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HISTORY

A Brief History of Snow Globes

BY LINDA RODRIGUEZ MCROBBIE

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The way Erwin Perzy's family tells it, if Thomas Edison had designed a better light bulb, Perzy would never have invented the snow globe.

Back in 1900, Erwin Perzy I was working in Vienna as a fine instruments mechanic when a surgeon came to him with a problem. Although the surgeon had electric light bulbs installed in his operating theater, the newly invented

product didn't cast great light. He

wanted to know if Perzy could improve on the dim bulbs and make them brighter. So he got to work. As Perzy hunted for inspiration, he noticed that shoemakers had stumbled into an interesting trick: By filling glass globes with water and placing them in front of candles, they created tiny spotlights in their shops.

When Perzy tried the trick with a lightbulb, he discovered the brightness wasn't improved. But what if he added something to the water that the light could bounce off of? Perzy started with white semolina flakes, used in baby food at the time. "He poured [them] into the glass globe, and [they] got soaked by the water and floated very slowly to the base of the globe," his grandson, Erwin Perzy III, told the BBC. "This effect reminded him of snowfall."

Inspiration struck: What if he used his technical expertise to create a tiny diorama in his snowy little world? Perzy made a miniature replica of the Basilica of the Birth of the Virgin Mary in Mariazell, Austria, placed it in his water-filled globe, sealed it, and mounted it to a gypsum base that he

painted black. And *voila*—the first snow globe was born.

At least, that's the story Austrians like to peddle. But what about the snow globes that appeared a few decades before, in another country entirely?

PARISIAN BEGINNINGS

According to Nancy McMichael, a snow globe collector profiled in a 1997 article in The New York Times, the first snow globes were showcased at the 1878 Paris Universal Exposition by a local glassware firm. She isn't the only one who noticed. As described in the (exhaustive) reports of the U.S. Commissioners to the exposition, the water-filled globes each featured a little man holding an umbrella, and "a white powder which, when the paper weight is turned upside down, falls in an imitation of a snow storm."

The next iteration of the snow globe came in 1889, again at the Paris Universal Exposition.

As McMichael writes in her book Snowdomes, this time the globe—which was the work of an enterprising souvenir vendor—featured a tiny ceramic version of the just-unveiled

Eiffel Tower and the whole ball fit in

the palm of a hand. (An example of the globe lives at the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass in Wisconsin.)

“The rest,” McMichael wrote, “is history.”

But it’s interesting history, one that reflects a larger story about how items were manufactured and sold, and what made them popular in the 20th century.

Though Perzy—who patented his globe in 1900—didn’t invent the snow globe, he and his brother are responsible for catapulting the souvenir into the position of tchotchke primacy it holds today. Seizing on the invention, the pair opened a shop, Original Wiener Schneekugel Manufaktur, in Vienna.

Today, that shop is still run by an Erwin Perzy—his grandson, Erwin Perzy III—and they still make snow globes, containing Austrian tourist attractions, animals, and Christmas themes, in the same Vienna workshop where the original Perzy practiced his craft.

But it’s easy to forget that Perzy was also an artisan. His items were painstakingly hand-crafted. So while his snow globes (also called “snow domes” or “snow weights”) were exquisite and

popular, they were neither cheap nor widespread. For the snow globe to go global, it needed to be mass-produced—and that's how America got into the business.

