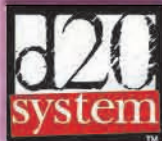


*Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook*

# ATHENAEUM ARCANAE VALUABLE PAINTINGS



BY CARLA HARKER

# A+HENAÆUM ARCANÆ: VALUABLE PAINT+INGS

## INT+R⊕DUCTION

The most ancient reliably-dated paintings in the world are at least twenty-three thousand years old. Art has been an important part of our culture, probably from the moment we could walk upright. Paintings make for interesting treasure items; their worth is measured as much or more by how much the artist is valued for his or her contributions to a style than whether the work is technically correct.

The items contained in this PDF are mundane paintings from various periods in a generic fantasy setting and are intended to spice up any treasure horde or building. Besides describing the painting, each entry also includes a small history of the work and lists the artist, if he or she is known, along with the piece's value and any special notes regarding it. Use these descriptions as is, or let them spur your imagination to create new paintings. Any of the works listed below can have their values adjusted to fit any level of adventuring party with no one the wiser.

### ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Many of the stories behind these paintings can be used as jumping off points for adventures. Perhaps the Diurdhe family wishes to recover the last portrait of the family ancestors (see the "Diurdhe Family Portrait" entry) or a collector hires the PCs to find all four of Moldar Gisk's "Planes" series (see the "Plane of Fire" entry). Whatever the case, the PCs might find the history behind the paintings more valuable than the artworks themselves.

## THE PAINT+INGS

### BEAUTIFUL CREATURES

**Appearance:** This is a watercolor painting done on parchment. The artwork depicts a beautiful dryad shyly peeking out from behind a tree to see a handsome male centaur bathing in a forest pond. Many of the technical aspects of the painting are wrong.

**Appraise Information:** DC 10. The actual artist of this piece is unknown, because it's one of hundreds sold through a now-defunct College of Fine Arts. The piece contains nothing noteworthy, and it's unlikely to interest anyone but a peasant or lower class merchant.

*Value:* 1 gp

**Special Notes:** None.

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### BEYOND THE BATTLE

**Appearance:** This is a 3-ft. by- 2-ft. oil on canvas depicting a raiding party of drow eating a meal on the banks of an underground lake. Near the edge of the left side of the canvas lies a haphazard pile of dead deep gnomes. The artwork is highly detailed, and each drow and deep gnome has distinct features.

**Appraise Information:** DC 15. The artist of this piece was a human painter named Masae Handar who disappeared 250 years ago. When the piece surfaced decades later, scholars believed Masae was kidnapped by the raiding party depicted in the image. Someone studying the painting with a magnifying glass can see a sigil on one of the drow's rings, that indicates to which drow city the elves belonged.

*Value:* 500 gp (200 gp for the craftsmanship, 300 gp for the historical value).

**Special Notes:** None.

### DURIDHE FAMILY PORTRAIT

**Appearance:** This 5-ft. by- 5-ft. acrylic on canvas is framed in gilded wood and shows a family of humans standing in aristocratic clothes two hundred years out of style. An elderly couple is perched on a pair of stools, their grandchildren sit at their feet, and the children's parents stand stiffly behind their elders. The expressions on their faces are very serious.

**Appraise Information:** DC 12. This painting is typical of the style of portrait popular in the previous two centuries. The artist, Achta, was no one of note and has been forgotten by time.

*Value:* 350 gp (50 gp for the craftsmanship, 300 gp for the historical value).

**Special Notes:** Only surviving members of the Duridhe Family are willing to pay more than 50 gp for the portrait.

### FAILURE

**Appearance:** This is a 6-ft.-square oil on canvas featuring a desert landscape. In the foreground are the remains of half a dozen humans or elves lying face down in the sand. They wear rusty metal armor and rusty weapons and each holds a waterskin in an outstretched hand. In the background, mere feet from the bodies is a verdant oasis, a sparkling pool of water surrounded by trees bearing luscious fruit.

**Appraise Information:** DC 15 (DC 25, see text). The gnome bard Fomkin enjoyed creating works that amused his patrons, and this was one of his most popular. "Failure" is one of the most-plagiarized works ever created, so many people have seen a copy of the painting. Only an expert can identify the original Fomkin work.

*Value:* 725 gp (75 gp for the craftsmanship, 675 gp as a collector's item).

**Special Notes:** Most collectors know of the existence of the duplicates of this painting, but since few can identify the original Fomkin work, it's difficult to find anyone willing to pay more than 75 gp for a copy.

### FULL MOON TERROR

**Appearance:** This is a crudely done oil on birch wood painting two feet on a side depicting two terror-stricken gnome girls running from a werewolf along a moonlit road. The background shows a moon and stars. The gnomes, werewolf, and moon are painted on cutouts of wood that stand off

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the painting. This painting is as much a mechanical device as a piece of art. A winding wheel on the side of the canvas controls a series of cogs and wheels at the back of the painting. When the wheel is wound, the gnomes and werewolf move toward the left side of the painting until the werewolf catches the gnomes while the moon moves right. This creates a unique three dimensional effect. Turning the winding wheel in the opposite direction returns the cutouts to their starting positions.

**Appraise Information:** DC 15. A gnome village exported these clockwork paintings several hundred years ago as novelties. Most have been destroyed over time and only a few that still exist even work.

*Value:* 225 gp (25 gp for the craftsmanship, 200 gp as a collector's item).

**Special Notes:** Each time the painting is wound, the clockwork mechanism has a 5% cumulative chance of breaking. Repairing the painting requires a successful DC 20 Craft (clockworks) skill check.

### FUTILE GESTURES

**Appearance:** Watercolor on canvas, this 8-ft. by- 6-ft. paintings shows a vicious storm tossing a convoy of merchant ships. One of the ships is sinking and the sailors of another ship are attempting to save the sailors from the sinking ship and not having much luck.

