

OBJECT of the **month** July 2022

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to 'Object of the Month.' I'm Violette-Anne, a Museum Guide at the Dayton Art Institute and I would like to introduce you to an oil painting, *Dance of the Almeh* by the French artist, Jean-Léon Gérôme.



Looking at this painting, what holds your interest? Is it the amount of details, the luscious colors, the play of light and shadow, the undulating movement of the dancer... or something else? Once you've determined what caught your interest first, let your eye wander around to see what more you can discover.

The painted scene takes place in a coffee house in mid-19th century Turkey or Egypt. An *almeh*, or 'female dancer' in Arabic, performs her dance to the music of three nearby musicians for her audience of bashi-bazouks, irregular soldiers of the Ottoman army raised in time of war.

This painting is a prime example of the 19th century Orientalism art movement that depicted scenes and motifs drawn from a range of Eastern and Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey, Egypt, India and Algeria. Archeological discoveries and colonialism brought information and cultural materials from what was then referred to as 'the Orient' to a previously uninformed Western audience. Artists primarily from Western Europe and America traveled to these countries and brought back sketches, items to use as props and memories of what they saw. The paintings were often romanticized. They may mix architecture, misrepresent customs and often feature people from different cultures, blended into a single artwork. This practice resulted in a popular yet skewed interest in both art and cultural appreciation.

Jean-Léon Gérôme was a master at this genre, combining dazzling photographic-like details with vibrant colors and effects of light that appealed to his contemporaries' interest in the unfamiliar, thus "exotic" world of the East. This painting was well-received by the public when exhibited at the 1864 Paris Salon, prompting an art critic of the day to state that it contained, "a corner of the Orient in a frame." You can experience this rich painting in Gallery 212, Bieser Family Gallery of Late 19th Century French Art at the Dayton Art Institute. More information can also be accessed in *What is a Masterpiece?* found on the DAI website. Thank you for enjoying art with us!

END TRANSCRIPT

DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

Click [here](#) to access the video presentation.

FEATURED ARTWORKS*

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (French, 1780–1867), *Odalisque, Slave, and Eunuch*, 1839–1840, painting. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, MA. Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.251

Félix Ziem (French, 1821–1911), *Constantinople*, 19th century. Image courtesy Galerie Delvaille

Frederick Arthur Bridgman (American, 1847–1928), *Cleopatra on the Terraces of Philae*, 1896, oil on canvas. Danesh Museum of Art, New York, NY, 1999.5

Edwin Lord Weeks (American, 1849–1903), *A Street Market Scene, India*, oil on canvas. Private collection

Eugène Delacroix (French, 1798–1863), *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, 1834, oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Department of Paintings, INV 3824

Léon Cogniet (French, 1794–1880), *Expedition to Egypt Under the Orders of Bonaparte*, 1835, oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Department of Paintings, INV 3287

William Simpson, (1823–1899), *Buddhist Vihara Cave, Ajanta*, 1862, watercolor on paper. Victoria & Albert Museum, UK, 1128-1869

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (French, 1780–1867), *The Turkish Bath*, 1862, oil on canvas glued on wood. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Department of Paintings, RF 1934

Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, 1824–1904), *Prayers in the Mosque*, date unknown, oil on canvas. Image courtesy Sotheby's

John Frederick Lewis (English, 1804–1876), *Portrait of a Memlook Bey*, 1863, pencil with watercolor heightened with white © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Thomas Phillips (English, 1770–1845), *George Gordon Byron (1788–1824), 6th Baron Byron, Poet*, 1814, oil on canvas. Government Art Collection, UK, 1976

Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, 1824–1904), *Snake Charmer*, about 1879, oil on canvas. The Clark Art Institute, MA, 1955.51

Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, 1824–1904), *Bashi-Bazouk*, 1868–69, oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 2008.547.1

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