COLLECTOR’S FOCUS
ART OF THE NUDE

1. Titian (1490-1576), Venus and Adonis, 1554, oil on canvas, 73 x 81". Prado National Museum, Madrid, Spain.

2. RJD Gallery, The Intruder, oil on canvas, 36 x 36", by Adam Miller.

*Painting his series of works based on stories in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Titian perfected his skill rendering the female nude and mythological subjects in the landscape. In *Venus and Adonis*, 1534, he put nearly the entire story of the ill-fated couple on one canvas. Cupid has fallen asleep in a tree, content that Venus—who had accidently been stabbed by one of his arrows—was sleeping amorously with Adonis beneath it. Aroused, as it were, from his slumber to go off to hunt the wild boar, which Venus had warned him not to do, Adonis is pulled away from her embrace by his anxious dogs—his passion for the hunt greater than his passion for the goddess. When he is gored to death by the boar, being a mere mortal, Venus creates the anemone from his blood. The flower is often red and blooms only briefly, echoing the short life of Adonis.

Michael Bergt explores myth and the masculine/feminine dynamic in his paintings and drawings. In *Diana and Dogs*, he plays on the theme of Diana and Actaeon. Actaeon haplessly happened upon Diana at her bath. Enraged, the virginal goddess turned him into a stag who was devoured by his own unsuspecting..."
hounds. Throughout the history of art the relationship of Diana and Actaeon has been interpreted in many ways. Tales of the hunt and of rape in the forest set Diana up for a justifiably fearful response to the sudden appearance of Actaeon. In his *Mythology*, Thomas Bulfinch wrote, “Some thought the goddess in this instance more severe than was just, while others praised her conduct as strictly consistent with her virgin dignity.”

Bergt shows the goddess having taken the hounds as her own. “I wanted to show Diana with a pack of hunting dogs having her back,” he says, “ready to defend her. She holds them back, thereby controlling on whom she’ll unleash this potential. Essentially, she controls who can see her.”

Adam Miller portrays another unwelcome trespasser in his painting *The Intruder*. Classically trained, he draws from Baroque and mannerist masters as well as dramatic comics to paint lush interpretations of the presence of myth in the contemporary world—“a world just a little bit different from this one.” Whether nude or clothed, his figures reveal, as much as we might wish it otherwise, our common humanity. A satyr, a woodland fertility god blessed with ram’s horns, hooves, a
tale and a permanent erection, happens upon the harvest for which he, as a nature spirit of fertility, is responsible. Perhaps revealed by the local hunters’ hounds, he lies on the ground defenseless. As in many of his paintings, Miller’s characters show a variety of emotions. The woman points her rifle at the mysterious “other” ready to do him in while her companion shoulders his rifle and gazes into the distance, contemplating what this creature could be. Their innocent friend holds his rifle like a Caravaggio lute player fascinated by this novel intrusion into his dull life. A rainbow suggests a happy ending in which the mythic and the mundane will coexist.

Susannah Martin writes, “The history of the painted nude in landscape documents exactly this eternal longing. Setting aside for a moment any erotic motivations, the nude has always also been a symbol for man in his purist form, his original form, his primordial form. Stripped of all social indicators; clothing, possessions, etc., he exists independent of identity in a time of pure being (ein Zeit des Seins). Being is our eternal home. Nature does not possess an identity, it is. The nude in a natural setting has always been associated with our return to a time of pure being, a return home.”

Martin photographs her models nude in the landscape, observing in the process, their sudden realization of their freedom. She arranges the photographs of individual figures into groups setting up her composition.

She says, “Nature is no longer home to us, she is much more a tourist destination. Certainly no representation of the nude in landscape in the 21st century can escape conveying our extreme estrangement from nature, intentional or not. There is an unavoidable strangeness or feeling of dislocation which envelopes the most sincere attempt at harmony.”
9. David Alvarado, *High Tide*, oil on linen, 30 x 24"  
10. David Alvarado, *Ablutions*, oil on panel, 24 x 18"  
Her models experience the exhilaration of being naked in nature but it isn’t a state that is practical. We briefly experience our primordial connectedness, but the more recent imposition of clothing, houses and other conventions takes precedence.

In *The Day I Quit*, the naked, well-built male (male as object is another whole subject) kicks a rubber toy to the excitement of a pack of dogs, both he and they enjoying being unfettered. Despite the dogs’ being domesticated and the man being somewhat tamed, we are all animals, susceptible to instincts bred in the bone—instincts that can, at any time, overcome the imposed restraints of civilization.