**Appraise Information:** DC 15. The prolific elven painter Ethlessar spent a decade painting only sea-based scenes, and *Futile Gestures* is only one of at least thirty known works from that decade. Ethlessar is believed to have painted over twenty-five hundred paintings that have made their way into collectors' hands over the course of his long life. One such collector, a dwarven merchant named Daggda Stonehammer,

has the largest known collection of Ethlessar's works, seven hundred at last count.

*Value:* 110 gp (110 gp for the craftsmanship).

**Special Notes:** None.

### PLANE ⊕ FIRE

**Appearance:** This is a 2-ft. by- 3-ft. oil on black silk stretched tightly between a red-painted, wooden frame. The painting depicts a lake of molten lava in the foreground and a mountain that spews red flame in the background.

**Appraise Information:** DC 20. This is one of four paintings from the "Planes" series done by the halfling artist, Moldar Gisk, sixty-five years ago, after traveling to each of the four elemental planes. Moldar has since retired and lives a quiet life with his children and grandchildren in the valley.

*Value:* 75 gp (75 gp for the craftsmanship).

**Special Notes:** If all four of the paintings can be collected, they're worth 500 gp for the set.

### RIGHT ⊕ OF SUCCESSION ⊕

**Appearance:** Two dwarves are fighting to the death with huge warhammers on this 3-ft. by- 3-ft. oil on canvas. Their fight takes place on top of a snow-covered mountain. In the background, other dwarves dressed as aristocrats watch the battle.

**Appraise Information:** DC 25. At a glance, most people think this is a simple oil painting depicting a rather generic combat scene. A closer look reveals that the dwarves in the fight are the twin brothers, Dorren and Daeren, in their epic battle for

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the right to the Granite Clan throne. The artist is Daeren's wife, Baritha, who painted the work to remind her brother-in-law, Dorren, of what he did. Rumored to have felt such remorse for taking his brother's life after being presented with the work, Dorren killed himself soon after, though some suspect Baritha had a hand in his death. She was never tried for the crime, and her daughter became queen of the clan after Dorren's death, ruling for seventy-five years.

*Value:* 980 gp (180 gp for the craftsmanship, 800 gp for the historical value).

**Special Notes:** None.

### SECRETS

**Appearance:** Watercolor on parchment, this 2-ft. by- 3-ft. painting features a man and woman walking hand-in-hand through the woods toward the viewer. Both characters are partially turned away from each other, a look of sadness on their faces. Peeking out from behind each character are evil-looking imps that bear resemblances to the characters. Due to the age of the work, the parchment is very brittle and is usually found pressed between two pieces of thin glass.

**Appraise Information:** DC 25. The artist for this piece is unknown by even most art scholars. A thousand years ago Andus, a cleric who worshipped a dark goddess, was commissioned to create the painting for one of his masters, though no one has ever discovered the name of his patron. Some believe it was the goddess herself who commissioned the work, but since the painting has never left the mortal realms, most doubt that.

*Value:* 2,050 gp (50 gp for the craftsmanship, 2,000 gp for the historical value).

**Special Notes:** The paint for this work was created by mixing dark naga poison with colorants. Anyone touching the painting feels sleepy and hallucinates for one round, but the poison is too old to do any real damage.

### SEDUCTION

**Appearance:** This is a series of three paintings, enamel on ceramic, each one foot in length and width. In the first image, a succubus transforms into a beautiful elven maiden wearing a thin dressing gown. The second image shows the succubus in elven form flirting shyly with a cleric of a god devoted to the destruction of demons and devils. The final image shows the cleric and the succubus embracing in a passionate kiss. One of the succubus's hands has reverted to claw form and is poised near the cleric's exposed neck.

**Appraise Information:** DC 20. More famous for his glazed plates than his paintings, the dwarven artist Olstral Verthan nevertheless painted this series in his early years. Twice in history the pieces have been separated, only to come together again up to thirty years later.

*Value:* 650 gp for the set (150 gp per painting, 200 gp as a collector's item).

**Special Notes:** None.

### SUPPLICATION FROM THE MASSES

**Appearance:** A 4-ft. by- 4-ft. oil on canvas, this abstract expressionist painting displays a vivid barrage of colors. Hundreds of humans kneel in a town square before their king, who sits on a raised throne on a tower balcony.

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**Appraise Information:** DC 20. Most people are used to the realistic style in which most artists of the realms choose to paint, so many people, even collectors, find the works of the elven artist Manewin Bril off-putting. Credited as the inventor of the abstract expressionist movement, Bril was almost as well known for his violent temper, diva-like behavior, and numerous mistresses. He died at the age of 271 having painted only six works of art after one of his spurned mistresses stabbed him through the heart.

*Value:* 575 gp (575 gp for the historical value).

**Special Notes:** Although Bril's works are rare, very few people enjoy it. Finding a true fan of his works (DC 30 Gather Information check) doubles the value.

### THE RULERS

**Appearance:** A 6-ft. by- 4-ft. oil painting on wood, this artwork depicts a tall crenellated stone tower. Standing at attention atop the battlement are serious guards holding pikes and crossbows. Playing on the crenellations are a litter of kittens of various markings. One of the kittens hangs by its front paws from one of the crenellations while two others engage in a playful fight on a merlon. Another stands on the shoulder of one of the guards, playing with a tassel hanging from her pike.

**Appraise Information:** DC 12. Scholars scoff at the works of the human artist, Daelma Ter, calling it crass and commercial. Nevertheless, her works were and still are very popular with the merchant class.

*Value:* 1,000 gp (200 gp for the craftsmanship, 800 gp as a collector's item).

**Special Notes:** None.

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