

MICHELE OKA DONER | HOLIDAY READS | AXEL SALTO | LONDON SALES RECAP

BLOUIN ART+AUCTION

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IN AUCTIONS, COLLECTING, PATRONAGE, DESIGN, AND MORE



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LOS ANGELES

American Idyll

Thomas Cole's sublime "The Course of Empire," 1833-36, a cycle of five large-scale paintings depicting the rise and fall of a civilization, including *The Savage State*, above, headlines "Nature and the American Vision: The Hudson River School," an exhibition of 45 landscapes opening at the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** on December 7. According to **Ilene Susan Fort**, LACMA's senior curator of American art, Cole's cautionary tale appears more relevant than ever in an age of environmental destruction and urban expansion. "Southern California, in particular," she says, "has been so developed one has to go pretty far to commune with nature. I think people are going to enjoy the exhibition for that quality." The show, which also features works by **Asher B. Durand** and **Albert Bierstadt**, runs through June 7, 2015. —BRIDGET MORIARITY

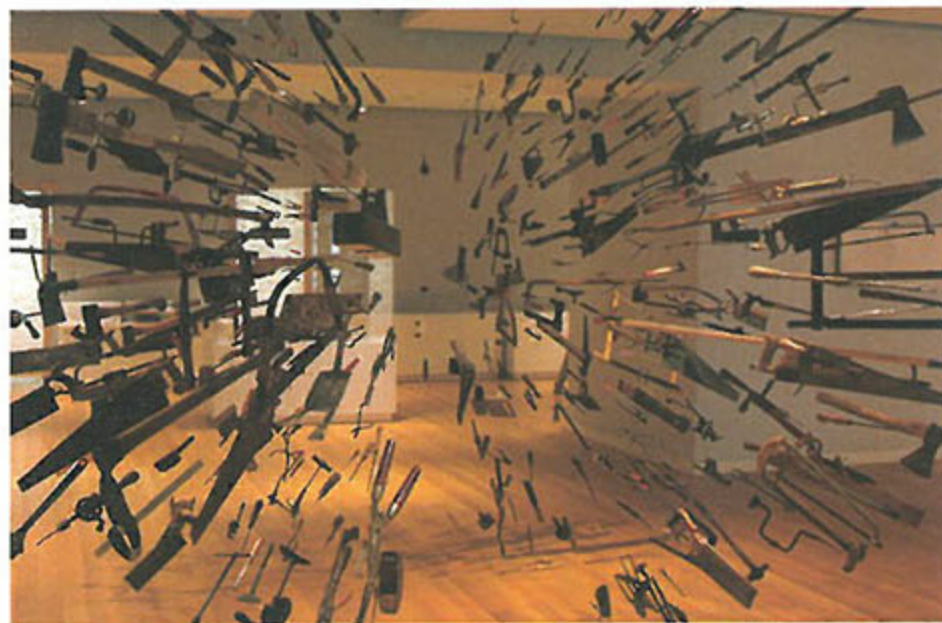
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NEW YORK

ON THE AVENUE

The Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum reveals a new look when the doors of the 1903 Carnegie Mansion reopen to the public on December 12 after a three-year renovation. Key to the upgrade are digital technologies that offer visitors new ways to investigate and experience the objects on view. Among the 10 inaugural exhibitions are the interactive "Beautiful Users," which deconstructs user-centric design in the new Design Process Galleries, "Making Design," the museum's first survey of its own collection, and "Tools: Extending Our Reach," an examination of some 175 useful objects. The latter exhibition features **Damián Ortega's** *Controller of the Universe*, 2007, an immersive sculpture of suspended hand tools that spotlights the history and design of devices, gadgets, and gizmos as a single object of fine art. "The piece really is the perfect mix of old and contemporary, art and design, to activate all the ideas of the show," says the artist. He's thrilled by the work's placement in the new 6,000-square-foot top-floor open-plan galleries, noting that "the piece looks very elegant" in its Gilded Age environs. That would be by design. —DEBORAH WILK

The top-floor gallery at the Cooper Hewitt, which reopens on Museum Mile December 12.



NEW YORK

PERIPATETIC PURSUIT

In her previous body of work, "Home Stills," 2011, multimedia artist **Bastienne Schmidt** explored femininity and gender roles in the domestic sphere, using herself as a stand-in for everywoman. Her latest inquiry, "Topography of Quiet," on view at **Ricco/Maresca Gallery** December 11 through January 10, 2015, uses painting, drawing, and photography to create a transcendental and introspective experience. Schmidt draws inspiration from her travels to map the effects of our environment on our imagination, and vice versa. Non-pictorial photographic compositions and intricate paintings, such as the three mixed-media *Untitled, Topos*, 2014, above, evoke ikat prints, Asian scrolls, and the rich lapis hues of the Aegean. The images not only bear witness to Schmidt's peripatetic movements, but also suggest that the act of traveling is a means by which our minds engage in the pursuit of identity. —JG