

Wine Culture in the Thyssen- Bornemisza Collection

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Linked both to religious rituals and everyday life, the prerogative of the rich and powerful and consolation of the ill-fated, a vehicle for social interaction, an object of economic exchange, stimulation for the senses, a wellspring of good health... wine has always been an important source of artistic inspiration. It would be hard to understand mankind's cultural history without wine for it is a gift from Nature that speaks directly to senses, hearts and minds. An acquaintance with this, the most civilised of beverages and fruit of an ancient tradition, can lead to new experiences in our encounters with other people and places and — also like art — invite us to enjoy life to the full.

This tour examines different aspects of the history of wine while following an enjoyable, very special route through the Museum's permanent collection. The pictures along the way span the period between 1509 and 1919, four centuries that start with what we might call local, empirical knowledge of wine making and finish with the birth of today's industry and its scientific approach to viticulture and oenology.

ROOM 8

LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER

Kronach, 1472–Weimar, 1553

*The Virgin with Child with
a Bunch of Grapes*, c. 1509–10

Oil on panel. 71.5 x 44.2 cm

INV. 114 (1936.1)

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGURES in German Renaissance art, Lucas Cranach was a firm believer in the ideas of the Reformation. His friendship with Luther, however, in no way deterred him from painting religious scenes for a Catholic clientele. Here the artist depicted the Virgin in the foreground, her softly outlined and modelled face recalling Leonardo's technique of *sfumato*. Cranach signed the painting on the low wall behind the Virgin with his usual winged serpent symbol. Another noteworthy detail is a tiny, almost imperceptible figure climbing up



the steep path whom some have identified as Saint Joseph.

The symbol which most immediately draws our attention, however, is the bunch of grapes in the Virgin's hand — a reference to the Eucharist and Christ's role as the Redeemer.

In Christianity, as in Judaism and the pagan religions of Classical times, the vine was of special significance. Traditions inherited from Egypt and Mesopotamia and reflected in the Bible describe wine as a key symbol of joy, life and fertility and a special gift from God to man. There are references to the vine, with its tendrils, leaves and fruit and to vineyards and wine in many metaphors and parables in both the Old and New Testaments: according to some estimates the Bible mentions wine and vines almost four hundred times. Such frequency is due to the fact that the Scriptures were originally intended for folk who were familiar with the techniques involved in wine growing and making.

The central role, together with bread, played by wine in the Eucharist made it an essential element of worship and for this reason grapes were grown wherever Christian places of worship were established. In the 13th century, however, the presence of both ingredients together ceased to be obligatory for communion among common folk and only necessary when consecration by a priest was required. In this respect, the Protestant reformers made no changes yet did recommend that the faithful commune with both while sharing the same cup so that all Christians, even those who lived in areas where grapes were not grown, would associate the symbols connected with the vine with the promise of everlasting life.

In similar contexts, bunches of grapes are featured in two other works from the Collection, both in Room 20: *The Holy Family with an Angel* by Jacob Jordaens and his workshop (c. 1625-29) and *The Holy Family with Saints and Angels* (c. 1606-10) by Joachim Antonisz Wtewael.

ROOM 9

CHRISTOPH AMBERGER

Nuremberg, c. 1505–Augsburg, 1562

Portrait of Matthäus Schwarz, 1542

Oil on panel, 73,5 x 61 cm

INV. 4 (1935.1)



THIS PORTRAIT CONTAINS A NUMBER OF fascinating details: the glass on the window sill is a reference to Schwarz's background as the son of a wine merchant, while a sheet of paper nearby states the sitter's date and time of birth, the date when the portrait was painted and Schwarz's age at that time — forty-five years and thirty days — all entries that correspond to his horoscope, which is featured in the clouds visible through the window.

To this singular character we owe the production of an interesting book known as the *Trachtenbuch* (now in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick). This biographical manuscript contains one hundred and thirty-seven illustrations of the most important events in Schwarz's life and also tells of the aversion to studying which led his father to seek him employment with the family firm as a wine taster at the tender age of fifteen. He subsequently enjoyed a successful career as accountant to the powerful Fugger family of bankers and was ennobled

by Charles V a year before this portrait was painted.

Wine has been traded from the earliest of times. In a cereal-producing community the bulk of the harvest can be consumed locally but this is not the case with wine: "Grape harvests cannot be drunk in the same way as crop harvests can be eaten," said the French historian Camille-Ernest Labrousse (1895-1988) some decades ago.

With the fall of the Roman Empire wine production and consumption experienced a marked decline in the West, but did not disappear altogether thanks to the monasteries and local nobles. In line with general trends in trade expansion, wine transactions increased steadily from the 16th century, when a revival of Roman agronomic techniques spread in ways that contributed to changes in cultural and wine growing practices.

As wine merchants came from all social levels, Schwarz's wealthy father, who was highly-placed in Augsburg, had little in

ROOM 6

ANONYMOUS GERMAN ARTIST
(active in Swabia c. 1515)

*Saint Elizabeth offering Bread
and Wine to Two Beggars*
(exterior right wing), c. 1515

Oil on panel. 159.5 x 65.5 cm
INV. 267.B (1955.2.2.B)



common with vintners who drove mules or ran taverns. However, in many countries the industry as a whole can be said to have formed the foundations for large

THIS MAGNIFICENT PANEL FORMED A triptych whose central motif may have been a group of free-standing painted wooden sculptures. The two wing panels depict Saint Anne, the Virgin and the Christ Child (an iconographic theme known as the “Triple Anna” very popular in Germany in the 15th and 16th centuries) and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (who lived in the first half of the 13th century) with her attributes: a small loaf of bread and a jug of water which she offers to cripples who sit at her feet, and a comb referring to her role as the patron saint of those who suffer from ringworm. From the Middle Ages wine was a common feature in the charitable practices of convents and monasteries and on the food lists of hospitals, asylums and hospices, being regarded not as superfluous but rather as comforting and nutritious. As the biblical proverb says: Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget

fortunes and modern estates, components of mercantile capital which would help pave the way for industrial capital in the 18th century.

his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” (Prov. 31: 6-7).

