

Claude Raguet Hirst

A Gentleman's Table



A Gentleman's Table, after 1890

A Man's World

Claude Raguet Hirst (1855–1942) began her career painting floral still lifes, but creating “bachelor” scenes proved more lucrative. Scholars suggest this work is Hirst's subversive, critical commentary on contemporary male vices. Ironically, a Chicago men's club displayed it.

Take a closer look

The artist litters her canvas with the detritus of debauchery. Paraphernalia of smoking, drinking, and gambling—ashen pipe chamber, empty bottles, abandoned absinthe glass, and upturned playing cards—suggest an unseen narrative.

Something to talk about

Hirst is considered the only American female artist of her time to employ a hyper-realistic style known as trompe l'oeil (French for “fools the eye”). Which elements function this way? Which aspects remind you that this work is two-dimensional?

Who knew?

Born Claudine, Hirst began signing her works with the masculine variant “Claude” in the 1870s. Lee Krasner (1908–1984), also in the museum's collection, and writers Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Brontë, and Harper Lee, likewise disguised their gender for professional gain.

Claude Raguet Hirst, *A Gentleman's Table*, after 1890; Oil on canvas, 18 x 32 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

