

OBJECT
of the **month***September 2020***BEGIN TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to the Dayton Art Institute's Object of the Month presentation. I'm Rick Hoffman, a Museum Guide and I'd like to share with you one of my favorite paintings in the museum: [the] portrait of François Jean Baptiste Emmanuel Gustave, Count d'Adhémar de Cransac, painted by Lionel Noël Royer in [about] 1890.

Look at this larger than life-sized oil portrait of an elegantly dressed French gentleman of the 19th-century. What do your eyes notice first? Perhaps his perfect artistically rendered formal attire or his handsome physical features? Isn't it remarkable how his clothing shows multiple types of textures: fur on his topcoat, the smooth fabric of his tuxedo contrasted by his crisp shirt with studs and his pink bow tie? Why might he be dressed this way?

Let's investigate the painting's smaller details. In his right hand is a monocle and his left hand holds his fashionable walking cane. Notice the gold chain just above his waist. It's actually his carriage whistle to call for his ride home. Look closely at the very small detailed red ribbon on his left lapel. It shows that he is a member of the French Legion of Honor. The French Legion of Honor was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. It is awarded for military or civil merit for a minimum of twenty years of service and has been retained by all French governments and regimes since then.

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Now let's step back and look how the artist used the subtle hues of black, gray, white, and pink in the background to show us the steps of the building where the subject is standing. Note that it is a grand marble staircase. We know our subject is in France—where in France might he be located?

If you've been lucky enough to visit Paris, perhaps you've seen the architectural masterpiece, the Palais Garnier, (the Paris Opera House). The Palais Garnier is at the end of the Champs-Élysées, the major street of Paris where, in during this time, the most current fashions could be seen by the patrons of the opera as they rode by in their carriages.

Let's zoom in and look at the exquisite ornate gilded top. You will notice a crown with a standing lion on the top of it and underneath the crown, two coats of arms or family crests. The right-side shield has three distinct bars going diagonally from left to right. This represents the family of d'Adhémar and if the whole frame wasn't gilded, the background behind the three gold bars would be azure or sky blue. The left shield has on its left side ten fleur-de-lis, a stylized lily with three petals, followed by the same pattern in miniature that was on the right and it also has three small triangles at the top, bottom, and right of it. The fleur-de-lis signifies royalty. The whole piece is supported by two standing lions, one on each side with their tongues coming out as if they were roaring. Underneath this is a scrolling banner which reads, "plus d'honneur que d'honneurs," more honor than honor. As a whole, these represent the arms of the d'Adhémar of Longuedoc of Mory of Lorraine. These also represent the families of the gentleman and his wife.

This beautiful realistic portrait of a member of the French aristocracy was painted by Lionel Noël Royer in [about] 1890. Royer volunteered for the Franco-Prussian war before his 18th birthday. He fought under the command of General Anthanase de Charette de la Contrie. The general noticed Royer's artistic talent and offered to finance his studies at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. While he was there, he studied under well-known academic painters such as William-Adolphe Bouguereau, whom the Dayton Art Institute is very fortunate have a painting by, *The Song of the Nightingale*, a 19th-century masterpiece which you can see in the Dayton Art Institute's European Wing, gallery 212.

Thank you for enjoying this masterful artwork with me. You can find it in-person in gallery 223, also known as the upper rotunda, at the Dayton Art Institute.

END TRANSCRIPT

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RESOURCES

www.metmuseum.org

www.sniteartmuseum.nd.edu

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