Attributed with therapeutic properties, wine was also included among the food items distributed to the poor and sick, one of the various reasons for this being that many religious institutions, especially Mediterranean convents and monasteries, held reserves of wine produced by their own vineyards. Furthermore, wine with bread was a symbol of the Christian Eucharistic and given together combined material and spiritual salvation. Thirdly, in a world without water purification systems, where local supplies, particularly in towns and villages, often left much to be desired and even helped spread disease, wine was considered a healthy drink whose purity was guaranteed when certain conditions were met. Recent studies have shown that adding a certain amount of wine to water (once a widespread practice) can actually kill the bacteria that cause typhoid fever. In a Europe without sewers wine played a major preventive role.

ROOM 11

ANONYMOUS VENETIAN ARTIST
(active c. 1570)

The Last Supper, c. 1570

Oil on canvas. 121 x 190 cm
INV. 17 (1934.5)

IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION IT IS AT THE Last Supper where with bread wine assumes its greatest symbolic role at the very centre of the rite of the Eucharist.

As artists often depicted the scene with settings typical of their own age, it is not surprising that this one does not coincide historically with that of the original Cenacle. Thus the panel on the same theme in Room 3, attributed to a follower of the

Master of the Virgo inter Virgines (c. 1485), depicts Jesus and the Apostles in a late-Gothic setting while in this Venetian canvas the Last Supper has been transferred to an Italian Renaissance *palazzo*, as is evident in both the architectural elements in the background and the arrangement of the table and servants. And naturally, there would be no lack of wine at any self-respecting aristocratic Renaissance table.



ROOM 12

WORKSHOP OF ORAZIO GENTILESCHI

Pisa, 1563–London, 1639

Lot and His Daughters, c. 1621–23

Oil on canvas. 120 x 168,5 cm

INV. 155 (1977-99)



Since Antiquity wine has been an indispensable feature of aristocratic banquets. The type of wine, its quality and even ways of drinking it have served to establish social distinctions and elites.

Although there have been significant changes in the prestige accorded different types of wine, some aspects have remained constant. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance sweet white wines with high alcohol content (especially muscat and malmsey) were the most favoured at the best tables. While many of the so-called “wines of honour” came from overseas, the fact of their having been imported denoted luxury in itself. However, exotic

wines and “clean” and “pure” wines (taken without adding water as was the custom of the lower classes) were generally preferred by members of the upper class.

From the 16th to the late-18th century white wine was thought to be more suited to intellectual pursuits while red wine was recommended for those intending to engage in physical activity. Claret and red wine, especially of the full-bodied kind, however, gradually gained favour with the aristocracy, especially in countries that did not produce wines of their own. Fortification with alcohol was a guarantee of preservation, hence the fame of the Porto, Marsala, Madeira and Malaga wines.

ORAZIO GENTILESCHI, WHOSE WORK was influenced by the new ideas of Caravaggio, produced numerous variations on the same theme, as in this painting with its story from Genesis. Having fled Sodom, Lot took refuge with his daughters in a mountain cave. There, the two girls decided by common agreement and on the suggestion of the elder to make their father drunk and then lie with him so as to ensure the continuation of the line.

Ignoring the more lurid aspects of the tale, Gentileschi depicted Lot asleep on the ground between his daughters. Only the wine flask and the gold scallop-shell cup seem to reflect a certain sexual symbolism. One theory states that the word *vino* is derived from the Sanskrit *vana* (love) — with which the words *Venus* and *venera* are apparently connected — in a semantic relationship based on an age-old belief in wine’s aphrodisiac properties and that from this original root the Greek word *oinos* and subsequently the Latin *vinum* were also derived.

For many years the story of Lot was cited as an example of the negative consequences of unrestrained drinking, with

Christian sermons likening the brutal conduct of the drunkard who ignores taboos and behaves like an animal to the incestuous actions of Lot. Furthermore, in the Bible, where wine is considered a basic ingredient in the material and symbolic life of Christianity, several passages strongly condemn drunkenness and excessive drinking.

However, praise for the consumption of wine in moderation can be found in the works of writers and philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Seneca and Apuleius, although they do remind the reader that alcohol can also suppress our fear of others, numb our conscience and bring out the worst in us. Furthermore, temperance — one of the virtues of Classical tradition and for some Catholics a cardinal virtue — has often been equated to moderation in drinking.

This theme inspired another version of *Lot and His Daughters* by Bernardo Cavallino, in the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, which was paired with his *Drunkenness of Noah*, another biblical passage popular in post-Trent times as a morality story.

ROOM 12

TOMMASO SALINI

Rome, c. 1575–1625

***Young Peasant with a Flask*, c. 1610**

Oil on canvas. 99 x 73 cm

INV. 363 (1977.4)



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FLASK in the boy's hand and the cabbages in this work by the still life specialist Tommaso Salini may be a reference to the belief of Platina (a 15th-century humanist and the author of a treatise on cookery entitled *On Correct Pleasure and Good Health*) that cabbage was an excellent cure for inebriation besides being "most efficacious when mixed with wine for counteracting the bite of rabid dogs."

Indeed, before the 19th century many medical texts contained instructions regarding those wines most effective in the treatment of the four humours (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile). Furthermore, among the ingredients in mediaeval and modern pharmacopoeia a large number of recipes included measures of red or white wine. A similar case is that

of what we might call "folk medicine", for as late as 1846 the renowned Spanish hygienist Felipe Monlau wrote that "Wine [...] is a basic necessity for many and a condiment and medicine for all."

