

# 3. Jean Siméon Chardin 1699-1779

Composed tactility

# Self Portrait, 1775, Louvre



- Pastel 46 x 38 cms
- Born in Paris in 1699 to a family of artisans (his father made billiard tables), he was drawn to painting while still young.
- He studied under **Pierre-Jacques Cazes** (1676-1754), ‘One of the most skilful painters of his day’ (Cochin and Voltaire agreed).
- “First and foremost, in the realm of painting alone, there is the monumental integrity of Chardin, who could never lie. This is indeed the quality that singles him out from so many others: there is no brushstroke of his where truth does not play its part....Chardin is the irrefutable witness who makes all other painters look like liars.” (Julian Green, “Oeuvres Complètes, III, 1993, p 1348/9)

# The Draughtsman (detail), c.1734

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

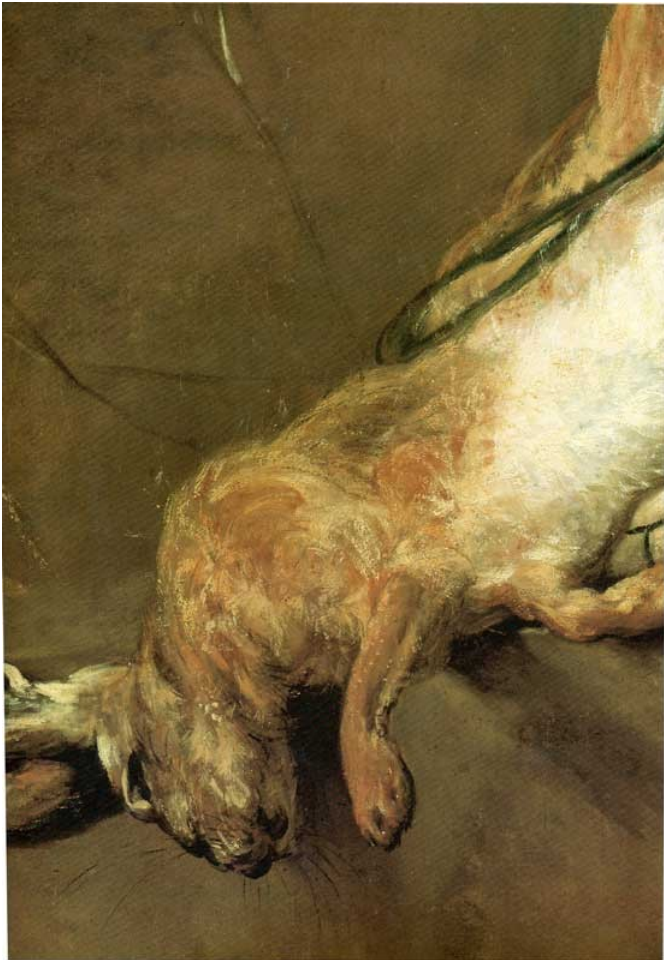


- Oil on oak panel, 21 x 17 cms.
- A young artist copies his masters work, pinned to the wall. Chardin spoke of his own apprenticeship:
- “We were set, at the age of seven or eight, with pencil-holder in hand... We spent long hours bent over our portfolio... We spent five or six years drawing from the model” (Diderot, Salon of 1765).
- The apparent simplicity of the scene belies its subtlety - the careful arrangement of whites and grays, the echoes of triangles and the harmonious balance of browns, grays, ochres and reds.

