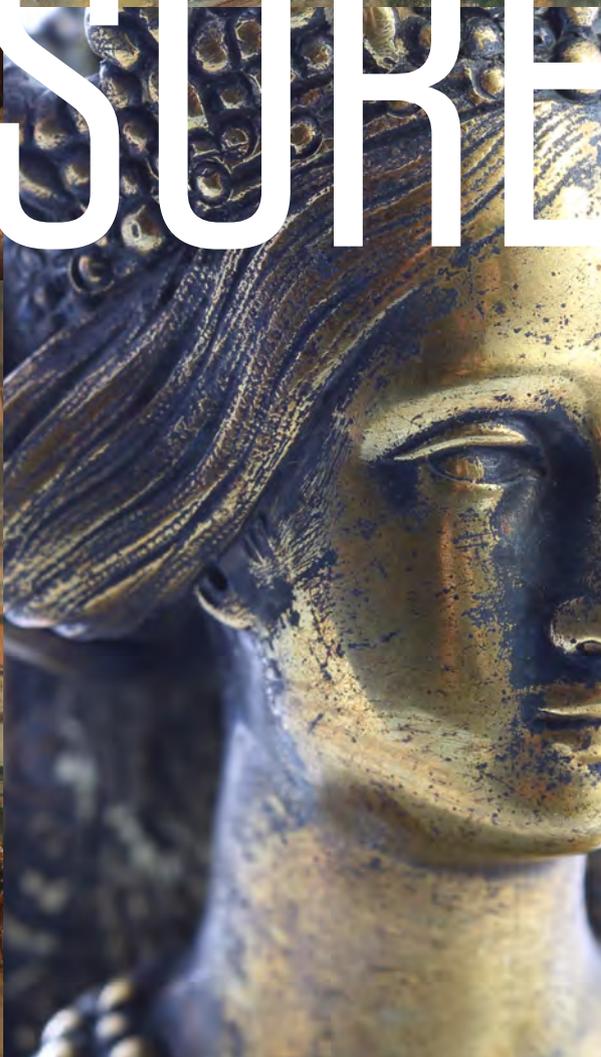


# HIDDEN TREASURE



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## In Conjunction with the School's Evans Building Centennial, the Thomas W. Evans Collection of Second Empire Art Is Brought to Light

THIS SUMMER AND FALL, visitors to the Penn campus will have the chance to experience a rare collection of nearly 150 works of art and artifacts — oil paintings and sculptures, ornate silver and ceramics, jewel-encrusted cases and medals — all a fascinating reflection of the storied life and times of Penn Dental Medicine's earliest benefactor, Dr. Thomas W. Evans. A Philadelphia native and prominent international dentist to 19th century royalty, Evans' fortune made possible the construction of the School's Thomas Evans Building.

This exhibit, *Courtly Treasures: The Collection of Thomas W. Evans Surgeon Dentist to Napoleon III*, is set to run July 18 through November 8 in the University's Arthur Ross Gallery, being presented this year in conjunction with the Evans Building's 100th anniversary. It also coincides with the launch of the Evans Building Centennial Renaissance project, the most extensive renovation in the building's history, set to begin this fall (see [www.dental.upenn.edu/evans](http://www.dental.upenn.edu/evans)). Bringing this exhibit to fruition, however, meant rediscovering many of these hidden treasures.

Shortly after Dean Denis Kinane arrived at Penn Dental Medicine in 2009, he learned of the existence of a collection of art and artifacts from the Second Empire — a period of ornately styled 19th century French architecture, painting, furniture, and decorative arts — belonging to the School of Dental Medicine and originally owned by Evans. While many



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of the pieces of Evans' impressive lifetime collection had been sold in years past, some were on display in various locations throughout the School and the University, and others had been locked away for decades in local warehouses — all but forgotten in recent years.

