INDIGENOUS ARTISTS ART IN THE NORTHEAST BLACK ARTISTS FEMALE ARTISTS

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum reopening after nine-month closure

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Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Photo: Max Wilhelm

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (MHCAM) in South Hadley, MA will reopen to the public on September 8, 2026, following a nine-month closure for the comprehensive renovation and reinstallation of its permanent collection galleries. *MHCAM at 150: Our New Collection Galleries* is timed to coincide with the Museum's 150th anniversary later this fall. The reopening marks a transformative moment in the institution's history—one that honors its distinguished legacy while advancing a more expansive and inclusive vision of art history.

In addition to the reconfigured collection galleries, the

Ringgold's America, a two-part exhibition of the acclaimed artist's prints, and *Black Box 1: Christine Sun Kim—Classified Digits*, a single-channel video that humorously explores daily social encounters through American Sign Language.

Founded in 1876, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum ranks among the nation's oldest academic art museums. Today, its collection of more than 18,000 works of art and objects of material culture spans five continents and over 5,000 years of human creativity, serving as a vital resource for teaching, learning, and public engagement.

MHCAM at 150: Our New Collection Galleries

For the first time since the opening of the Museum's current building in 1971, the permanent collection galleries have been entirely renovated and reconceived. The new installation, *MHCAM at 150: Our New Collection Galleries*, introduces a chronological exhibition that allows visitors to encounter the Museum's encyclopedic collection through broader global narratives, cross-cultural dialogues, and newly illuminated histories. Focused presentations on regions, artistic traditions, and thematic intersections encourage dynamic conversations and fresh perspectives.

"We could not be more excited about our renovated permanent collection galleries and what they have allowed us to achieve for our audiences," said Tricia Y. Paik, Florence Finch Abbott Director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. "Our new chronological display now presents a more diverse, nuanced, and interconnected view of global artistic production across time and cultures. As we celebrate the Museum's 150th anniversary, we are also reaffirming our commitment to accessible discovery and innovative learning in our galleries."

the Museum's footprint, Hirsch reenvisioned and enhanced the existing galleries while preserving the building's exceptional architectural strengths. Originally designed in 1971 by notable architect Hugh Stubbins, the College's Art Building features beautifully proportioned galleries with soaring 14-foot ceilings. A 2002 expansion by The Hillier Group added gallery space, a teaching gallery, and other improvements.

To better serve the Museum's diverse audiences, the renovation focused on improving continuity, visitor flow, and accessibility. Four smaller galleries from the original footprint were transformed into two larger, more welcoming exhibition spaces, creating a more intuitive and cohesive visitor experience. Throughout the Museum, galleries were also modernized with new lighting and upgraded Wi-Fi. The result is a more flexible, accessible, and impactful museum experience that builds upon the strength of the building's original design.

The reopening also highlights the extraordinary depth of the Museum's holdings, pairing iconic works with objects that have never—or only rarely—been on view. Among the many highlights are Roman antiquities including a marble bust of the empress Faustina the Elder and frescoes from Pompeii; Japanese screens illustrating *The Tale of Genji*; a Song dynasty sculpture of Guanyin, the Buddhist deity of compassion and mercy; as well as a rare angel panel from Duccio's famed *Maestà* altarpiece; Surrealist paintings by Dorothea Tanning, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, and Hedda Sterne; a monumental landscape by Kay WalkingStick; and a sculpture by Nick Cave.

In addition, visitors will encounter celebrated paintings by American artists Albert Bierstadt and George Inness, including Bierstadt's *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*, the first painting gifted to the Museum upon its founding in 1876. Also featured

The reopening season will feature three special exhibitions that reflect on history, memory, and the evolving narratives of American art, in honor of both the Museum's 150th anniversary and the 250th anniversary of the U.S.

Art Histories: The Past as Provocation

September 8, 2026 – May 30, 2027
Organized in conjunction with the Museum's sesquicentennial, *Art Histories: The Past as Provocation* explores the ways contemporary artists engage with history as inspiration, critique, and reclamation. Through works that reinterpret archival imagery, challenge canonical traditions, and reframe historical narratives, the exhibition examines how artists use the past to address urgent questions of identity, representation, and cultural memory.

Featured artists include Bisa Butler, Elaine de Kooning, Audrey Flack, Martine Gutierrez, Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, Ana De Orbegoso, Paul Scott, and Kara Walker.

Faith Ringgold's America

Part One: September 8 – December 18, 2026
Part Two: January 26 – May 30, 2027
A two-part exhibition celebrates the life and work of Faith Ringgold (1930–2024), the influential artist, activist, and author whose work profoundly shaped conversations around race, feminism, and American identity, particularly during the Black Power and feminist movements of the 1960s and '70s.

Faith Ringgold's America draws from the Museum's permanent collection to examine Ringgold's lifelong engagement with history, social justice, and American myth-making. The fall presentation, from September 8 through December 18,

30, 2027, pairs Ringgold's works with related American artworks and photographs from the Museum's collection. The juxtapositions shed light on Ringgold's influences and her work's deep ties to American art and history.

Opening during the nation's 250th anniversary year, the exhibition offers a timely meditation on American history through the lens of one of the country's most acclaimed artists.

Black Box I: Christine Sun Kim—Classified Digits

September 8, 2026 – May 30, 2027
Christine Sun Kim's single-channel video installation inaugurates *Black Box*, MHCAM's new exhibition series dedicated to video and new media. In *Classified Digits* (2016), Christine Sun Kim (b. 1980) collaborates with conceptual artist Thomas Mader to humorously explore daily social encounters through American Sign Language (ASL). Throughout the video, both artists reenact moments of human engagement, to illustrate both the grammatical structure of ASL and the inherent cooperation at the root of all communication.

Visitor Information

MHCAM at 150: Our New Collection Galleries and the special exhibitions are open to the public from September 8, 2026 through May 30, 2027. MHCAM is free and fully accessible. Hours are Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. For additional information, please visit artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu.

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