# Chardin

- Chardin's art appears to be relatively straightforward, but it is an appearance which is deceptive, for Chardin concealed his originality with care, and while painting, quietly invented a new kind of painting - 'pure painting'.
- Chardin's contemporaries included Boucher, Natoire and Carl Van Loo all of whom developed alongside him and became fiercely competitive at the same time.
- Chardin initially studied 'History painting' with mediocre results. In 'The Billiard Table: and a "Sign for a shop"' (inspired by Watteau) he tried painting subjects from daily life.
- Eventually, in the painting of a "Rabbit" ('The Hare with Powder flask and game bag', 1728-30) he discovered his true calling. Cochin recounts:

# Hare with Powder Flask and Game Bag, (Detail), 1728-30, Louvre, Paris.



- Oil on Canvas, 98 x 76 cms.
- Pinned to the wall by a single nail, the hare seems to almost slip from the shelf, its head hanging over the side. Cochin recounts how in painting this, Chardin found his path:  
“This object may seem of slight importance. But the manner in which he wanted to do it made it a serious study. He wanted to paint it with the greatest truthfulness in all respects, but at the same time tastefully, with no overtones of servitude that might make its execution dry and cold. He had never attempted to paint fur before. He realised that he should not paint it hair by hair, or reproduce it in detail. ‘Here is an object which I must try to reproduce’, he said to himself. ‘In order to concentrate on reproducing it faithfully, I must forget everything I have seen, and even forget the way such objects have been treated by others. I must place it at such a distance that I cannot see the details. I must work at representing the general mass as accurately as possible, the shades and colours, the contours, the effects of light and shade’ (Cochin).”

# Hare with Powder Flask and Game Bag, c 1730, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia



- Oil on Canvas, 62 x 80 cm.
- Second version
- The painting caused a sensation when it was exhibited by Martinet in 1860 as part of a revival in interest in Chardin and French Painting.
- It is part of the acceptance that there was a genuine French School of painting, different from those of Italy and Holland, and in no way inferior. Philippe Burty commented it, “Defies comparison with even the most celebrated masterpieces of the foreign schools’
- Although the background shading would seem to suggest the presence of a wall, this is not made specific.
- The multiple shades of brown, the elimination of any superfluous detail, the boldness of the layout make this one of Chardin’s most accomplished and ‘minimalist’ arrangements.

# Chardin

- “The eye must be taught to look at Nature.” (Chardin, quoted by Diderot, “The Salon of 1765”)
- Thus was invented modern painting.
- He was admitted to the Académie in 1728 with “The Ray” and “The Buffet” which Largillière praised as being ‘very fine paintings..by a good Flemish painter’.
- Mariëtte noted: “His brush had nothing facile about it” (1749) - He struggled, time and again, to overcome the limitations of his talent. Depicting movement was a problem, so he carefully removed it, arranging objects and people in carefully controlled compositions so that they corresponded to key pictorial axes, and making of his weakness, a new and modern strength.
- He developed a slow, cumulative impasto style, unique in his day which allowed him to labour at successive layers, over a prolonged period of time, always seeking the perfection of a final resolution. Not until the 19th-century did this technique re-emerge with Courbet and the Impressionists.

# Chardin

- Engravings of his works were made, but because their subject matter was not usual, or easy for his contemporaries to understand, (he chose subjects that told no obvious story), anecdotal comments were often attached, as if to suggest a narrative content, which we today find totally gratuitous. The prints, however, gave a good financial return for Chardin and enabled him to concentrate on continuing with the type of painting that he wanted to make.
- Unlike some of his contemporaries (Greuze, Boucher) Chardin's works are chaste and introspective. His people, like his objects seem mutely wrapped up in themselves.
- His is a silent world of optical contemplation, His eye roams over surfaces and textures, calmly, evenly, without judgment or false emotion. His subjects are closer to the sense of the English or German 'Still Life' or 'Stilleben' than the French 'Nature Morte'
- At the time, the Académie imposed a hierarchy of 'genres', with 'History Painting' at the top and still life and genre scenes resolutely at the bottom. Chardin was not permitted to teach or hold higher rank in the Académie because he was limited by his chosen field.
- Lagrenée l'Aîné, Director of the Académie in Rome complained in 1781 to d'Angivillier, Superintendent of Royal Buildings, that:  
"One is born a painter, as one is born a poet: It is in vain that we try and advance painting by means of regulation, by insisting that people rise at a particular time, or work at a particular piece of work...it is all to no avail. The Arts have always been, and will always remain, the offspring of Liberty."
- Precisely in this sense, Chardin's art is 'subversive'



# The Cut Melon,

1760, Priv. Coll.