Here we might also recall the existence from the 19th century on of wines specifically intended for medicinal purposes, which were high in alcohol content and contained added ingredients such as herbs and spices. Paradoxically liqueur wines of this kind did not come under the heading of "natural wines" and were presented as good for the health.

Wine was also considered an effective external disinfectant, as, for example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Room 14 contains a painting from the workshop of Domenico Fetti based on this Bible story).

ROOM 16

SEBASTIANO RICCI

Belluno, 1659–Venice, 1734

***Bacchus and Ariadne*, c. 1691–94**

Oil on canvas. 94 x 75 cm

INV. 341 (1982.34)



THIS PAINTING BY SEBASTIANO RICCI depicts the marriage of Bacchus (the Roman name for the Greek god Dionysus) to Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete. As the poet Ovid told in the *Metamorphoses*, Ariadne had been abandoned on the island of Naxos by the ungrateful Theseus, whom she had helped escape from the Minotaur's labyrinth with a ball of thread, but managed to rekindle her joy in the god's arms. Among the couple's retinue Ricci included a tiger and a panther, animals which normally drew Bacchus' chariot, as well as other figures commonly associated with him, including putti, a tambourine-playing satyr and the maenads (also known as Bacchae) who in their ecstatic frenzy represent the life force behind nature.

According to the myth, Bacchus, the god of drunkenness, created the vine and brought forth from the ground milk, honey and wine — "the delight of mortals" in Homer's words — whose intoxicating effect freed men from their troubles. Archaeological evidence, however, suggests that wine was first produced — in all likelihood accidentally — during the Neolithic in the region now formed by

Georgia, Armenia and Iran. The secret of wine making may have first reached Egypt and then Greece via Crete or possibly Asia Minor or Thrace.

In Greece the celebrations held in honour of Dionysus at the time of the grape harvest took the form of popular festivities attended by large numbers of people. As time passed more Dionysian festivals were created, characterised by the drinking of large quantities of wine and, at the Dionysian Mysteries, suspension of the rules of conventional sexual behaviour. The Dionysian Mysteries were introduced to Italy by the Etruscans. Dionysus, known as Bacchus in the Roman world, and his rituals, called bacchanalia, came to be regarded as potentially dangerous and the festivities were banned by the Roman authorities. However, they reappeared frequently throughout the Roman period and even later in the barbarian kingdoms that sprang up after the fall of the Empire, in spite of the Christian church's condemnation and attempted suppression of pagan festivals. Many writers have discussed the "Bacchic" currents underlying Carnival and other popular, ostensibly Christian festivals. In the Renaissance the figure of

ROOM 18

DAVID TENIERS II and JAN VAN KESSEL I
 Antwerp, 1610–Brussels, 1690
 and Antwerp 1626–1679

*The Submission of the Sicilian
 Rebels to Antonio de Moncada in
 1411, 1663*

Oil on copper. 54 x 68.2 cm
 INV. 388 (1969.15)



Bacchus and the bacchanalia as ambiguous symbols of the celebration of life (and also of depravity) were revived in art and literature and became the subject of numerous works with varying interpretations.

THIS OIL PAINTING ON COPPER IS THE result of the joint effort of two painters: David Teniers II, who executed the scenes with figures, and Jan van Kessel I, who painted the decorative borders that frame this and another scene in a series of twenty illustrating the exploits of Guillermo Ramón and Antonio Moncada, aristocratic Sicilian siblings of Spanish origin.

The borders framing the historical episode contain a variety of objects which together form an allegory of the five senses: the musical instruments and exotic songbirds represent hearing, the contrast between the steely gleam of the armour and the soft smoothness of the bows and hangings is a reference to touch, the flowers and wreaths are a symbol of smell and the playful cherub holding a glass of wine near the two carafes is, of course, an allusion to taste. The colour itself makes its own contribution to the visual splendour of this work of art by representing the sense of sight.

The Greek and Roman writers established a basic language for referring to the taste of wine which was revived in the late Middle Ages and commonly used in the Renaissance. From that time and during the rest of the modern age Aristotle's classification of the categories of wine tastes was very similar to what we use today — sweet, salty, bitter and sour. The latter period also saw an increase in the number of treatises and travel stories connected with wines. Furthermore, the senses of taste and smell also made it possible to discern whether a wine was excellent, good, mediocre or bad, and whether it was suitable for those it was intended for and their personal circumstances. This first point was very important because, as many wines were short-lived, the first thing to determine was whether a wine was diseased or had been affected by the

In the previous room, Giulio Carpioni's *Bacchanal* (1660-65) depicts the god in a recumbent position wearing a crown of vine leaves and surrounded by a group celebrating orgiastic rites among ruins.

addition of foreign substances (from water to colouring via different flavours). The second point was connected with the Hippocratic-Galenic humours and temperaments and the therapeutic role of wine as a "warm food" in varying degrees that could bring equilibrium to the humours and preserve or restore health. In this respect a wine would need to correspond to the physiological characteristics of the drinker.

Until the late-18th century, this basic language of descriptions of wine flavours based on the simple categories of taste, beneficial qualities as appreciated by the taster, and wine's potential for adapting to different people in different situations was maintained. In contemporary texts it is virtually impossible to find similes and metaphors like those we use today to describe the gustatory and olfactory experiences inherent in drinking wine. It was in the 19th century, however, when organic chemists began to take an interest in the substances which actually gave wines their taste: oenanthic ether or ethereal oils, for example. At the same time, food and wine critics created a wider vocabulary in an attempt to describe the organoleptic characteristics of wines. In *Topographie de tous les vignobles connus* of 1816 André Jullien introduced new vocabulary which would be re-used during the rest of the century by other writers who in turn would add supplementary terms in other languages and develop literary forms which, rather than describing flavours, attempted to evoke characteristics and their effects on the taster. However, the old subjective categories without additional details or descriptions in which the reader placed his trust in the acknowledged good taste of the writer were also preserved.