What pieces comprised the warehoused collection? What condition were the items in? How did they relate to the School, and could they be restored to their original glory to become a lasting part of Evans' legacy? Dean Kinane was determined to find and honor those forgotten treasures. In 2010, he made a call to Lynn Marsden-Atlass, Director of the Arthur Ross Gallery and the University Curator. Together, they made plans to unearth the pieces from storage and, ultimately, to organize the upcoming exhibition.

## A COLORFUL AND RESPECTED INTERNATIONAL DENTIST

To understand the story of the Thomas W. Evans Collection, it is necessary to know a little bit about Evans himself. Born in 1823 to a Quaker family in West Philadelphia, he knew from an early age that he wanted to practice dentistry; as a young man, he built his reputation by perfecting the use of gold-foil fillings and introduced the use of vulcanite rubber in the manufacture of dentures.

Evans' innovative and exacting work gained the attention of another Philadelphia dentist who was practicing in France and needed an assistant. Evans moved to Paris in 1847. Over the next decades, he became known

as a skilled and compassionate dentist to the city's wealthy and well connected, eventually appointed court dentist to Emperor Napoleon III and his wife, Empress Eugenie. (Evans would help Eugenie escape from Paris at the fall of the Second Empire during the Franco-Prussian war; see sidebar page 15.)

Evans' professional relationship grew into a close friendship with Napoleon III, and it was through contacts with artists he met through the Emperor and Empress and other aristocrats and royalty that Evans began to collect a large number of artworks and decorative pieces from the Second Empire period, often receiving gifts of art from his wealthy patrons in lieu of payment. Much of Evans' art collection became part of his enormous legacy to Penn Dental Medicine when his estate became one with the University of Pennsylvania; it was originally displayed in the Thomas W. Evans Museum that was part of School's Evans Building when first built in 1915. The Evans Museum occupied the east half of the Spruce Street wing of the building.

### "WHAT WAS LOST WAS SUDDENLY FOUND"

Nearly 100 years later, intrigued by the existence of this mysterious group of artworks from the Evans Collection, Marsden-Atlass spent much of the summer of 2010 at warehouses in Philadelphia and New Jersey, where the pieces were unpacked, taking inventory, documenting and digitizing them, and assessing their condition.

"It was unusual and exciting" for a long-forgotten collection to be discovered anew, Marsden-Atlass remembers. "What was lost was suddenly found. We didn't know what to expect...we were all surprised by the collection's diversity and scope." As she began to uncrate more and more valuable paintings and items of decorative art, many damaged, she grew increasingly inspired about their potential for a major campus exhibition. She also realized that restoring the collection would take time, and money.



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DEAN DENIS KINANE

"Many of the pieces were broken, torn, or dirty. Almost every piece needed some kind of conservation," she says. "We needed someone who was willing to invest in the future of the collection." That someone turned out to be Dean Kinane, who procured and committed funding to bring the collection back to life.



## A REFLECTION OF CHARACTER

“Dean Kinane truly appreciated the collection’s significance. He was curious and excited about it,” Marsden-Atlass says. “We have him to thank for making a commitment to its preservation, and for putting his support and resources behind it.”

To the Dean, restoring the collection to its former glory is both a privilege and an obligation as the School’s leader. “The respect with which we treat the past and our benefactors reflects on our character,” he says. “This collection is critical to the history of the School and distinguishes our School from all others. The story of Evans is truly unique and memorable, for the field of dentistry as a whole and specifically for the School of Dental Medicine.”

## A TIME CAPSULE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

With the commitment of funding in place, Marsden-Atlass and her staff created a prioritized list for conservation, starting with the collection’s large paintings and sculptures and working down to smaller decorative art pieces. By 2012, a portion of the conserved collection was installed in Penn Dental Medicine, including a number of the paintings and decorative arts in the Dean’s Office Suite and decorative arts in display cases located in the School’s Robert Schattner Center atrium area and the hallway leading to the Dean’s Office.