Fig. 5  
JEAN-SIMÉON CHARDIN,  
*The Cut Melon* (cat. 79),  
Private collection



Fig. 6  
Ewer with basin,  
Chantilly soft-paste  
porcelain, c. 1730-35,  
Musée Condé, Chantilly

- Oil on Canvas, 57 x 52 cms
- Ewer with Basin, Chantilly soft-paste porcelain, c 1730-35, Musée Condé, Chantilly.
- Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, in the recent Catalogue by Pierre Rosenberg (London, RA, 2000), has done excellent research into the Ceramics which figure so prominently in Chardin's paintings, locating the precise example used by the painter.
- These are often contemporary French pieces of high quality produced in Chantilly, reflecting the new Oriental style in vogue across Europe.
- This example imitates the 17th century Japanese Kakiemon designs favoured at Chantilly.
- But he also painted glazed earthenware and tin-glazed earthenware and porcelain in some of the more lowly domestic interiors.

# The Jar of Apricots, 1758, Art Gallery Toronto.

- Oil on Canvas, 57 x 51 cms.



Fig. 7  
Beaker and saucer,  
Chantilly soft-paste  
porcelain, c. 1730-35,  
Musée Condé, Chantilly



Fig. 8  
JEAN-SIMÉON CHARDIN,  
*The Jar of Apricots* (cat. 78),  
The Art Gallery of Ontario,  
Toronto

Beaker & saucer, in the fashionable Japanese style 'Imari' pattern. Chantilly, soft-paste porcelain, c.1730-35, Musée Condé, Chantilly.

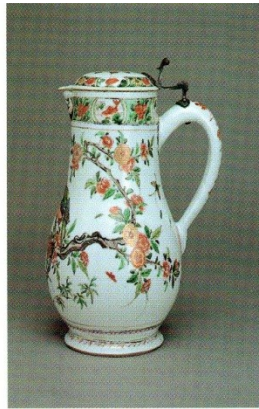
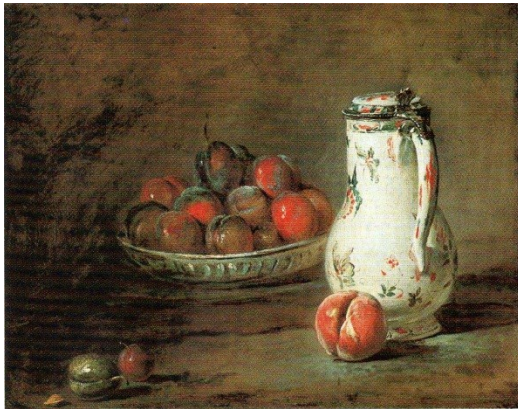
The Chantilly porcelain factory was founded in 1730 by the Prince de Condé to service the domestic taste for Oriental ceramics, and rival the Delft factories.

Chardin's choice of objects shows that he was a connoisseur of contemporary porcelain, deliberately choosing contemporary pieces for his paintings.

He also painted tin-glazed ceramics from Meissen, dating from the 1760s. The vogue for porcelain items reflects the growing fashion for drinking tea, coffee and chocolate which was spreading amongst the upper and middle classes in Europe at the time, as well as the results of the trade routes opened up by Vasco da Gama (in 1498) from the 16th-century onwards.

# Bowl of Plums, a Peach & Water

Pitcher, 1728-30, Phillips Coll. Washington, DC



- Oil on canvas, 45 x 70 cms
- Ewer, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period, c. 1700-10, Casa-Museu Anastácio Gonçalves, Lisbon.
- Although the shape of the ewer is of European origin, the decoration of butterflies is typical of the ‘Famille Verte’ style of the Kangxi period, intended specifically for export to Europe.
- The increasing refinement of the ceramics in Chardin’s paintings from the 1730s onwards, reflects the increasing financial security of the painter.