It was not until after World War II, particularly from the 1960s on, when a much wider vocabulary appeared which

ROOM 20

CAESAR VAN EVERDINGEN

Alkmaar, c. 1617–1678

Vertumnus and Pomona, 1637–40

Oil on panel. 47.9 x 38.9 cm

INV. 136 (1983.19)



gradually began to complicate the description of flavours and fragrances and analyse the concept of objective components in wine. Wine makers at the University of California, Davis, in the 1970s with their Wine Aroma Wheel, and the French oenologist Émile Peynaud, whose book *Le*

goût du vin was published in 1983, initiated the process of creating a broad, objective vocabulary that was completed with the introduction of accurate levels for measuring the gustatory qualities of wines, the best-known in this respect being that of Robert Parker.

POMONA, THE ROMAN GODDESS OF gardens and orchards, was associated particularly with olive trees and vines; these, together with cereal crops, form a “trio” of Mediterranean produce. The *patrona pomorum* or “Lady of the Fruits” is also the goddess of September, the month when fruit ripens.

According to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, this rather surly young woman rejected the advances of her fellow woodland gods, but Vertumnus, the deity of seasonal changes, used a ruse to win her over: disguised as an old woman, he went to congratulate Pomona on her fruit trees. Pointing to an elm tree entwined by a vine — the symbol of union between lovers — he told her the story of Anaxarete. Moved by this sad love story, Pomona threw herself into his arms and Vertumnus then showed her his true semblance and won the goddess’s heart.

A very popular theme in Dutch painting, this story could be interpreted as a warning to young people to beware of the wiles of seduction, although it also contains a reflection on the illusionist character of painting.

Of all the pictures on this tour, this painting by Everdingen is one of the few that allow us, through the images of the pruning knife (an attribute of the goddess’s) and wine leaves, to discuss the wine production process. Up to the 19th century, knives were most commonly used for cutting grapes, although pruning shears were also used until mid-century, when the first industrial production systems began to appear. Though more precise and easier to handle, pruning shears were, however, relatively expensive and beyond the means of many families of vintners or at least too dear to provide every picker with one. It should also be remembered that the harvest had to be brought in relatively quickly to avoid bad weather (rain, frost, etc.) which could severely affect the quality of the grape and even induce premature fermentation with all its harmful effects. Thus in terms of manpower and despite mechanisation it was — and still is — a labour-intensive task often requiring staff to be brought in, sometimes from far-off places. As each grape picker normally had his or her own knife (a multi-purpose tool indispensable for life in the country) the grower was spared the extra expense of providing cutting tools.

ROOM 22

DAVID TENIERS II

Antwerp, 1610–Brussels, 1690

The Village Fête, c. 1650

Oil on panel. 45 x 75 cm

INV. 386 (1930.113)



WITH REGARD TO THIS PAINTING, ONE contemporary writer wrote: “The main vice of the inhabitants of the Netherlands is excessive drinking... although what with the damp, gloomy climate they can to some extent be forgiven.” Outdoor festive scenes with villagers and farmers at leisure indulging in their favourite pastimes of dancing and drinking became very popular as a genre in the Netherlands during the 17th century, as other works in this room such as *Country Wedding* (c. 1649-55), attributed to Jan Havicksz Steen, or *Village Scene with Men Drinking* (c. 1631-35), attributed to Adriaen Brouwer, also show. Wine and beer were essential at such events for reinforcing social bonds, conducting business transactions or simply having a good time.

While imported luxury wines stood side by side with the best local wines on the tables of nobles and urban patricians in the pre-industrial age, the common folk also had “wines” of their own, although in this respect the differences between areas that produced wines and those that did not were naturally great. Where vineyards existed, wine consumption was high, in some cases because the wine was home-grown and not sold on, and in others because part of the workers’ wages was paid in kind. Even then poorer households had little storage space and paid employment and work in kind were limited to certain times of the year. Thus, to increase the amount of wine at hand, avoid drunkenness and accompany physical labour with

a drink, water was often mixed in with the wine. People also turned to “weak wine”, i.e. low-quality wine obtained by adding water to crushed grape skins or scraps from the press.

The success of this type of genre scene in the Dutch visual culture of the 16th and 17th centuries has been associated by some with the art market boom attributed to the urban bourgeoisie, who saw contemporary social and moral issues reflected in such works. Here the theme with its rough and ready characters drinking wildly could be interpreted as moralistic criticism of excess and impropriety. Despite its possible uplifting implications, however, the painting has been subject to other interpretations.

At one and the same time, such scenes provide a worldview both utopian and populist. A comparison with the group portrait by Franz Hals on the other side of the room entitled *Family Group in a Landscape* (c. 1645-48), might reveal a contrast with the more formal language of official culture, dominated by differences of rank and privilege inherent in the social order. Festivals like this implied temporary suspension of the established order and, through images of exuberance, community celebration of fertility, growth and abundance, thus remind us of the constant struggle between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in human behaviour. As the philosopher William James wrote: “Sobriety diminishes, discriminates and says no; drunkenness expands, unites and says yes.”

ROOM 22

GERRIT VAN HONTHORST

Utrecht, 1592–1656

The Happy Violinist, c. 1624

Oil on canvas. 83 x 68 cm

INV. 194 (1986.21)



“MUSIC WAS INVENTED TO BRING happiness to the spirit, as was wine,” wrote Cesare Ripa in his *Iconologia*, an influential book of emblems written in the 16th century. Since time immemorial, each has stimulated the other, as numerous paintings testifying to that combination prove.

One of the leading figures of the Utrecht School, Honthorst was responsible for the dissemination of Caravaggio’s style in Holland. His work is characterised by paintings full of theatricality and sharp contrasts of light, which earned him the nickname “Gherardo delle Notti”. It has been suggested that figures of this type could be allegories of the senses, with one representing taste. Furthermore, some paintings with similar themes form pairs with others featuring female figures, setting up a dialogue of gestures involving a degree of eroticism.

