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Preface

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Preface

THE WORKS OF ART in the collection of the Colby College Museum of Art are well worth serious study. The opportunity afforded the editors of this volume was thus propitious. Perhaps not surprisingly, when we solicited contributions for this edition, it became clear to us that people who used the collection for teaching felt a responsibility to undertake scholarly investigation of the museum's holdings. In its initial manifestation, the museum was, after all, founded as a component of the art department to complement the department's teaching mission. Of the six essays included in this volume, three were written by current Colby art department faculty members—one of these in collaboration with a student—one by a former member of the department, and one by a professor from nearby University of Southern Maine, who uses the collection in her teaching. What makes the Colby collection so valuable is that it provides the opportunity for careful looking, close analysis, and thoughtful inquiry that students of art history require in order to learn and practice their discipline. The intimate study of works of art, like all scholarly endeavors, requires time and attention. Such investigation and the opportunity to view high-quality objects firsthand yields an understanding of individual works of art, in themselves and in context, both social and historical.

Although the focus of each article is scholarly and educational, they are not monolithic. Each author approaches objects differently, analyzing them from varied intellectual perspectives. The diversity of approach is paralleled by the diversity with which the museum collection is used in teaching. From an interest in region, in sociocultural moment, to artistic motif and artist's biography, these essays cover different intellectual ground, much as they concentrate on different kinds of art, from landscape to mythology, portraiture to genre.

The editors would like to thank the contributors for their timely response to our solicitation of articles and most of all for the substantial scholarly content of their submissions. It has been a pleasure to work with professionals of this high caliber. Douglas N. Archibald, Roberts Professor of English at Colby, first conceived of an issue of the Colby Quarterly devoted to the Art Museum. This reflects his understanding of the value of the study of the visual arts in a liberal arts context, demonstrated as well by his support for the creative arts during his tenure as Dean of Faculty of the College. In this his retirement year we would like to dedicate this volume of essays to him, a trusted and admired colleague and a remarkable friend of the arts.

Michael A. Marlais

James M. Gillespie Professor of Art

David L. Simon

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