# Cat with Ray, Oysters, Pitcher & Loaf of Bread, c.1728, Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid



- Oil on Canvas, 80 x 63 cms. Signed & dated.
- Chardin introduces a live animal into the composition, perhaps to compete with Desportes & Oudry and to show his talents were not limited to inanimate objects. (Note- All tortoise-shell cats are female, and cats do not like oysters)
- Typically the items of food and domestic ware are laid out on a stone ledge the base of which coincides with the picture plane, and leads our eye 'in' to the illusionistic pictorial space.
- Equally typical is the knife handle that protrudes back towards us. It is a subtle play:
- If we accept the shelf edge as coincident with our space, then the knife-handle must project 'into' the real space we inhabit 'in front' of the picture plane.

# The Buffet,

c.1728, Louvre, Paris



- Oil on Canvas, 194 x 129 cms.
- One of the two 'Presentation pieces' which gained Chardin entry to the Académie, and thus a 'tour de force' of the conventions of the still life genre.
- The dog with its head turned towards the parrot, perched on the ewer, introduces a live and dramatic narrative aspect.
- It forms a leaning pyramid, like the towering arrangement of fruit above, and the implied drama is that it will topple, if the dog decides to act upon its instincts, and the balance of the painting will be lost.
- The pewter jug on the left reappears in several of Chardin's paintings.
- It includes contemporary French cut stem glass, in a delicate style typical of the 1720s. Glasses after 1750 copy the more sturdy, baluster style of Bohemian crystal.
- Proust commented on the upturned glass, "Clear as daylight, enticing as Spring water...Bent over like a wilted bloom, one glass is half toppled.."

# A Mallard Drake Hanging on a Wall and a Seville Orange, 1728-30, Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris.



- Oil on Canvas, 80.5 x 64.5 cms.
- Suggesting the classic French dish, Duck “à l’Orange”, Chardin carefully arranges his ingredients on a slight diagonal, following the direction of the Mallard’s wing.
- The central axis passes through the duck’s beak, not the gravitational axis which runs through the duck’s body.
- The orange of the duck’s legs and beak is echoed by the Seville orange on the right.
- Painting, as with cooking requires precision, control, a good technique and the freedom to innovate.

# Still Life with Leg of Mutton, 1730, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston.



- Oil on Canvas, 40 x 32.5 cms
- Selects a small number of familiar objects and arranges them in a dramatic slightly diagonal composition.
- Again, the mutton, garlic, onions and the cauliflower in the basket, suggest a recipe, and also imply a trip to the market.
- And the overhanging element is reduced to just a hint of garlic, protruding on the left.
- Chardin was to limit himself to this type of small painting for several years, often repeating the compositions. Here the brushwork is characterised by short quick strokes which emphasise the light on the surfaces.

# The Fast-Day Meal, 1731, Louvre, Paris.

- Oil on Copper, 33 x 41 cms.
- The title alludes to the 40 days of fasting of Lent, a companion piece ('The meat day meal') is also in the Louvre.
- The number of objects depicted could lead to confusion, but Chardin reduces their relative size and balances them across the surface.
- The cold silver colours of the mackerel and metal dish, contrast with the warm brown teapot and copper pot.
- The earthenware teapot reappears in the 'Lady Making Tea' of 1735.