“There are many wonderful and accomplished paintings in the collection that are typical of the bourgeois tastes of the moment, which were characterized by less interest in religious and ancient art and more focused on history through the lens of everyday life,” says André Dombrowski, Assistant Professor in the Department of the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania.

A scholar of French avant garde painting, including the Second Empire, Dombrowski is fascinated by how the Evans paintings, particularly those by French artist Henri Dupray, reflect the historical currents in Paris at the time.

“Industrialization had taken hold in Paris, and that is evident in many of the works,” he says. “They are very important in a larger social and political sense.”

## PIECES OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE

While all of the pieces in the Evans collection are valuable, a few are particularly noteworthy for their artistic and historical significance, says Marsden-Atlass.

Among them, “*Departure of Empress Eugenie*,” by *Henri-Louis Dupray*, dating from 1884. The 60-inch by 76-inch oil on canvas depicts the dramatic flight of the Empress from Paris at the end of the Franco-Prussian war, when the Emperor was imprisoned. Eugenie is depicted escaping with Evans in his brown, four-seated carriage, which was also recently returned to campus (see sidebar, page 15).

Another significant oil painting is *Evans’ portrait* by *George Peter Alexander Healy* (the cover photo for this issue of the *Penn Dental Medicine Journal*). Healy was a popular and prolific American portrait painter of the time. The medium-sized work portrays Evans during his Paris years, probably five to ten years after he arrived abroad.



A marble bust of *The Greek Slave* by sculptor *Hiram Powers* (see 6, below left), currently on display in the Penn Dental Medicine library, is significant because Powers is the only American sculptor represented in the collection, and because the original sculpture on which it is based was first exhibited in America at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Two decorative pieces are particularly fine examples of their genres: a *German silver tankard* by *Eduard Wollenweber* (see 7, above), circa 1892, which shows superior workmanship in the complicated repoussé technique, and a rare *ceramic vase* by *English manufacturer Minton’s, Ltd.* Standing four-feet tall and finished in turquoise majolica glaze, it features a modeled figure of Prometheus being attacked by an eagle.

Another item of note is a *19th century Boulle desk*, intricately inlaid with brass and tortoiseshell (see 4, page 12). This inspirational piece of the collection is appreciated every day as it is currently on display in the Office of the Dean.





Dean Kinane’s favorite painting in the collection is *“Napoleon”* by *Henri-Louis Dupray* (see detail 1, page 10), also on display in his office. “The conservation completely transformed this painting and removed decades of soiling and discoloration,” says Heather Gibson Moqtaderi, Art Collections Manager in the Office of the Curator. “I can see why this is the Dean’s favorite. In addition to the historical importance of the subject, there is a masterful application of color.”

## CELEBRATING OUR CENTENNIAL TO THE FULLEST

These, along with an array of other paintings, sculptures, decorative objects, and furniture, will be among nearly 150 selected works in the exhibition, which will bring together some items on loan to other institutions, those on display at Penn Dental Medicine and other parts of the University, as well as some previously sold works lent from their current owners.

The exhibition will showcase “the richness and diversity of the collection,” says Marsden-Atlass, and will be unique among gallery shows for the sheer number of different types of art and objects represented. “This will be the



first time since the Evans Museum closed at the Dental School that so many Evans works will be available for scholars on the Second Empire and the public to enjoy.”

A catalogue will be produced in conjunction with the exhibition, with essays from art scholars of the Second Empire period, including an essay on the Second Empire by Dombrowski, one by Moqtaderi on the Minton Prometheus Vase, and by Marsden-Atlass on the history of the Thomas W. Evans Museum and art.

“The exhibit will help us celebrate the Evans Building Centennial to the fullest,” says Dean Kinane. “In addition, it will allow us to continue to appreciate Evans for his unique role in promoting the high standing and respect of dentists in the communities of the world.” ■

—By *Juliana Delany*

## RELATED EVENTS

### PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE EXHIBITION

Penn Homecoming Weekend  
Saturday, November 7, 11:15 am–12:15 pm  
*Arthur Ross Gallery*

Speakers: André Dombrowski, Assistant Professor, Dept. of the History of Art; Heather Gibson-Moqtaderi, Art Collections Manager, Office of the Curator; and Lynn Marsden-Atlass, Director of the Arthur Ross Gallery and University Curator.