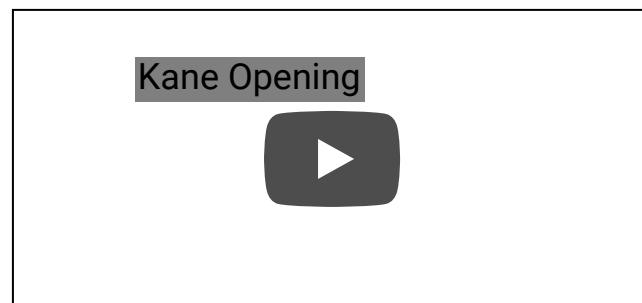
A MASS-MARKET MEMENTO

In 1927, a Pittsburgh man named Joseph Garaja filed his application for a patent for a liquid-filled novelty paperweight that improved upon previous designs; the design he presented and later sold was a fish floating in sea grass. But it wasn't Garaja's under-the-sea theme that impressed the industry. His real contribution to snow globe manufacturing was in pioneering the now-obvious method of assembling the globes underwater to ensure they were entirely filled. This, David Bear wrote for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in 2000, "revolutionized" the snow globe industry: "They went from being expensive mementos individually crafted by skilled artisans to items that could be cheaply mass-produced and sold."

Which they were: In the 1930s, William Snyder, a New Jersey entrepreneur, began selling souvenir globes for \$1,

around \$18 now. Snyder would later earn two patents related to snow globes and his company, Atlas Crystal Works, would become a major manufacturer of the items.

But the big boom for snow globes came, as it did for so many other things in the 20th century, after a little product placement. In the 1940 Ginger Rogers vehicle *Kitty Foyle*, young Kitty launches a flashback scene when she shakes a snow globe containing the figure of a girl on a sled. According to Connie Moore and Harry Rinker in *Snow Globes: A Collector's Guide to Selecting, Displaying and Restoring Snow Globes*, sales of the keepsakes skyrocketed 200 percent after the film came out.



The next year, Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* also used a snow globe—containing a little log cabin and made by Perzy's company—for that monumental opening scene: When publishing titan Charles Kane dies with the word “Rosebud” on his lips, and the

snow globe he's holding drops from his hand and shatters. The 1940s also witnessed the dawning of a new era in advertising ubiquity, and brands began making snow globes to advertise their products. Other popular themes included World War II iconography, such as a soldier at attention.

By the 1950s, innovation in plastics and injection-molding meant that snow globes could be made even more cheaply. Even the "snow" that floats around inside the globe, called "flitter" in the business, could be made from plastics—no need to use marble, bone chips, or ground rice anymore (mass-produced plastic glitter, which was allegedly invented in 1934, became part of the snow globe story only later). The water filling the globes was also frequently mixed with glycol, to make the snow fall more slowly, although sometimes it was mixed with far more lethal substances. At least one manufacturer, McMichael told *The New York Times*, began mixing antifreeze into the water to keep the globes from freezing and cracking during shipping. Stories of children becoming ill after drinking the water from snow globes sometimes made headlines, including

one about children who became seriously sick after drinking snow globe water taken directly from polluted Hong Kong Bay.

Despite those stories, the industry continued to grow. Four major companies in America continued to produce snow globes of varying quality and subject including souvenirs, but also holiday globes and novelty gifts. It was a similar landscape in Europe, with a few manufacturers dominating the snow globe scene.

By the 1980s, snow globes were still a staple of the gift industry, but they'd also become the epitome of kitsch—probably because everyone and everything from Disney's Bambi to the Lone Ranger to Niagara Falls and the White House could be put under glass and forced to endure frequent and bewildering snowstorms. But what does the market look like today?

A GLOBE FOR EVERYONE

Oddly enough, snow globes remain big business. There is a sizable collector's market for both antique and novelty domes. And Erwin Perzy III's company is still healthy. The Vienna shop

produces upwards of 200,000 snow

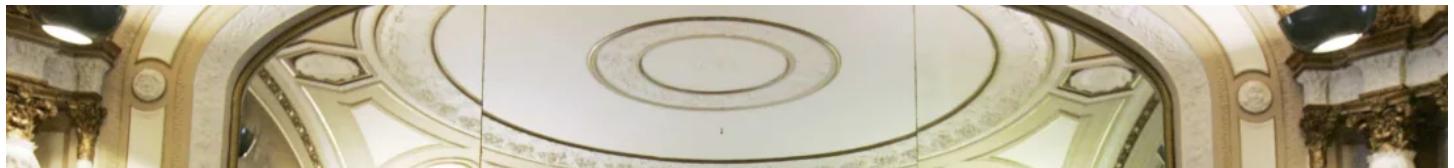
globes a year, and that's just a small part of the market. It's perhaps a mark of how familiar a form a snow globe is, and what innocent—almost saccharine—kitsch they're meant to be that they can be so gleefully perverted, as this collection of weird, macabre, and wonderful snow globes demonstrates.