# Chardin

- Chardin's first wife, Marguerite Saintard, in April 1735, and of their daughter Marguerite-Agnès in 1736/7 put the artist under a great deal of strain.
- He was seriously ill in 1742.
- In the 1730s, Chardin seems to have reappraised his career, and decided that he must paint figure compositions in order to progress as an artist and gain wider recognition.
- His second marriage to Françoise-Marguerite Pouget in 1744 elevated him into the milieu of the Parisian middle classes. Two further events were of critical importance to him: the re-establishment of the Salons in 1737 at which he became a regular participant; and his visit to the Château de Versailles in November 1740, when he presented "The Diligent Mother" and "Saying Grace" to the King.
- Between 1737 and 1773, Chardin presented 46 figure paintings at the Salon, and nearly always had engravings made of them. Paintings were usually small or medium sized and presented one or two half-length or standing figures in domestic interiors, engaged in a number of homely tasks: writing a letter, taking tea, preparing a meal, always undramatic, subtle and understated.
- The heavy brushstrokes and impasto gradually give way to softer, subtler handling. The brighter colours fade to more delicate hues.
- Around 1738/40 important changes occur: The figures, no longer working class, but middle class are set in more spacious settings, and the colours move towards pastel.

# Woman Sealing a Letter, 1733, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.



- Oil on Canvas, 146 x 147 cms
- The earliest surviving genre scene by Chardin and marks the beginning of his mid-career ‘change of direction’. In both scale and subject matter it is new in Chardin’s art.
- It was also the first painting of Chardin’s to be turned into an engraving.
- The setting, drapery, clothes and greyhound suggest opulence.
- Both figures are presented as lost in their own thoughts, present but introspective. The red of the sealing wax serves as an emotional and compositional focus.

# A Lady Making Tea, 1735, Hunterian Gallery, Glasgow.



- Oil on Canvas, 80 x 101cm cms, Signed and dated.
- Exhibited in the Salon 1739.
- Thought to be the first Mrs Chardin, painted shortly before her death.
- She uses a Chinese porcelain bowl next to a simple glazed earthenware teapot which appeared in the “Fast-day meal” (1731).
- Only the third of such new genre paintings, there are some slips in perspective and drawing of the table, chair and teapot spout, indicative of the newness of the challenges facing the artist who was not formally trained in Genre painting.
- The mood of the painting is gently introspective as the woman contemplates the rising steam from the cup.

# Chardin

- The change of direction was successful. Commissions from the Kings of France, Austria, Prussia, England, Russia and Sweden flooded in.
- But Chardin was notoriously slow - The Queen of Sweden impatiently waited for him to complete some paintings she had commissioned.
- His friend Cochin, described him as “Slow and not very hard-working” -
- His patrons and the critics at the Salon accuse him of laziness - comments point out his slowness, ‘the slow speed and the trouble he takes’, and ‘his misfortune in working so slow.’
- This is difficult to believe, and it is more likely that his technique was so painstaking in the pursuit of perfection that he was never satisfied. Chardin himself explained: I take my time because I have made a habit of not relinquishing my paintings until, to my eyes, they leave nothing to be desired.”
- Finally, he abandoned painting genres scenes, despite the financial gain these would have secured him and returned to his preferred still life painting.

# Girl with a Shuttlecock, 1737, Private Coll.



- Oil on Canvas, 81 x 65 cm; signed and dated
- Chardin presented 8 paintings at the Salon of 1737, the first to take place since 1704.
- The painting received scant attention in the press at the time. But one comment is significant.
- A letter from Commissaire Dubuisson to the Marquis of Caumont (Nov 1737) notes: “When one speaks of truth in painting, that is where one would have to look for it to be sure of finding it”
- This is the comment which affected Cézanne in his quest, and gave the title to Jacques Derrida’s book on painting.
- Rosenberg notes: “Seldom has a small girl been portrayed with such modesty and delicacy, tenderness and sympathy, or such comprehension and complicity.” (2000).

# The Return from the Market,

1739, Louvre, Paris.



- Oil on Canvas, 47 x 38 cm
- Chardin made four versions of this painting of which only 3 survive (now in Ottawa and Berlin).
- Its engraved version (1742) by Lépicié attached some lines of verse which tried to ascribe a sentimental narrative to the work, in the hope of making it more popular with a wider audience.
- The painting was favourably received by the critics, at the Salon of 1739, who likened the creamy whites of the maidservant's sleeves to Vermeer.
- It was extolled by the Goncourt Brothers, Fantin-Latour and Théophile Gautier.
- **André Malraux** observed: "Chardin is not a minor 18th-century master who was more delicate than his rivals. Like Corot, he is a subtly imperious *simplifier*. His talent demolished the Baroque still life of Holland and made decorators out of his contemporaries. In France, nothing can rival his work from the death of Watteau to the Revolution."