Here we might recall the existence of a deep-rooted folk tradition in the Mediterranean countries revolving around songs about the grape harvest that bring together love and pleasure and wine along the lines of the Bacchanalia (with lyrics sometimes “saucy” sometimes “innocent”). There also existed more modern types of drinking song that were completely masculine in content and tone as the regular customers at the places where they were sung were usually men. A more refined musical tradition also drew directly on Classical motifs and linked wine with love and even inspiration.

Also on display in this room is a painting by Jan Gerrit van Bronchorst, a disciple of Van Honthorst’s, entitled *Young Man playing a Theorbo* (c. 1642-16). It depicts a boy in a hat adorned with what appears to be a vine (the plant sacred to Bacchus, the god of wine), strumming an instrument similar to a Baroque lute.

ROOM 23

JAN HAVICKSZ STEEN

Leiden, 1626–1679

Self-Portrait playing the Lute, c. 1663–65

Oil on panel. 55.3 x 43.8 cm

INV. 373 (1930.110)



FAMOUS FOR HIS DROLL GENRE SCENES, Jan Steen attempted to combine painting with other undoubtedly more lucrative pursuits the nature of which, given the theme of this self-portrait, is not particularly surprising. Some years before he painted this picture he ran a brewery in Delft called *The Snake*, with little success. He then opened an inn in Leiden where he also took up brewing beer, as his father before him had done.

Like wine, beer is achieved through fermentation (although with cereals) and has vied with wine throughout European history. Although produced all over Europe since Antiquity, in the Middle Ages it was lower in status than wine and its consumption fell below it even in countries that did not produce wine. By 1500, wine was still the drink of the rich in many regions, particularly in northern Europe, but its consumption had spread to the detriment of beer in the wine-producing regions and their hinterlands. However, during the 17th century — when the future brewer Steen painted his own portrait with a jug on the table — beer began to regain ground. During the Thirty Years War,

many German vineyards were destroyed and the status of wine was severely affected in Central Europe. In the “mini ice age” of the 17th century, production was affected in many northern regions of the continent with the same result. There were also significant innovations in brewing. Hops, which had been used in brewing since the late Middle Ages, began to be grown in almost all of the production areas. They increased the life of beer and altered its flavour so that its taste became similar to that of today. Aromas were also introduced into the production process, particularly in Flanders and the Low Countries, which led to the appearance of aromatic beers.

From the 17th to the 19th century the beer production process became industrialised, with costs subsequently falling and general quality rising. Distribution and marketing networks also grew and beer finally became the alcoholic drink *par excellence* in all the European countries north of the wine-growing line. In the late-19th century, a new kind of catering establishment (already widespread in Central Europe) appeared in some

Mediterranean countries and became popular with middle class customers. Breweries then began introducing beer into the wine-producing countries and demand grew considerably in the second half of the 20th century.

This painting has been compared with one of Ripa's emblems representing the sanguine personality. The lute, jug and book were all in line with the love of the

good life as suggested in this self-portrait — in contrast with the melancholy nature traditionally ascribed to artists. More “regulars” at taverns are featured in other genre scenes from the Collection, as in *Smokers in an Interior* (c. 1637) by David Teniers II, or *Smoker*, by a follower of Adriaen Brouwer. Both praise the atmosphere of camaraderie fostered by drinking.

ROOM 23

JACOB LUCASZ OCHTERVELT
Rotterdam, 1634–Amsterdam, 1682

Oyster Eaters, c. 1665–69

Oil on panel. 47.6 x 37.7 cm
INV. 304 (1930.82)



IN THIS SCENE, WHICH COULD WELL BE set in a brothel, Ochtervelt placed three figures around a table. One, a woman, sets down a tray of oysters, while a gentleman strums a lute and a lady prepares to pour wine from a jug. Music, wine and oysters — known in Dutch as *minnekruyden* (“love herbs”) as oysters were supposedly an aphrodisiac — all serve to infuse the atmosphere with eroticism. The Latin proverb “Sine Cerere et Baco, friget Venus,” translates as “Without Ceres [the goddess of food] and Bacchus [the personification of the disinhibiting effects of wine], Venus [love] freezes.”

The messages contained in *carpe diem* (seize the day) and *memento mori* (remember that you will die) exist side by side in paintings in which wine takes the leading role vis-à-vis conviviality. Some such paintings warn of the dangers of excess, although their main aim seems to be to exalt the pleasures derived from cheerful company.

Since ancient Egypt, the vine has been associated with fertility and reproduction; in many funerary scenes, vines heavy with leaves and grapes represented resurrection. Osiris, god of nature, death and rebirth, was also the god of vineyards. This association with fertility and regeneration is also found in many other Mediterranean religions which attributed wine with a strong sexual charge. But above and beyond the symbolism so easily attributable to a plant that revived every spring to re-emerge from apparently dead wood

and conserved its greenery while all else around it withered, the erotic connotations of wine have much to do with its ability to intoxicate, its consumption making it easier to break conventions and approach others, including on a sexual level.

For centuries the depressant effects of alcohol on the central nervous system and the euphoria and disinhibition caused by drinking were regarded as mysteries. They were even seen as a gateway to some kind of transcendental state linked to life and reproduction, as is evident at the Dionysian Greek festivities and Roman bacchanalia. Although with the spread of Christianity most of these traditions fell into disuse, references to the link between wine, vigour and sexual desire did not disappear from folk tales or even medical literature. It was precisely for this reason that Classical Rome — and well as Christianity — tended to frown upon women drinking wine, as it was thought that to do so was to compromise one's virtue and consequently one's family honour. This negative association returned with a vengeance in the campaigns and literature of the temperance movements of the 19th century which equated immorality in women with the drinking of wine and above all of spirits.

Also in the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Pieter Hendricksz de Hooch's painting *Interior with Two women and a Man drinking and eating Oysters* (1681) explores a similar theme.