Will the man learn to fish from the sea and gather edible plants or will he go back to the edge of the field to reclaim his clothes? Will the dogs continue to be playful or will they revert to a state for which they have retained their vicious teeth?

The nude in classical perfection or scarred by life will always be a subject for artists. Rodin wrote, “Man’s naked form belongs to no particular moment in history; it is eternal, and can be looked upon with joy by the people of all ages.”
Within the pages of this special section are both classical and contemporary renderings of the nude figure. There are also insights from artists and dealers about this timeless collecting category.

Bonner David Galleries in Scottsdale, Arizona, represents a number of artists who specialize in figurative painting including Joseph Lorusso. “The depiction of the nude form should be one of beauty, mystery and inaccurate perfection,” Lorusso says. “I strive to show the nude be it male or female in way that, as in all of my work, allows the viewer an opportunity to be an active participant in the story, to become
part of the narrative. I strive to show mood and atmosphere in the scene with the figure as a central role. I make no distinctions between the clothed or unclothed figure; to me, it all becomes an orchestration of color, shapes and line. Having said this, I generally would rather see a depiction of the nude form in a tasteful setting that allows me a reason to want to view it again and again.”

Lotton Gallery, in Chicago, represents Russian couple Marina Marina and Aydemir Saidov. “Marina’s newest piece, Dreamy Morning, captures a peaceful moment of being caught in a dream. Marina’s delicate handling of the skin, face and hair with the intricate workmanship of the fabrics are pristine quality,” says gallery director Christina Franzoso. “Saidov’s latest, Warm Morning, exudes sensuality and seduction, although invariably innocent, the perfect combination in the art of the nude.”

In Charleston, South Carolina, is the John C. Doyle Art Gallery, which represents the work of its late owner and artist John Carroll Doyle as well as a handful of other artists. Gallery director Angela Stump says, “John Carroll Doyle was a self-taught prolific painter of all subjects, but I believe nudes were his most challenging and most rewarding. Although he loved creating romantic stories evoking softness and celebrating femininity with his nudes, the challenge of impressionistic skin tones is what kept him creating more.

“The art of the nude can be so personal for a collector,” she continues, “as well as a timeless way to be more intimately connected to the artist behind the figure.”

Artist John Cutruzzola’s paintings feature texture and dramatic color and light that express a sense of presence and emotion. He continues to explore the aesthetic qualities of his subjects, while addressing their primal and darker elements. In describing his painting Grace, he says, “The soft beauty of the woman. The heavenly expression of the Creator. The centerpiece of humanity.”

K.L. McKenna has found that drawing from the nude is difficult, but “once you learn it, you can draw or paint anything.” Her pastel nudes have a direct relationship to the compositions of the oil landscapes she paints. McKenna explains, “I see figures in mountains and valleys. This drawing practice allows me to keep my skills honed for whatever inspires me to capture on canvas. They become part of the process, which can sometimes be more interesting and worthy than the final product.”

An alum of the prestigious National Academy of Fine Arts, Repin Institute, in St. Petersburg, Leonid Gervits has a career...
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Art of the Nude

spanning more than 40 years of creating and teaching. Celebrated in international exhibitions and recognized by numerous awards, his work is defined by a harmony of deep feeling and technical skill, and can be found enhancing the collections of museums, galleries, universities and private homes throughout the world.

Gervits’ diverse talent ranges from evocative impressionist seascapes to nudes and drawings done with exceptional delicacy. The pinnacle of his creation is his highly realistic and keenly sensitive portraiture and figurative realism.

Working from a live model, Stephanie Amato begins by drawing the figure as accurate as possible. “At some point I will move into a more creative process, pushing the shadows to create drama and movement,” she says. “Creating figurative artwork is a personal preference, but one subject that is the most meaningful to me as an artist. I believe this is also true for the collector of this type of art. My goal is to capture the feeling or essence of the figure and to translate this to the viewer. I am hoping to appeal to those who can look beyond the nudity and appreciate the romanticism in the piece.”

Amato is represented by J.M. Stringer Art Gallery in Vero Beach, Florida, and at Lagerquist Gallery in Atlanta.

Los Angeles-based artist David Alvarado primarily focuses on the figure, and aims for a high level of craftsmanship— informs by his classical training—and a poetic contemporary feel. He says, “My work seeks to imitate life, to capture a moment of life across the broad spectrum of our emotional and psychological life.”

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