# The Morning Toilet, 1741, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm



- Oil on Canvas, 49 x 39 cm
- Exhibited in the Salon of 1741 along with “The House of Cards”, Commissioned by Count Carl Gustav Tessin, and sold by him to the Crown Prince of Sweden.
- It gave rise to two commentaries. One an anonymous letter to M.Poiresson-Chamarand: Again he depicts a member of the bourgeoisie. There can be no woman of the Third Estate who does not imagine that she is looking at an image of her face, her holm life, her simple ways, her bearing, her daily routine, her morals, the moods of her children, her furnishings, her wardrobe...”
- He second, from the editor of the Mercure de France: “Nothing is simpler or more felicitously captured than the action of the attentive mother s she arranges a pin in her daughter’s hair. Even more appealing is the child’s feeling, expressed so skillfully by the painter, as the girl takes a sidelong glance in the mirror to satisfy her vanity and to see for herself that her mother’s ministrations have made her beautiful” (1741).
- The Goncourt’s proclaimed: “Sunday, the whole of the Bourgeois Sunday is contained within this picture!” (1864)
- Rosenberg calls this “One of Chardin’s most accomplished and elegant paintings”(2000).

# The Morning Toilet, 1741, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm



- The figures in Chardin's early genre paintings tend to occupy the entire composition. Later, from c 1740, their relative size is diminished to make more space for the surroundings, and he moves them further 'back' in the pictorial space.
- The detail is all significant in the narrative: the candle has only just been extinguished; the marquetry clock (a Fiacre Clément timepiece which appears in the inventory of Mme Chardin's estate) shows the time as a few minutes before seven - time for early morning Mass. A Missal and muffler are shown on the stool, whilst a silver coffee pot activates the space in the lower right corner.
- Chardin pays full attention to the details of surface texture - cloth, fur, velvet, silver etc, as well as the overall complementary colour scheme of blues and reds, creams and browns.



# Meal for a Convalescent/The Attentive Nurse,

c. 1747, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC



- Oil on Canvas 46 x 37 cm, signed
- Continues the theme of a muted colour harmony within a narrative domestic genre scene
- The scene depicts a nurse peeling a hard-boiled egg for a convalescent. A casserole with a spoon under the lid is placed on the floor. On the table stand a loaf of bread, a white faience water jug, a knife and an egg and egg cup on a plate. The colour ranges from earth brown to white, passing through ochres and pale orange. A typically restrained register.
- Between “the Return from the Market” and this painting, Chardin has modified his colour range which is now more delicate and tender, and his method of working is less grainy, more refined and resolved.
- The mood is also one of quiet, composed, introspection.

# Chardin

- After 1748, Chardin's production of Genre pieces stopped.
- His output slowed, and he returned to still life painting.
- In part this can be explained by his new status: He received his first Royal Pension in 1752, (in fact he was better provided for than any other 18th-century artist) and in 1757 he was granted lodgings in the Louvre, an extraordinary privilege for a painter of still lifes, and undoubtedly connected to the position he held since 1755 as Treasurer of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*
- Also in 1755, Chardin was made unofficially responsible for hanging the Salon, a post which became official six years later.
- Between the early still-lifes of the 1720s and 30s and the later ones from the 1750s, it is clear that Chardin has extended the range and scope of his subject matter. He began to introduce expensive porcelain and glassware, precious gold and silverware. A greater choice of fruit and game is depicted, commensurate with his more affluent circumstances.
- Generally, he is now less interested in capturing every detail of his chosen objects, as with harmonising them all into a general effect, which is the structure of the composition. The brushwork tends to be freer and more airy, and there is a new interest in reflected light and transparency, and with the air which circulates about the objects in space.
- Possibly through Diderot, he received a commission from Catherine the Great for a series of 'overdoors' (usually a decorative piece above a doorway) on the theme of 'The attributes of the Arts and their Rewards'.

