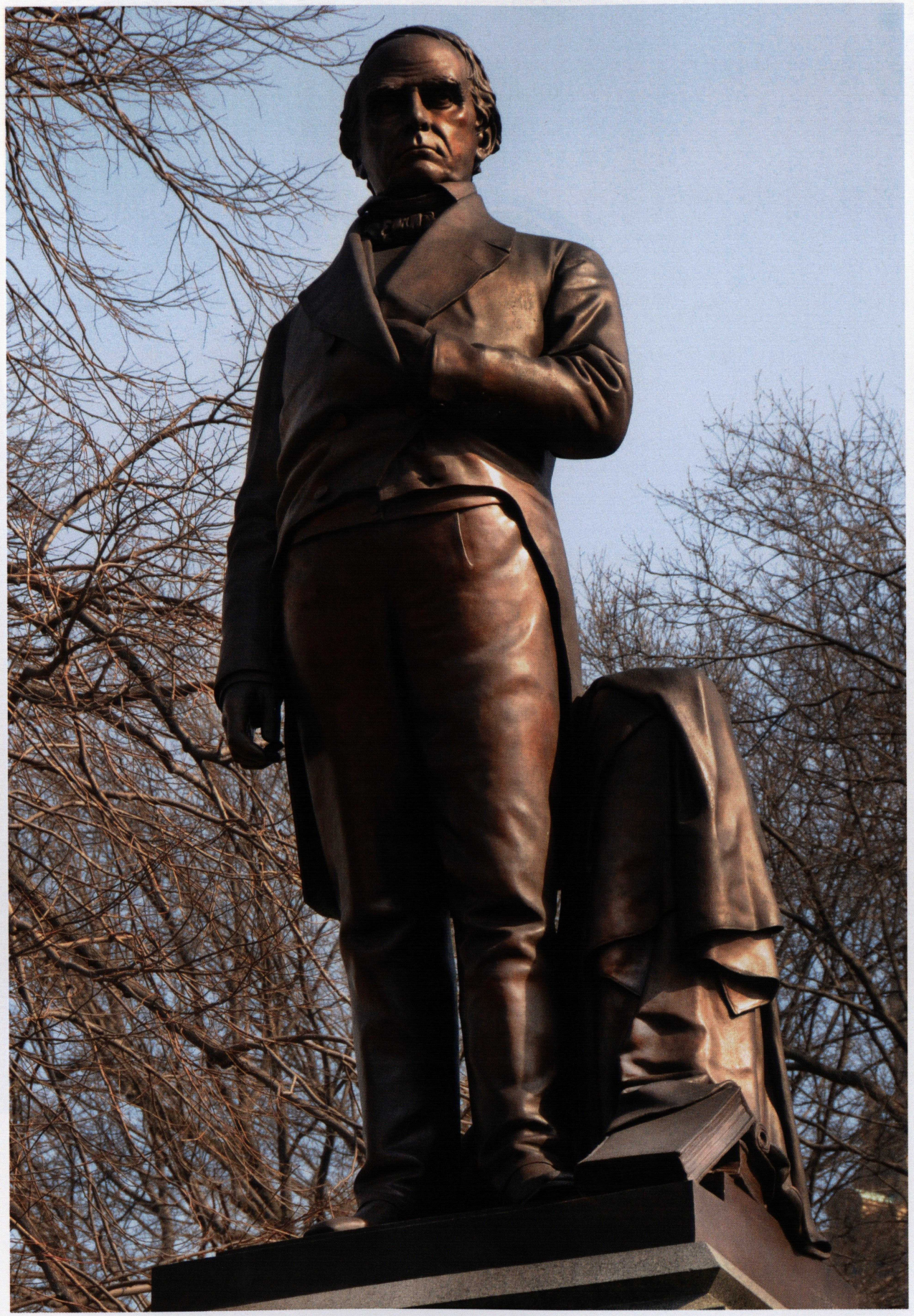
The *New York Evening Post* was owned by William Cullen Bryant, the famous poet and orator who was also one of the founders of the Republican Party. In 1856 Bryant was a major supporter of General John Fremont, the first Republican candidate for president. Did Nichols make this initial connection via sales of his Webster, a hero to abolitionists? Bryant, or his son-in-law, Parke Godwin, must have been the influential link that allowed Nichols to obtain his commission as Captain and assistant aide-de-camp on Fremont's personal staff when he finally joined the army in April of 1862. Their influence likely helped him get reassigned after Fremont's disgrace to other low danger positions such as recruiter (admittedly a natural for him) and finally to Sherman's staff. He was brevetted (a temporary field promotion) to Lt. Colonel after the war ended and called himself Colonel Nichols for the rest of his life.

