

**News Release
Public Information
Department**

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New Presentation of American Art in Luce Center for American Art at Brooklyn Museum of Art Designed to Enhance Visitor Experience

To expand and enhance the visitor's experience of American art, the Brooklyn Museum of Art has undertaken a major reinstallation of its American art holdings, considered one of the great collections of its kind in the world. The new presentation will integrate, for the first time, important objects from the Museum's exceptional collections of paintings and sculpture, decorative arts, Spanish colonial art, and Native American material. *American Identities: A Reinterpretation of American Art at the BMA* which will go on long-term view on September 7, is the first phase in creating the Luce Center for American Art. It will be followed in 2002 with a new public study center adjacent to the existing galleries that will make available to the public an additional 3,000 objects.

American Identities will be installed in 12,000 square feet of gallery space on the fifth floor of the Museum's East Wing will include nearly two hundred paintings, sculptures, and works on paper ranging from colonial portraits to distinguished works by artists such as John Singleton Copley, Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Eakins, Childe Hassam, and John Singer Sargent, to twentieth-century paintings by Stuart Davis, Ad Reinhardt, Richard Diebenkorn, Barbara Kruger, and others. These works will be complemented by more than 125 related holdings representing the depth and quality of the Museum's Decorative Arts collections, among them furniture, ceramics, silver, Tiffany objects, textiles, Spanish colonial material, and Native American objects.

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The installation of American Identities: A Reinterpretation of American Art at the BMA will be thematic and intended to present the concerns of daily life as expressed and reflected in works of art. It will also include contemporaneous photographs; and four film and video stations throughout the galleries, where short period films related to the themes will play on a continuous loop. Text panels will explore each of the themes and for the first time, descriptive labels will accompany many of the individual works, as well as statements from “new voices” such as artists and members of the Museum’s community, and commentary from period literature. Highlights from the collection will also be included in an audio tour of the entire permanent collection that is planned for the near future.

The new presentation will begin with an **Orientation Section** that will include Asher B. Durand’s *The First Harvest in the Wilderness*, Francis Guy’s *Winter Scene in Brooklyn*, which illustrates Brooklyn’s racial diversity in the early 19th century and was one of the first works to enter the collection; Georgia O’Keeffe’s rendering of the Brooklyn Bridge; and a basket made by the last living Brooklyn Canarsie Indian.

From Colony to Nation will explore the transformation of colonial societies into an emerging nation in search of a symbolic and stylistic identity. Works on view will include portraits by painters such John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, and Charles Willson Peale, along with objects including an 18th-century silver tankard made in New York; a pair of early 19th-century Sevres vases adorned with portraits of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and a door and doorframe from a Brooklyn house, as well as Spanish colonial material.

Inventing American Landscape will deal with the development of the American tradition of landscape painting in the 19th century and its continuing role in expressing the national identity. Among the works in this section will be Albert Bierstadt’s monumental *A Storm in the Rocky Mountains-Mount Rosalie* and Thomas Cole’s *A View of the Two Lakes Mountain House, Catskill Mountains Morning*, along with such 20th-century works as Arthur B. Dove’s *Flat Surfaces*; Richard Diebenkorn’s non-objective *Ocean Park No. 27*; and Pat Steir’s *Everlasting Waterfall*.

Home Life, which will explore how Americans have defined their daily customs from the early Republic to the present, will include works such as George Caleb Bingham's genre frontier landscape *Shooting for the Beef*; Eastman Johnson's urban interior *Not At Home*; Larry Rivers's *July*; and Florine Stettheimer's evocation of ennui, *Heat*; a Herter Brothers Mantel from the Sloan Griswold House that has not been on view for a quarter century; along with 19th- and 20th century still-life paintings; household objects and furniture; and works by women of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The visual culture of the Civil War is examined in **A Nation Divided**. Included will be Alexander Pope's *Emblems of the Civil War*; Eastman Johnson's *Ride for Liberty*; Hiram Powers's masterwork in the history of American Neoclassical 1869 sculpture, *The Greek Slave*, which came to be interpreted as an expression of anti-slavery sentiments; and related contemporary works such as Melvyn Edwards's *Lynch Fragment*.

Post Civil War expansion of American worldliness and the fascination with the exotic are dealt with in the section **Crossing Borders**. The new and energetic eclecticism in artistic styles and subjects will be represented by works such as Frederic Church's *Tropical Scenery*; William Merritt Chase's *The Moorish Warrior*; and Edwin Lord Weeks's *The Old Blue-Tiled Mosque Outside of Delhi, India* as well as by objects such as a chest of drawers in the Japanese style made of woven cane, bamboo, and brass, which was sold on Fulton Street in Brooklyn,

Art Making is an examination of the artistic process from folk art to academic figure styles and will include material as diverse as Edward Hicks's *The Peaceable Kingdom*; the African American folk art sculptor William Edmondson's *Angel*; Louise Bourgeois's *Decontractée*; Gaston Lachaise's monumental *Standing Woman*; Alex Katz's *Ann*; the folk art *Giraffe Head*; a Kwakiutl male potlatch figure; and a side chair decorated with gold stenciled swans.

The Centennial Era, examining visual culture from the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia through the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, will include George Inness's *Sunrise*; Winslow Homer's *In the Mountains*;

Augustus Saint-Gaudens's *Amor Caritas*; Cheyenne ledger book drawings; the Union Porcelain Works masterpiece, *Century Vase*, which was exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and depicts icons such as bison heads and the American eagle; as well as Native American ceramics, clothing, and basketry.

Modern Life will focus on the transformation of American life and landscape through technology, urbanization, and successive waves of immigration. This evolution was manifested in representations of industry and cities, the introduction of a machine aesthetic, and new artistic methods and styles. Among the works in this section will be new interpretations of natural forces such as Adolph Gottlieb's *Premonition of Evil*; Stuart Davis's abstract masterpiece *The Mellow Pad*, which captures the movement of the jazz music he loved; Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (We Are Notifying You of a Change of Address)*; and objects such as Norman Bel Geddes' *Skyscraper Cocktail Set*; a 1930s RCA Victor portable phonograph; and a Frank Lloyd Wright side chair.

This project will be organized by a team of BMA curators: Teresa A. Carbone (Project Director), Dr. Linda S. Ferber, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of American Art and Chair of the department of American Art; Dr. Barbara Dayer Gallati, Curator of American Painting and Sculpture; Dr. Barry Harwood, Curator of Decorative Arts; Charlotta Kotik, Curator of Contemporary Art; and Susan Kennedy Zeller, Assistant Curator of Arts of the Americas. Vice Director of Education Dr. Joel Hoffman will play a major role in the project. Matthew Yokobosky will design the reinstallation.

American Identities: A Reinterpretation of American Art at the BMA supported by a generous grant from the Independence Community Foundation for the Museum's project *American Identities: Building Audiences for the Future*. *American Identities: A Reinterpretation of American Art at the BMA* the first phase in creating the Luce Center for American Art.

The Brooklyn Museum of Art is recognized as a leader in the acquisition, study, and exhibition of American art with a collection distinguished by its breadth, quality, and size comprising some 2,500 oil paintings, sculptures, watercolors, and pastels that range in date from 1720 to the late 20th century. Its exceptional holdings of decorative arts are considered among the finest in the United States. Its important collection of Native American material is one of only two on view in New York City.

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www.brooklynart.org

GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$6; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$3. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits can be arranged through the Education Division, ext. 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Museum Caf open until 4 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays. Museum Libraries and Archives are open by appointment. Museum shops are open 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; till 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.