The person represented on this silver bowl must be a member of the royal family. This is indicated by the arrangement of the hair, part of which is drawn up into a ball above the head. The same figure is repeated in each of the five medallions, the outer four being separated by a plant design. The head and sections of the hair and body were added separately in typical Sasanian fashion to the bowl, which was cast. A Pahlevi inscription is dotted around the border. The interior of the vessel is undecorated.

The style of the figural and plant design suggests a date early in the fourth century A.D., a period from which few Sasanian silver vessels are preserved and none exactly like this piece.

*Bowl. Iranian, Sasanian, early IV century A.D. Silver, diameter 9 3/4 inches. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1970.5*
This recent addition to the Islamic collection belongs to a relatively rare group of monumental ceramic objects, in this case a piece of furniture that was probably used as a low table to hold food and drink during receptions or courtly audiences. It reflects the shape of a pleasure pavilion, which is all the more significant as none of these contemporary secular buildings, usually in front of a reflecting pool, have been preserved in the Near East.


This battle axe of black steel, damascened in gold with delicate arabesque scrollwork and rosettes, bears on its socket a large Mamluk emirial blazon, probably that of Naurüz al-Hāfīzī, Viceroy of Syria and Governor of Damascus (1397-1414).

The Mamluks were an elite of slave-warriors under their own sultans in Egypt (1250-1517). Though a large number of axes from the bodyguards of the latest sultans have been preserved, this axe is by far the oldest surviving, and apparently the only one that was the personal weapon of an emir. It is, furthermore, one of the few pieces of medieval “damascened work” that can be credited with actually having been made in Damascus.

This is considered a zenith piece of American federal furniture and belongs in the category of our top masterpieces. Modeled upon the Sister’s Cylinder Bookcase in Thomas Sheraton’s Cabinet Dictionary of 1803, this mahogany desk and bookcase was made in Baltimore about 1811. From Sheraton comes the overall design, an H plan of two tall pedestals with a connecting desk, the pyramidal lower sections resting on plinths with four corner posts and feet. Although there is some visual awkwardness in Sheraton’s original concept, this desk seems in some ways an improvement upon his design. The top-heavy quality is relieved here by a typical Baltimore device, painted decoration on the glass doors, which breaks up the surfaces and gives a feeling of lightness. The fretted gallery and globe surmounting the Sheraton version are replaced by a graceful pyramidal pediment echoing the shape of the base. The piece is veneered with satinwood (the oval inlays of the middle section also characteristic of Baltimore). The long center panel pulls out and falls open to form a writing surface.

Inscribed in pencil on the underside of one of the interior satinwood drawers is: “M. Oliver/ Married the 5 of October/1811/Baltimore.” The date is that of the wedding of Roswell Lyman Colt and Margaret Oliver, one of the four daughters of Robert Oliver, millionaire merchant of Baltimore.
Designs for a ballroom pavilion, by an unknown French artist. 1813. Watercolor and ink, 15½ x 30½ inches, 15¼ x 25½ inches. Rogers Fund, 1970.507.1, 2
These two watercolor designs for the exterior and interior of a ballroom pavilion are among the most elaborate and eye-pleasing architectural drawings to come to us from the Napoleonic era. Inscribed, “Salle de Bal pour un Prince, 1813,” they present a lighthearted and fanciful conglomeration of the neoclassicisms characteristic of Empire style.

Nearly all the decorative embellishments used – the swags and wreaths, the Palladian porch, and even the potted plants and eagle-topped banner – have been enthusiastically lifted from the festive decorations devised for the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise by Charles Percier and Jacques Cellérier, and published in 1810.

At one time attributed to Percier (one of Napoleon’s foremost architect-designers), the drawings are more likely the work of one of Percier’s many devoted pupils, and were probably submitted in competition for a prize such as the Prix de Rome.

Spectacular exercises in decorative style, they have the intriguing distinction of announcing the collapse of Napoleon's Empire, while ardently recalling the vanished glories of the court at Versailles.

The Belated Party on Mansfield Mountain by Jerome Thompson, a New York genre painter popular in the mid-nineteenth century, is a large and extremely dramatic example of the artist’s characteristic combination of glowing New England landscape views and pleasantly relaxed youths. Thompson painted this grand sunset panorama of western Vermont and the Champlain Valley in 1858, and exhibited it that year at the National Academy of Design.