Nichols continued to work for the *Evening Post* throughout the war. He wrote a letter on Post letterhead from New York to Fremont in the summer of 1863 requesting an interview for an article, and he kept Parke Godwin apprised of Sherman's movements with the advice that Godwin could publish what he saw fit of the information, and not to worry that he would reveal anything the rebels would want to know, mostly because Nichols was in the dark about Sherman's plans himself. His diary must have been in the mail to *Harper's* for publication within hours of the end at Appomattox.

Epilogue

Thomas Ball spent three of the war years completing his equestrian Washington in Boston until economic conditions improved enough for his return to Italy in the spring of 1865 near war's end.

Facing: *Daniel Webster*. Thomas Ball. Bronze. Erected 1876. Central Park, New York City. Central Park Conservancy. Photo by Sara Miller.



Facing: Detail, *Henry Clay*. Thomas Ball. Bronze. Original model 1858, date of bronze cast unknown. GM0826.94.

The Crayon Art Gallery lingered on. Whether it was still owned by Nichols while he was in the army is unclear. An announcement in the *New York Observer* as late as March 3, 1864, invited art lovers to view Bierstadt's *Rocky Mountains* at the Crayon Art Gallery, 756 Broadway. It is possible that this referred to an engraving of the artwork being promoted by Mr. Seitz. However, on November 7, 1864, *The Circular* (Brooklyn) published a letter from H. W. B. (probably Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent radical abolitionist preacher in Brooklyn and friend of Nichols) about a visit to the Crayon Gallery where he saw Francis Bicknell Carpenter's painting *President Lincoln and his Cabinet in council on the Emancipation Proclamation* (now at the U. S. Capitol). Beecher devoted many paragraphs to describing the work in glowing terms and added that the painting was 14 and a half feet by 9 feet, everything life size, and that the exhibit hall was darkened except for the combination gaslight and sunlight reflected from the painting itself. Indeed, if Nichols had managed to organize another of his blockbuster exhibits—complete with free advertising—while occupying Atlanta with Sherman he would seem to have been equally capable of orchestrating the Ball versus Powers fiasco from Paris.

Art bronze casting halted during the war. But by 1866 the Ames Manufacturing Company was back in the *Daniel Webster* business when they filled an order of a bronze cast for Gordon Webster Burnham of 128 Fifth Avenue, New York City. His letter to Ames of October 15 indicates that he had ordered an "extra" Webster that he hoped would be "equal in color and finish, if not superior, to any that I have in my collection."[16] The fact that Burnham was ordering his cast directly from the foundry rather than going through Nichols may indicate that Nichols' art gallery days were done, though no doubt he was still getting his share of the sale. Mr. Burnham so loved Thomas Ball's *Daniel Webster* that in addition to owning a houseful of them, he commissioned, for $50,000, an heroic 14-foot-tall version that was erected in Central Park in 1876. It stands there still today.

NOTES

1 Obituary of George Ward Nichols, *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette,* September 16, 1885.

2 Rose Angela Boehle, Maria, *A Biography of Maria Longworth* (Santa Fe: Landfall Press, 1990).

3 *Dictionary of American Biography,* s.v. "Nichols, George Ward."

4 Thomas Ball, *My Threescore Years and Ten: An Autobiography* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), 142.

5 *Ibid.*

6 William Kloss and Diane K. Skvarla, *U.S. Senate Catalog of Fine Arts* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002), 417.

7 Official Catalogue of the New-York Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations, revised ed. (New York: G. P. Putman & Co.,1853), 97.

8 Thomas Ball, *My Threescore Years and Ten: An Autobiography* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), 137.

9 The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Patents, 1853, lists a patent for a bust of Daniel Webster issued on April 19, 1853, to Thomas Ball as assigned to G. W. Nichols.

10 "Art Items," *New York Evening Post,* June 1, 1860.

11 "Art Items," *New York Evening Post,* May 12, 1860.

12 "Art Items," *New York Evening Post,* July 14, 1860.

13 Art Items," *New York Evening Post,* February 5, 1861.

14 "Art Items," *New York Evening Post,* June 1, 1860.

15 "Art Items," *New York Evening Post,* November 9, 1861.

16 Burnham to James T. Ames, October 15, 1866. Ames-Stearns Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



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