So this holiday, consider the humble snow globe as a gift for someone you love. But if you do buy in, remember not to bring your snow globe on a plane (unless it's smaller than a tennis ball and can fit entirely into a Ziploc bag). And always adhere to these words from collector McMichael: “No matter how thirsty you are, no matter how desperate, never, ever drink the water from a snow dome.”

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Alessandra Mussolini, the granddaughter of Benito Mussolini.

MARCO DI LAURO / STRINGER, GETTY IMAGES

LISTS

What the Descendants of 8 Controversial Historical Figures Are Doing Today

BY LUCAS REILLY

MAY 1, 2020

The joy of genealogy is in finding unexpected twists and turns in your family's past. For some, it's a reason to celebrate—the direct descendants of the frontiersman Davy Crockett and author Leo Tolstoy, for example, assemble every few years for a jolly reunion. For others, well, having a link to a certain lineage might be something they'd want to hide. And being a descendant (a term we use loosely here to also include non-direct descendants) of any notable figure from history can bring plenty of baggage along with it.

Here's what the descendants of eight controversial historical figures are doing right now.

1. AARON BURR'S DESCENDANT IS BOATING BUDDIES WITH ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER.



For the 200th anniversary of the Burr-Hamilton duel, Antonio Burr and Douglas Hamilton, a fifth-great-grandson of Alexander Hamilton, reenacted the scene in Weehawken, New Jersey.
MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

In 1804, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr were embroiled in a venomous feud and decided to “take it outside,” engaging in a duel that, ultimately, led to Hamilton’s death. More than 200 years later, there’s no bad blood between the two families anymore: In fact, members from both sides go kayaking together. Antonio Burr—a descendant of one of Aaron Burr’s cousins who portrayed the third vice president in a reenactment of the duel for its 200th anniversary in 2004—once

served as Commodore of the Inwood Canoe Club in New York. Fittingly, Alexandra Hamilton Woods, the great-great-great-granddaughter of the first secretary of the U.S. Treasury, served as the club's treasurer for a time and worked alongside Burr. The two originally met at a party and only put together their familial connection (and their passion for canoeing) after some small talk.

“I used to tease him about our respective history,” Hamilton Woods told the New York Post in 2015. “We’ve had a number of interesting conversations. But I have great fondness and respect for Antonio.”

Though each defends their respective family member’s actions surrounding the duel, when they had to deal with club matters, Hamilton Woods said, “[Antonio] and I find ourselves usually on the same side.”

2. ADOLF HITLER’S GREAT-NEPHEWS ARE PROUD AMERICANS IN LONG ISLAND.





William Patrick Hitler and his mother outside the Astor Hotel in New York City in June 1941.
KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

Descendants from Adolf Hitler's paternal side of the family currently reside in Long Island, New York, and, if you ever visit, you're likely to find them proudly flying the American flag. Their father, William Patrick Hitler, was the son of the dictator's half-brother Alois, who had the same father as Adolf.

William moved to the United States in 1939 shortly after having a falling-out with his uncle, and would famously write an article for the July 4, 1939 edition of *Look* magazine called "Why I Hate My Uncle." As you'd expect, the Führer was no fan of Willy, either, calling him "my loathsome nephew."

During World War II, William would join the United States Navy and earned a Purple Heart while serving his new country. After the war, he changed his name and had four sons, three of whom continue to live quietly in Long Island and rarely speak to reporters. The scattered anecdotes that do exist from neighbors describe a perfectly normal

childhood in the town of Patchogue, and their adulthood has been similarly unassuming: One brother became a social worker, while the other two run a landscaping company together. None are married; none have children.