ROOM 27

WILLEM CLAESZ HEDA

Haarlem, 1593/94–1680/82

Still Life with Fruit Pie and various Objects, 1634

Oil on panel. 43.7 x 68.2 cm

INV. 181 (1958.1)



SIGNED AND DATED ON THE KNIFE blade (“HEDA 1634”), this composition is notable for its range of grey and brown tones and stunning representation of textures and tactile qualities — the silvery sheen of the cup lying on its side, the soft whiteness of the tablecloth, and the light filtering through the glass bowl of golden liquid all allow the artist to explore the effects of transparency and reflection. The brilliant presentation is not only an invitation to look at the painting but also to “savour” it.

By including wine in still lifes like this one, the artist was able to depict a variety of containers of very different shapes, sizes and materials, as for instance the Rummer or Römer glasses so popular in Germany and the Low Countries throughout the 17th and early-18th centuries (and also seen in Jan Jansz Treck’s *Still Life with Glass of Wine, Pewter Jug and other Objects*). Another popular feature of this kind of still life was the shell-shaped nautilus cup, a Venetian design adopted by glass manufacturers all over Europe after the city’s virtual monopoly on such objects

came to an end in the 17th century. Over the ages wine glasses have been made of a wide range of materials and have taken many forms. In the Middle Ages, porcelain, wood, leather and even bone vessels were used by the common folk, whereas nobles and members of the middle class preferred silver. Many of the silver pieces that have survived are so large that they are thought to have been intended for group use, i.e. for drinking then passing round. However, in the 16th century with the rise of the Venetian workshops, glass replaced silver as a material of distinction and its forms multiplied.

As English glassware developed in the 16th century, new finer, more slender and resistant goblets made their way across Europe. Often richly decorated, they reflected the legacy of the old silver goblets and finest Venetian glassware. In the late-18th century, designs for vessels for different types of wine and other drinks began to appear, although specific shapes and sizes of glassware for such purposes were not used commonly until the next century.

ROOM 27

WILLEM KALF

Rotterdam, 1619–Amsterdam, 1693

Still Life with a Porcelain Bowl and Nautilus Cup, 1660

Oil on canvas. 64.1 x 55.9 cm

INV. 202 (1930.37)

THE PAINTINGS OF WILLEM KALF, A master of what came to be known as *pronkstilleven* (“ostentatious still lifes”) due to their emphasis on sensuality, are characteristic of the European socio-economic order of the time when the modern market economy began to take shape. They brilliantly evoke the wealth accumulated by the well-to-do Dutch merchants: again and again Chinese bowls, glasses, nautilus cups and Persian carpets appear in such paintings; luxury goods to which as an art dealer Kalf would have had ready access and which are known to have been lent to him on occasions by collectors.

With regard to the possible symbolism inherent in these objects, it has been suggested that the open watch on the left alludes to the passing of time, while the grape pips, the remains of the fruit and the broken glass may refer to the fleeting nature of life. The glass of wine is also a reference to the eternal battle against time



and its ravages, although one positive effect was that time allowed wines to acquire their characteristic bouquet.

A recurrent element in Kalf's work is the half-peeled lemon with its manifold interpretations. The spiralling of the peel precariously poised over the edge of the table contributes to the picture's sense of dynamism while adding a touch of vivid colour. This fruit also lent itself to other symbolic interpretations: the rough skin conceals an inner fragrance, while the perishable body houses an immortal soul;

on the other hand it was a symbol of temperance and moderation as its juice was believed to counteract the effects of alcohol.

Kalf modulated the lighting through a subtle interplay of reflection and iridescence: the light envelops the objects while revealing qualities and colours. He softened the tones of the Venetian glasses and as a counterbalance to their delicate appearance highlighted the shine of the porcelain bowl and the texture of the fruit, the result being a feast for the eyes that also whets the appetite.

ROOM 28

NICOLAS-BERNARD LÉPICIÉ

Paris, 1735–1784

The Courtyard of the Customs House, 1775

Oil on canvas. 98 x 164 cm

INV. 219 (1966.2)



LÉPICIÉ'S WORK, WHICH WAS EXHIBITED at the 1775 Salon and received rave reviews from Diderot, is a celebration of the virtues of trade and the customs system. The painting was commissioned by Abbot Terray (who has been identified as the clergyman in black) shortly after he was relieved of his post as *contrôleur-général des finances* and illustrates one view of the economic activity in France at the beginning of Louis XVI's reign: wagons laden with bundles and bales await inspection, wine barrels are being weighed and in the foreground three men inspect a case of books. The overall impression is that, from a mercantile point of view, all goods were subject to control.

From the late Middle Ages to the 20th century indirect taxes from trade and other indirect sources of wealth in Europe formed the foundations of royal, aristocratic and municipal treasuries. Wine, which was a common commodity easily traced by tax collectors, was often one of a state's main sources of income and was normally taxed not where it was consumed but at bridges, ports, gates and other transit points used by horses and carts.

In wine-producing countries, as cities were the main centres of consumption, the authorities often channelled traffic through checkpoints where the value of goods could be gauged and the corresponding taxes levied. In countries which did

not produce wine and received supplies by sea and cities where wine arrived by river, maritime or island customs houses were set up where import taxes on wines and spirits and other products could be collected.

Governments often justified the application of such duties by arguing that wine as a commodity was actually consumed in much larger quantities by the rich and that taxation acted as a deterrent to excessive drinking. In the 19th century, as temperance movements grew stronger, taxing alcoholic drinks was presented as vital to public health campaigns against alcoholism. The wine-producing countries made a distinction between wine, beer and cider, and distilled drinks, considering the last more harmful. However, throughout history taxing wine has in general dictated demand: for instance, the heavy tariffs on French wines in England in the 18th century paved the way for a boom in port and sherry sales. On the other hand, in some countries the levying since the mid-19th century of a tax on alcohol rather than liquid content contributed to the decline of fortified wines and the rise of natural wines.