### “12 @ 12”

First Wednesday of September, October and November  
12 min. talk at noon on the exhibit by gallery docents  
*Arthur Ross Gallery*

“This will be the first time since the Evans Museum closed at the Dental School that so many Evans works will be available for scholars on the Second Empire and the public to enjoy.”

LYNN MARSDEN-ATLASS



## Image Key

- 1 "Napoleon" by Henri-Louis Dupray (detail)  
19th century
- 2 "Disturbance in Paris" by Henri-Louis Dupray  
c. 1883
- 3 Thomas W. Evans portrait by George Peter  
Alexander Healy  
c. 1853
- 4 Secretary desk, brass and tortoiseshell inlay  
19th century
- 5 Agnes Doyle Evans (Mrs. Thomas W. Evans)  
by George Peter Alexander Healy  
c. 1850s
- 6 "The Greek Slave" by Hiram Powers  
c. 1844
- 7 German silver tankard by Eduard Wollenweber  
c. 1892
- 8 Star of the Order of St. Stanislas, First Class  
Russian, gold and enamel, ribbon
- 9 Empress Eugenie statuette by C. Mertens and  
G. Loos, Prussia, bronze and marble  
c. 1853
- 10 Jewel casket, gilded and enameled metal  
c. 1881
- 11 Napoleon III cipher letter holder, gilt metal  
and leather  
Late 19th century
- 12 Footed dish (detail), marble, gilt metal, seed  
pearls, glass cabochons



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## HOME TO STAY *Evans' storied carriage returns to campus*

Thomas W. Evans made a name for himself as a skillful, innovative, and caring dentist to wealthy and powerful 19th century Parisians and European royalty. But he didn't stop there: He also made history when he helped one of his patients, the Empress Eugenie, flee Paris during the Franco-Prussian War after the capture and imprisonment of her husband, Emperor Napoleon III, in 1870. The dramatic event was immortalized in the painting "Departure of Empress Eugenie" by Henri-Louis Dupray, a highlight of the Thomas W. Evans Collection, selected pieces of which will be exhibited at Penn's Arthur Ross Gallery from July 18 to November 8.

The great escape would not have been possible without Evans' luxurious, four-seat Landau carriage, which is returning to its rightful home at Penn Dental Medicine in time for Alumni Weekend 2015, May 15-17. Originally part of the Evans Museum within the School's Thomas Evans Building, since the 1990s, the carriage had been on extended loan to the Réunion des Musées Nationaux. In 2013, when Marsden-Atlass located it at the Château de Compiègne, Dean Kinane was

determined that the carriage should come home to Philadelphia. In 2014, after negotiations with the French, who valued the carriage as an important national symbol, an agreement was reached for the carriage's return.

A restoration is now underway to return the carriage to its former glory. The comprehensive restoration includes body work to remove rust and match original paint, as well as repairs to all parts of the carriage, from the lamps and wheels to the folding roof, dashboard and fenders. Initials and decorative striping on the doors will be enhanced, and the entire carriage will be finished in a satin clear-coat to protect it for years to come. The first phase of work on the exterior elements will be completed for its return for Alumni Weekend 2015 through June; the rest of the work will be completed over the summer for the carriage's return to the School in early November.

"The carriage is steeped in history and was a Rolls Royce of carriages in its time," says Dean Kinane. The vehicle that holds a unique place in history is now home to stay at the School forever tied to Evans' lasting legacy.

ABOVE: Dr. Thomas Evans Landau carriage used to help Empress Eugenie flee Paris in 1870 as displayed within the original Thomas W. Evans Museum, circa 1915, that occupied the east half of the Spruce Street wing of the Evans Building.