3. BENITO MUSSOLINI HAS A POLITICAL *PLAYBOY* MODEL GRANDDAUGHTER.



Italian Senator Alessandra Mussolini holds a political rally in 2014.

LAURA LEZZA/GETTY IMAGES

On April 1, 2019, the following words actually appeared in the Washington Post: "Alessandra Mussolini, the granddaughter of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, is engaged in a bitter feud with Jim Carrey, the actor best known for the likes of Ace Ventura: Pet Detective and Dumb and Dumber. No, this is not an April Fools' Day joke, and yes, the Internet is to blame."

Unlike Hitler's descendants, Alessandra Mussolini has no problem calling attention to herself nor is she ashamed

of defending her ancestor's past. So when Carrey insulted her grandfather on Twitter, Mussolini started tossing verbal tomatoes at the funnyman and his defenders. It's no surprise:

According to the New York Times, Mussolini ran for office as a member of the "neo-fascist" Italian Social Movement in 1992, before more recently serving in the European Parliament as a member of the Forza Italia party. In addition to embracing her grandfather's legacy and far-right politics over the years, Mussolini has posed as a Playboy cover model, acted in a dozen Italian films, and even released an album of pop music (in Japan, no less).

4. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS'S SPANISH NAVAL ADMIRAL GREAT-GREAT [...] GRANDSON.

It's not uncommon for a child to follow in his or her parent's footsteps. Sometimes, a grandchild might even join the business. But it's not often you hear about a descendant 500 years removed taking on the family job and the titles that go along with them. That is reportedly the case with Cristóbal Colón de Carvajal y Gorosábel, a direct

descendant 18 generations removed from Christopher Columbus. Not only did Cristóbal join the Spanish Navy, sail around the world, and command his own ship in his younger days, but he also holds onto many of the ceremonial titles that have been in his family for generations: He's technically still Admiral and Adelantado Mayor of the Indies, the 18th Duke of Veragua, and the 16th Marquis of Jamaica, but he told the BBC these titles are merely "honorific" now.

Though the 70-year-old Colón doesn't have much business in the United States, he famously made headlines after he was named grand marshal of the 1992 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, which gained the ire of many Native American groups; it was later announced he would be the co-marshall with U.S. Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Native American politician from Colorado. Today, he'll occasionally pop up in the news to defend the most controversial member of his family tree.

5. JOSEF STALIN'S GRANDDAUGHTER IS A BUDDHISM-PRACTICING PUNKSTER.





Josef Stalin with his son Vasily and daughter Svetlana.

FINE ART IMAGES/HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

In 1967, Stalin's only daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, embarrassed the Soviet Union by defecting to the United States. Her daughter Olga Peters—a.k.a. Chrese Evans—is now decidedly American. According to the most recent reports, Evans lives in Oregon, practices Buddhism, and works as an antiques dealer. Sporting some wicked tattoos and punk-rock hair, she's been photographed carrying a toy Kalashnikov rifle, prompting the New York Post to claim: “Stalin’s granddaughter is an all-American badass.”

6. NAPOLEON BONAPARTE'S DESCENDANT MARRIED NAPOLEON'S SECOND WIFE'S GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-NIECE.





Jean-Christophe, Prince Napoléon and his wife, Olympia Von Arco-Zinneberg, on their wedding day, with a statue of Napoleon fittingly watching over them.

LUC CASTEL/GETTY IMAGES

Napoleon Bonaparte wrote some seriously mushy love letters to his first wife, Josephine, during the late 18th century. (Take this doozy: “I hope before long to crush you in my arms and cover you with a million kisses burning as though beneath the equator.”) Apparently, the talent for saccharine prose was passed down to his descendants.