It is interesting to note that this work once belonged to the collection of the tycoon James de Rothschild who in 1868 acquired Château Lafite, one of the greatest French vineyards, in the Bordeaux region.

ROOM 28

JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD

Grasse, 1732–Paris, 1806

The See-saw, c. 1750–52

Oil on canvas. 120 x 94.5 cm

INV. 148 (1956.13)



THE SEE-SAW HAS BEEN REGARDED as the precursor to one of Fragonard's most famous works that is now in the Wallace Collection in London. In this canvas the artist displayed all the exquisite lightness, hedonism and *joie de vivre* that characterised him by combining subtle eroticism with a love of nature.

The couple in the painting are accompanied by two putti and a still life consisting of succulent fruit and a bottle of wine (both allusive to games of love). In the worldly 18th century women assumed greater prominence and acquired more freedom in their habits. As Princess Palatine "Liselotte" complained a few years before this picture was painted: "In Paris today it is all the rage for ladies to drink like men to the point of inebriation and commit all kinds of dishonourable acts and excesses."

When the French absolute monarchy established the court at Versailles at the end of the 17th century, the road lay open for the rise of great French cuisine with all its refinement and luxury. In this context we must bear in mind developments such as the wider use of bottles and corks, which allowed wine to age or mature, for until then bottles were used in homes and businesses solely for serving wine that had been previously stored in barrels or other containers. With breakthroughs in glass technology and thanks to the spread and redevelopment in the 17th century of Venetian glass making techniques in other countries, bottles became stronger and their production cheaper, making the storage of full bottles in cellars possible. So it was that the potential for aging cer-

tain wines in the bottle was discovered. Nevertheless, in the 18th century wine continued to be distributed in barrels and only the richest households used bottles (often of their own) for storing it. Indeed, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that the practice of bottling and further aging the best wines in the cellar after first aging them in a barrel and subsequently marketing them became common. The stoutness of the bottles also led to the appearance of a new type of wine: champagne.

In the second half of the 17th century the combination of the experiments carried out in the Reims region, such as those attributed to Dom Pérignon (regarding whom a veritable legend unfolded in the 19th century), and the improvement of bottle quality led to the technique of a second fermentation in the bottle which in turn led to the invention of sparkling wine. Champagne became a fashionable drink in the London of the Restoration in the 1670s (having arrived with French aristocrats from the Champagne region) and subsequently in France in the 18th century during the regency of the Duke of Orléans after the death of Louis XIV in 1715. Despite progress during that period, as many as half of the bottles of champagne exploded and production was extremely limited. It was not until the first half of the 19th century when changes in processing, bottling machines and the shape of corks and bottles heralded the appearance of the French sparkling wine industry, whose success enabled the *méthode champenoise* to be exported to other countries.

ROOM 36

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER
Aschaffenburg, 1880–Frauenkirch, 1938

Alpine Kitchen, 1918

Oil on canvas. 121.5 x 121.5 cm
INV. 616 (1983.30)



KIRCHNER WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS of the German Expressionist group Die Brücke (The Bridge), so called because it allowed “the passage from one side to the other” in reference to a desire to break away from academic art and strive for a synthesis between the outside world and one’s own psyche, i.e. between art and life. The artist’s conscription in World War I led to a serious deterioration in his health and he was declared unfit for service in 1915. He moved away to the Swiss Alps and in summer 1918 rented an alpine cabin in Staffelalp, reproducing the interior in this painting through loud colours, distorted perspective and angular lines that reflect the turmoil in his mind. The figure near the table may be Kirchner himself.

In the kitchen is a balloon-shaped bottle of Italian wine with a straw cover. This type of bottle, which was known as a *fiasco* and had been common in Italy at least since the Renaissance, was used from the end of the 19th century to distinguish it abroad as Italian table wine, although most Italian wine was sold in bulk. In the 1880s Italy launched a promotional campaign aimed at increasing wine sales abroad in direct competition with Spanish wines (both countries had a surplus). Italy had the edge over Spain as demand from

large communities of Italian immigrants in the United States and Rio de la Plata preferred Italian wine to any other. As this painting shows, Central Europe (Switzerland and Germany) was another destination for Italian table wine, due in a certain degree to Italy’s geographical proximity and the existing regular trade between northern Italian and Alpine regions. As Italy and Spain both exported table wines they became engaged in a price war over a type of wine intended particularly for the mass market and *coupage* (blending) with other foreign wines (especially from France). In fact they specialised in table wines (Italy even more than Spain) mainly because of low demand on both domestic markets for quality wines, which made it difficult to consolidate established or exclusive brands.

After the creation of the Common Market, to Spain’s detriment Italy received mid-term benefits from the special tariffs applied to table wines sold abroad. It was not until the 1960s that both countries managed to build up wine industries with products geared to the tastes of the new middle class, and it was to be these firms which would subsequently produce most of the quality wines in each country in what was considered a wine making revolution.

ROOM 41

JUAN GRIS
Madrid, 1887–Boulogne-sur-Seine, 1927

Bottle and Fruit Dish, 1919

Oil on canvas. 74 x 54 cm
INV. 566 (1976.7)

JUAN GRIS IS HAILED AS ONE OF THE foremost figures of the Cubist movement. In this still life he created an interplay of warm brown tones combined with colder greens and greys. In a letter of 1918 he expressed his desire to experiment with natural tones inspired by the landscape in these words: “In the countryside I see such solid and materially sumptuous tones and such perfect combinations that they carry within themselves a far greater force than all the combinations of the palette, and I would like to work with them.”

As is usual in Cubism, in a play on words of the kind Cubist artists were so fond of, Gris experimented with typography, exploiting its expressive potential. *Le Jour* (jour = day in French), could be taken from



the name of the newspaper *Le Journal*, but by changing the letters around it could also mean *jouer* (to play) or *jouir* (to enjoy).