# Seville Orange. Silver Goblet, Apples, Pear & two Bottles, c.1750



- Oil on Canvas, 38 x 46 cm
- Private Collection, Paris.
- This work signals Chardin's return to still-life painting.
- In the intervening years, Chardin has hardly altered his subject matter at all.
- The dark bottle, tall, cylindrical, with smooth shoulders, known as a 'Thévenote' after its inventor, represents the last phase in the evolution of bottle-shapes in the 18th-century, replacing earlier, more rounded, bulkier models. Its depiction was described by Conisbee as 'A wonderful, glowing transparent green bottle.'
- The silver goblet reappears in the later painting of "Three Apples, Chestnut and silver goblet."

# Bouquet of Carnations, c.1755

Tuberose & Sweet Peas in a white Porcelain Vase with Blue Decoration, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh



- Oil on canvas, 44 x 36 cm.
- The shape of the tin-glazed vase is of Chinese origin, was widely copied in the 18th-century and probably came from Delft. It reappears in several of Chardin's paintings.
- Rosenberg describes it as, "a consummate Masterpiece" (2000).
- The flowers are depicted with such freedom that it is impossible to identify them exactly, but they include carnations, crocuses and lilies.
- What is remarkable is the boldness of its execution, the originality of its palette and the rejection of 'trompe l'oeil' effects.'
- Not least, its rejection of narrative in favour of 'pure painting' inspired Cézanne, along with the choice of blues and browns.

# The Butler's Table, 17(63?)

Louvre, Paris



- Oil on Canvas, 38 x 46 cm
- One of the reception pieces for Chardin's admission to the Académie.
- The pot with a lid on the stand to the right, of typically Chinese shape, is decorated in the Imari style, imitated from the Japanese.

# The Cut Melon, 1760, Priv Coll.



- Oil on Canvas, 57 x 52 cm, Rothschild Collection
- The composition is a masterful play of ovals, mirroring the melon's shape. The three dimensional geometry of the melon is made visible by cutting it, and enabling the spectator to see beyond the surface, and into the inner shape.
- Once cut, the slice of melon, placed at right angles to the cut, enables the spectator to gauge the distance 'back' into the picture plane, whilst reiterating the delicate balance by which the peaches have been arranged, (their flesh of cream and red, echoing the melon's) and indeed in which the entire painting has been 'composed'.
- The indented curves of the black bottle and white Chinese inspired ewer to either side, mirror each other and follow the oval curves of the picture frame.
- Even the customary table ledge at the bottom, is in this instance, curved, cutting a melon-shaped slice across the bottom of the picture

# Basket of Wild Strawberries, 1761, Priv Col.



- Oil on Canvas, 38 x 46 cms
- Family of Eudoxe Marcille collection.
- Shown in the Salon of 1761. But missed by the critics at the time. It was noted by Chalres Blanc in 1862, as “An exquisite painting”, and by the Goncourts a few years later.
- The concern with absolute formal perfection within the picture plane is achieved again here, by the perfect pyramid of strawberries, the creamy white carnations, and the simplicity of the glass of water and the peach with two cherries, which serve to ‘hold in’ the image at the sides, and to echo the red and cream theme.
- “Nothing could be more natural or more free, more composed or more carefully considered, nothing more tender or more moving. Indeed, this magic defies understanding” (Rosenberg)

# Glass of Water and Coffee Pot, 1760, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh



- Oil on Canvas 32 x 41.3 cms
- The ceramic is tin-glazed earthenware but the form is selected specifically because it is the inverse trapezoid to the glass of on the left;
- One transparent form, of water, one opaque, of earth. Two elements required by the garlic and herbs to grow in the air and light which surrounds the scene. The roasting of the coffee, as of the jug, requiring fire.
- The Goncourt praised the painter, as “the best still life painter of all the Schools)” 32