In 2019, Jean-Christophe, Prince Napoléon—an investment banker and great-great-great-nephew to Napoleon—married Austria’s Countess Olympia von und zu Arco-Zinneberg,

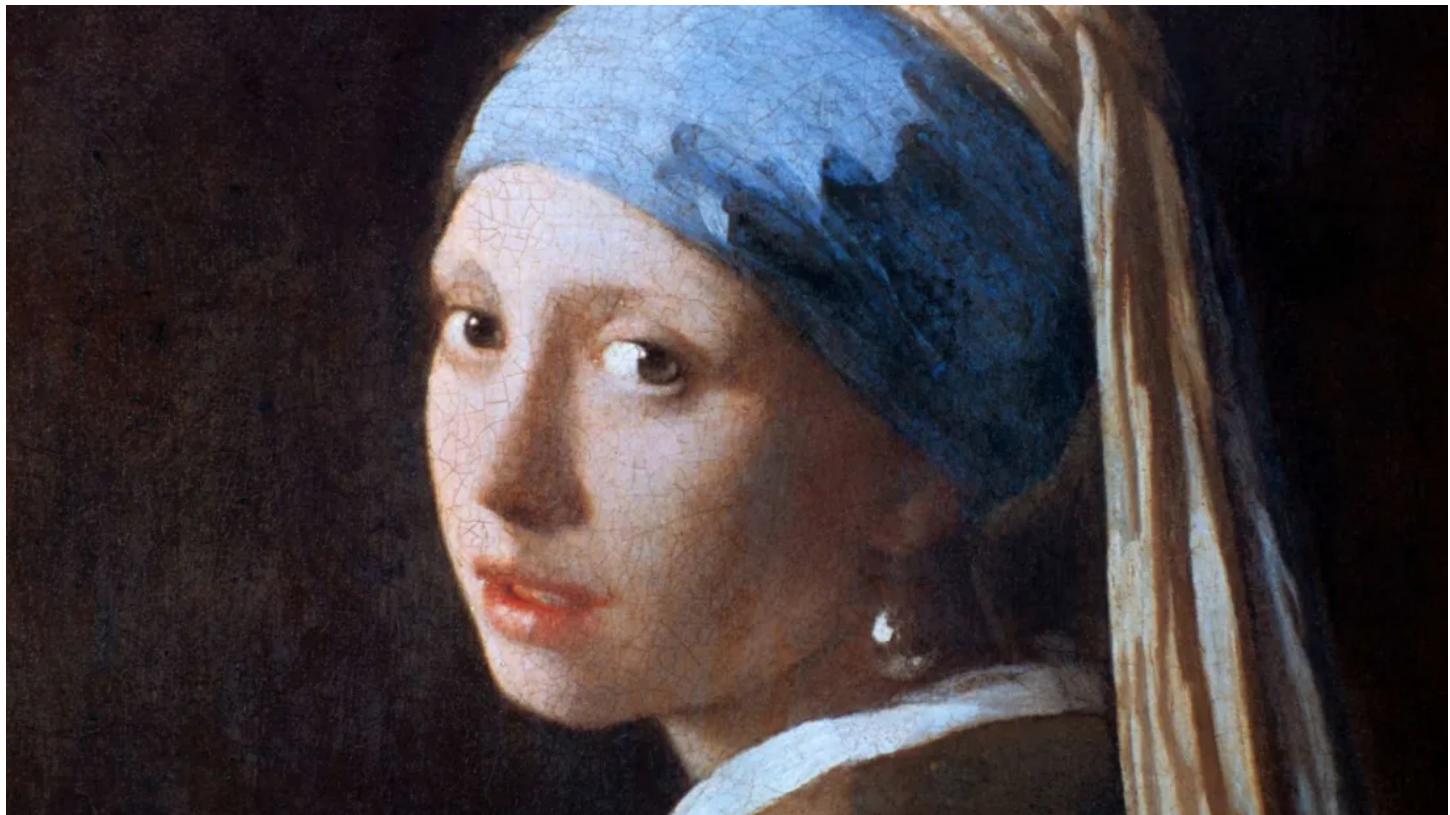
the great-great-great-niece of Napoleon's second wife, Archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria. Remarking on the connection, he said: "When I met Olympia, I plunged into her eyes and not into her family tree." Proof, if anything, that he inherited his great-great-great-uncle's silver tongue.