In this picture, which was painted soon after World War I, Gris juxtaposed a fruit bowl and two symbols of mass society (as described critically ten years later by Ortega y Gasset in *The Revolt of the Masses*): wine and the newspaper. They are certainly two very different symbols in that at that time the press was a mass phenomenon in the West while the bottle of wine was seen as a product of mass consumption only in French society.

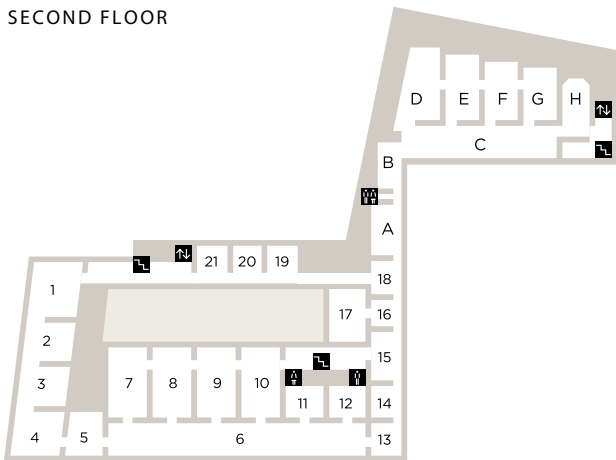
Although statistics reflect a growing trend in wine consumption in France in the course of the 19th century, World War I marked a significant increase. The huge mass of *poilus* (recruits) forced into conscription by the war was provided with generous supplies of wine by the French military authorities. Millions of young people returned from the front accustomed to a large daily intake of wine: whereas in 1904 per capita consumption stood at 103 litres per year, by 1922 it had risen to 136 litres. Supplied by the French wine making sector — particularly of Languedoc — and that of Algeria (and in years with bad harvests with wines imported from Spain and Italy), mass consumption of this kind was no obstacle to the development of quality wines or

French domination of the international premium wine markets.

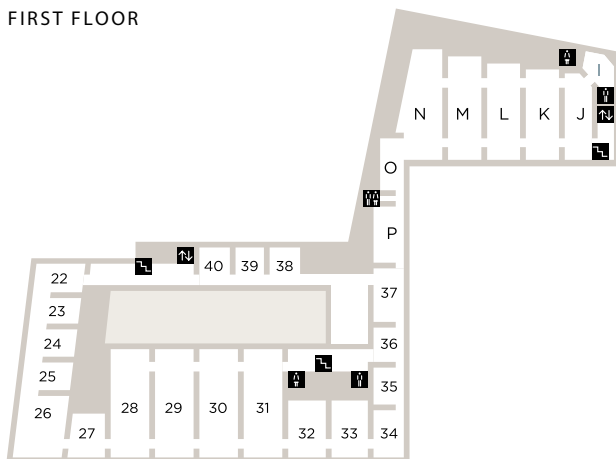
Moreover, in a process characteristic of social differentiation in consumption, the preference of French workers and peasants for *vins ordinaires* helped boost the consumption of quality wines by the middle class. However, increased demand in the interwar period did nothing to prevent wine surpluses. In the course of the Great War grape production increased in the neutral countries and those outside Europe and with the coming of peace French production also grew. Oversupply led to government regulation of markets through measures such as “controlled designation of origin” or the creation of price regulation boards, etc. which have survived to the present day and have even flourished.

By 1919 — when our tour ends — wine had become divided into the four major categories recognised today: quality natural wine, full-bodied, fortified or liqueur wine, sparkling wine and common or table wine. Within each of these groups, except to some extent the last, scientifically-based viticulture and oenology have and will continue to provide a far greater variety of sensations and experiences of the type that have bestowed all their diversity upon an ancient beverage which originated in the Mediterranean and is now enjoyed the world over.

SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



- 1 Early Italian Painting
- 2 Gothic Painting
- 3 Early Netherlandish Painting
- 4 The Quattrocento (Italian art)
- 5 The Portrait (Early Renaissance)
- 6 The Villahermosa Gallery
- 7 Italian Painting (16th century)
- 8 9 German Painting (16th century)
- 10 Netherlandish Painting (16th century)
- 11 Titian, Tintoretto, Bassano, El Greco
- 12 Caravaggio and the Early Baroque
- 13 14 15 Italian, French and Spanish Painting (17th century)
- 16 17 18 Italian Painting (18th century)
- 19 Flemish Painting (17th century)
- 20 Dutch Painting (Italianate movements)
- 21 Dutch Painting (17th century: portraits)
- A Italian Painting (17th century)
- B Flemish and Dutch Painting (17th century)
- C Views and Landscapes Gallery
- D 18th-century Painting
- E-F 19th-century American Painting
- G Naturalism and the Rural World
- H Early Impressionism
- 22 23 24 25 26 Dutch Painting (17th century: scenes of daily life, interiors and landscapes)
- 27 Still Lifes (17th century)
- 28 From the Rococo to Neoclassicism (18th-century painting)
- 29 30 American Painting (19th century)
- 31 European Painting (19th century, from Romanticism to Realism)
- 32 Impressionist Painting
- 33 Post-Impressionist Painting
- 34 Fauve Painting
- 35 36 37 Expressionist Painting (20th century)
- 38 Expressionist Painting (the Blue Rider group)
- 39 Expressionist Painting
- 40 Expressionist Painting (New Objectivity)
- J American Impressionism
- K Late Impressionism
- L Gauguin and Post-Impressionism (1)
- M Post-Impressionism (2)
- N German Expressionism
- O Fauvism
- P Cubism and Orphism
- 41 42 43 44 The Experimental Avant-gardes
- 45 The Synthesis of the Modern (Europe)
- 46 The Synthesis of the Modern (USA)
- 47 48 Late Surrealism. The Figurative Tradition and Pop Art

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