# The Attributes of the Arts and Their Rewards, 1766, State Museum, St Petersburg.



- Oil on Canvas, 102 x 140.50 cms
- Commissioned by Catherine the Great for the Lecture Theatre in the Academy of Fine Arts, St Petersburg, but kept for her private collection. The statue is a plaster copy of the 'Mercury' by Pigalle, (owned by Chardin) and the black ribbon alludes to Pigalle's acceptance into the Académie, the first sculptor to be so honoured.
- Diderot, who probably helped him obtain the commission noted, "When you look at his 'Attributes of the Arts', they eye is soothed and remains satisfied and at peace. When one has looked at this piece for a long time, other pieces appear cold, two dimensional, commonplace and crude".

# The Attributes of Civilian Music

## 1767, Priv Col.



- Oil on canvas, oval 112 x 144.5 cms
- Commissioned for Catherine the Great and intended for a doorway in the Academy of Fine Arts, St Petersburg.
- The oval composition permits a series of echoes of the curved shapes across the canvas, in which almost everything is curved, convex or concave. There is an homology too between the taut surface of the drum, and that of the stretched canvas.

# Three Apples, Two Chestnuts, Bowl & Silver Goblet, c.1768



- Louvre, Paris. Oil on canvas 33 x 41 cms.
- The work reiterates some of Chardin's favourite themes; a group of simple objects, arranged carefully on a shelf or ledge, against a plain background, organised perfectly to form an interweaving three-dimensional pattern, whose colours interrelate, echo and reflect each other.
- There is nothing out of place in this quiet masterpiece.

# Self Portrait, 1775, Louvre



- Pastel 46 x 38 cms
- Chardin, like Proust, demands that we find ‘beautiful to behold’ the domestic objects of extreme ordinariness that he found ‘beautiful to paint’
- He paints what he sees, but only what he sees, and in so doing he arranges and rearranges, selects, simplifies and balances, composes colours, shapes and textures in search of pictorial perfection which transcends the ordinariness of his subjects.
- We know of no student except Joseph Adam from Rouen who arrived late in his career. He seems mostly to have wanted to work in peace and solitude, in a technique which “cost him a great deal of work” (Haillet de Couronne).
- From 1751 onwards, Chardin progressively gave up painting the genre scenes which demanded so much of him and ‘caused him infinite pains’.

# Portrait of Mme Chardin, 1775, Louvre, Paris.



- Pastel, 46 x 38.5 cms
- By 1771 Chardin was seriously ill. The lead paint and solvents he used had seriously damaged his eyes, leading to 'amaurosis' (paralysis of the eyes). (Degas was later to suffer from the same affliction.)
- He turned to pastel and exhibited three works at the salon that year, and most years subsequently, until 1779.
- All the pastels are portraits, like this one of his second wife Françoise Marguerite Pouget, in three quarter figure size.

# Self Portrait at the Easel, 1771

Louvre, Paris



- Pastel on paper 46 x 37.5 cm
- Chardin was also deeply affected by the presumed suicide of his son Jean-Pierre, in Venice in 1772.
- In 1774 Chardin resigned from the Académie and, suffering severely from kidney-stones and dropsy, he died in 1779.
- Derrida, writing in 1990 noted , “The spectacles and the headband...distract attention as much as they concentrate it.
- Proust has given us a memorable description of the pastel, ‘..the tones are the tones of things nearing their end...garments wearing out, or men growing old, infinitely delicate, rich and soft.”
- Cochin recounts this exchange between an artist demonstrating his use of colours:
- “But who told you that painting was done with colours?”, “With what then?”, replied the other. “You use colours replied M. Chardin, “but you paint with our feelings”.
- And with Chardin these feelings are the tender attention to vision, rendered tactile.