

INTERNET

## Sotheby's brings artwork to life ahead of Master Paintings sale

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*Sotheby's New York headquarters*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

International auction house Sotheby's has commissioned a film to help raise awareness of its upcoming Master Paintings sale.

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Pamela Romanowsky, director of the Ed Harris and James Franco-starring "The Adderall Diaries," translated Orazio Gentileschi's painting "Dana," which will be sold at an auction, into a video that is hosted on Vanity Fair. The film and placement on Vanity Fair will help Sotheby's raise awareness of the Jan. 28 sale in New York.

"Sotheby's hopes this film illustrates to a larger audience the important place that Master Paintings hold in artistic conversation," said David Goodman, digital and marketing chief at **Sotheby's**. "They are not just masterpieces from centuries ago to be appreciated for their rich images and the artists' unparalleled skills, but still inspire contemporary artists of all types and drive deeper understanding of such considerations like the use of light, depth and movement.

"We also wanted to shine a light on an artist, Ms. Romanowsky, who truly engages in a cross-century conversation with another artist," he said.

### Dana and Jupiter

"Dana" captures a scene from the eponymous myth, in which Jupiter materializes amidst gold coins in the bedroom of Dana, the daughter of King Acrisius of Argo, when she is hidden in a secret chamber to steer away suitors. In the painting, Cupid has pulled away Dana's clothing as she rests on a bed throwing gold coins into the air.

## Orazio Gentileschi's Danae



### *Orazio Gentileschi's Danae*

This is among the premiere paintings of the Italian baroque period, with its deep colors and carefully differentiated textures.

The video begins first by showing the painting, which then fades out. Over black space, a single ray of light is cast down and a body starts to fall in slow motion as a choir sings. The rest of the video consists of shots of Jupiter and the king's daughter falling and rising slowly through black space.

Around the halfway point, gold coins begin to float through the frame, and as the two beings make eye contact and disappear above the frame of the screen the image of the painting in full returns.

### *Reimagining Gentileschi's Danae*

The video premiered exclusively on Vanity Fair's Web site.

"She's being rescued there's a state of betrayal and abandonment, so I was very interested in expressing that sort of in the fall," Ms. Romanowsky told Vanity Fair. "And then she falls out of frame, and you assume that's where this painting happens. And when she returns, we then get to see how her body language, and movement, and emotional state change so you see how Zeus will interact with her, and he sort of envelopes her."

"As a visual artist, Sotheby's has a deep respect for her aesthetic and creative interpretation," Mr. Goodman said. "We thought she would do a wonderful job in interpreting the paintings' use of light, depth and movement and represent it in a way that was both innovative and beautiful."

"As a storyteller, she understands the painting as part of a larger story rife with emotions and dramatic events," he said. "Ms. Romanowsky continued that narrative in her film and did not treat the image as a static moment in time."

For Sotheby's, the video more tangibly captures the emotions expressed in the painting, which might seem obscure or overly abstract to a modern audience that is not trained or accustomed to looking at paintings from the period. Highlighting a painting will also allow consumers to make a connection with one of the items being sold ahead of time or encourage them to explore the other items up for bid.

### *"Art across the ages: A new filmmaker meets an old master"*

Other paintings that will be sold that evening include Jacob Jordaens' "St. Martin Healing a Possessed Man" and works by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, Sandro Botticelli and Eustache Le Sueur, among others.

Vanity Fair makes an ideal host, as the Cond Nast publication's readership skew to the affluent side and its editorial content covers the world of art and culture. Such readers overlap with Sotheby's' Master Sales' target market.

### Digital art

This is not the first time that Sotheby's has used online content to generate anticipation for upcoming sales or auctions.

In December, the auctioneer took consumers "inside online auctions" with supporting content for its "Agents of Style: Gentlemen's Accessories" lot held Nov. 30.

The online auction centered on accessories made for men, including cufflinks and wristwatches from high-end brands. The online sale was promoted by curated content featuring influential men who discussed the lot items and how these pieces are incorporated into a gentleman's wardrobe ([see story](#)).

The digital space is becoming increasingly important to Sotheby's for its art auctions.

In September, Sotheby's began its partnership with Web-based art platform Artsy to create an online-only marketplace for contemporary art.

Artsy's search engine and database will be used to find artworks, which users can then bid on via Web site or mobile applications. The partnership will give the Web site, founded in 2009 and made public in 2012, a boost in visibility while granting the centuries-old auctioneer a chance to connect with a new, younger audience ([see story](#)).

"We hoped to introduce [artists and collectors] to a historical masterpiece and give the painting its due as a source of inspiration and participant in an evergreen artistic conversation, not just as a masterpiece from centuries ago," Mr. Goodman said. "We also look forward to continuing to spotlight other artists and creative thought leaders and their inspiration drawn from Master Paintings."

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