7 AND 8. HIDEKI TOJO'S GREAT-GRANDSON AND HARRY S. TRUMAN'S GRANDSON ARE LOOKING TO ATONE.

Hideki Tojo was Japan's Prime Minister during much of World War II, before being executed as a Class-A war criminal in 1948. Today, his great-grandson, Hidetoshi Tojo, an entrepreneur, is interested in making amends. According to The Associated Press, "[he's] reached out to Clifton Truman Daniel, grandson of wartime U.S. President Harry S. Truman" and has discussed working together on different projects to bring people together.

"Reaching full reconciliation all at once would be difficult," Tojo said in 2015, according to the Miami Herald. "But I'm sure we can build understanding, if we can respect each other, and that would

For his part, Clifton Truman Daniel, the descendant of a controversial figure in his own right, currently advocates for the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and is a vocal supporter of nuclear disarmament.

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Johannes Vermeer's *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, circa 1665.

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ART

Researchers Discover New Details In Vermeer's Girl

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/71983/brief-history-snow-globes>

20/25

Researchers Discover New Details in Vermeer's Girl With a Pearl Earring

BY ELLEN GUTOSKEY

MAY 1, 2020

In 2018, the Mauritshuis gallery in The Hague, Netherlands, gathered an international team of researchers to take part in its “Girl in the Spotlight” project, which aimed to unlock the secrets of Johannes Vermeer’s famed *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, circa 1665.

Their recently published findings reveal many intriguing details about Vermeer’s artistic process and the artwork itself, though the identity of the painting’s enigmatic subject remains a mystery.

Using X-rays and other advanced imaging techniques, the researchers discovered Vermeer depicted the girl in front of a faint green curtain—not an empty dark background—and even painted eyelashes on her eyes.

The Girl in the Spotlight - Cha...



As The Guardian reports, scholars in the past have cited both the lack of eyelashes and the blank background as

support for the theory that Vermeer was painting a conceptual, idealized image of a girl, so these newfound features could be evidence that an actual person posed for him in a specific setting. And, according to head researcher Abbie Vandivere, it's not entirely a bad thing that we still don't know who that person is.

"It is good that some mysteries remain and everyone can speculate about her. It allows people their own personal interpretation of the girl; everyone feels their own connection with the way she meets your eyes," she told *The Guardian*. "The fact that she is still a mystery keeps people coming back and keeps her exciting and fresh."

While we're all pondering the puzzling origin of one of the most captivating models in art history, there are plenty of other fascinating revelations from the Mauritshuis investigation to talk about, too. For one, the Dutch artist evidently spared no expense in bringing *Girl With a Pearl Earring* to life: the raw materials he used to create various colors in the painting came from just about everywhere, including England, Mexico, Central America, and maybe even Asia or the West Indies.

Ultramarine, a blue pigment derived from lapis lazuli (an export of what's now Afghanistan), which Vermeer used for the girl's headscarf and jacket, was more valuable than gold at the time.

The Girl in the Spotlight - Pig...



The study also shed light on Vermeer's painting methods. He began with broad brush strokes of brown and black paint, layering the girl on top of the background, and then made slight adjustments to her ear, the back of her neck, and the top of her scarf.

If "Girl in the Spotlight" has proven anything, it's that there's always more to discover about a work of art—and that's just what the Mauritshuis intends to do.

"Please know that this is not the end point of our research, but an intermediate station," Mauritshuis director Martine Gosselink said in a press release. "The collaborations are growing, and so is the desire to find out more."

As you wait for more information to come to light, here are 15 fascinating facts about *Girl With a Pearl Earring*.

[h/t The Guardian]

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