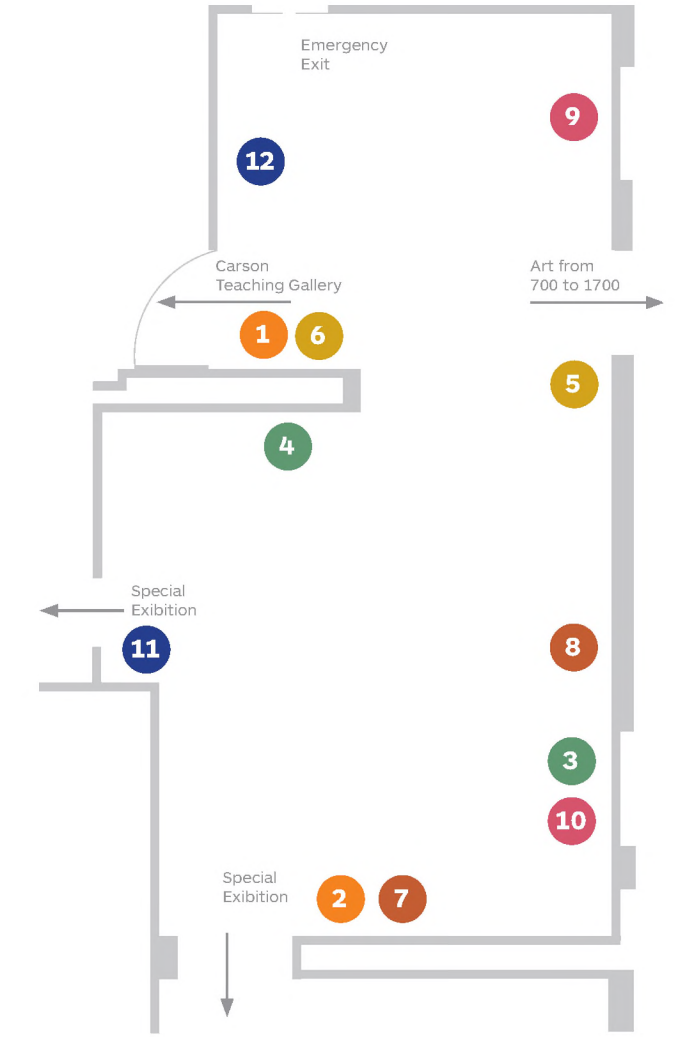
GALLERY GUIDE

ART FROM 1700 TO 1900



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MOUNT HOLYOKE
COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

GALLERY MAP





Turtle, Japan, late 19th century (1991.4.135)

INTRODUCTION

This gallery brings together art and material culture from around the globe, spanning the years between 1700 and 1900. Organized chronologically and regionally, the installation also features cross-cultural displays as well as some modern and contemporary artworks in order to expand the stories told here. This guide offers six themes that draw together objects from across the gallery, making connections between disparate times and places. For each theme, we illustrate specific objects that can be found using the floor map in this guide. The world map can help orient you to the geographies represented here and begins to convey the scope and diversity of the art on view.

This guide was made possible by the generosity of the Leon Levy Foundation.



Torah finials, India, late 19th century (2022.18.2a-b)

WOMEN AND THE MAKING OF ART

How did women artists attain education and success?

Women have always contributed to the creation of art, whether as patrons or makers, and this Museum's earlier galleries are full of objects that moved through the hands of countless unnamed women. In this gallery, artworks made by women range from unsigned weavings to works by well-known painters like Claude Hirst. Women across economic classes participated in the creation of art, as illustrated by two works: one made by Hester Bateman, born into poverty in England in the 18th century, and the other by 19th-century Bostonian aristocrat Elizabeth Boott.

Hester Bateman had few advantages of education but learned the art of silversmithing from her husband. After his death, she expanded his workshop and raised its reputation, becoming a successful craftsperson and businesswoman. She trained her children and other apprentices in her own elegant decorative style, which is exemplified in the work below **(1)**. Through tireless work and her own artistic vision, Hester Bateman became a highly sought-after silversmith. Unlike Bateman, Elizabeth Boott was born into a family of means and benefited from educational opportunities in both Boston and Paris. These included some of the first academic art classes for women, taught by the painter William Morris Hunt. The small painting illustrated here **(2)** reflects Boott's time spent in Italy, depicting a flowering tree on the outskirts of Rome. Boott was an advocate for women's art education, and urged others to offer classes for women.



1



2

IMPERIALISM

What can art tell us about the histories and legacies of empire?

The 18th and 19th centuries were marked by intertwined, competing empires. Driven by politics, religion, and trade, these empires took multiple forms. Those with the widest global reach were the transoceanic colonial empires of European nations, but there were other imperial powers, including the Qing, Ottoman, and Mughal. Many existed in some form before 1700, with their nature and borders shifting over time. This 19th-century Japanese *netsuke* **(3)** depicts Fernão Mendes Pinto, a 16th-century man who claimed to be the first Portuguese to set foot in Japan. The ivory figure invokes the lingering historical memory of earlier Portuguese imperialism at a time when Japan faced renewed contact and pressures from the rest of the world.

These centuries also saw wars of independence against imperial powers, especially in the Americas. Almost as soon as the United States broke from the British Empire, the new nation began its own campaign of expansion. Through purchases, wars, and the brutal dispossession of Native peoples, the US stretched across North America. Albert Bierstadt's *Hetch Hetchy Canyon* **(4)** celebrates the natural beauty of the western territories, yet also captures changes wrought by US expansion. Few wild elk populate the valley and, with Indigenous people displaced, only the flora testifies to millennia of Native ecosystem stewardship. By the end of the 19th century, Hetch Hetchy was no longer the frontier; it was firmly within an American empire that encompassed Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.



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4

EXPORT AND IMPORT

How did commerce drive artistic creation and exchange?

The spread of empires spurred the exchange and extraction of raw materials and the movement of luxury goods through global trade networks. Many of the objects in this gallery moved across oceans in merchant ships to satisfy the desires of wealthy consumers. Artisans in Qing-dynasty China created this bowl **(5)** for export with European tastes in mind. It features a scene from Greek mythology that was popular during the Italian Renaissance and spread globally in paintings and prints. Craftspeople and artisans of the ceramic workshops in Jingdazhen selected this image to satisfy European appetites for dishware with novel images like historical events, biblical stories, and coats of arms.

Entangled in histories of commerce and empire, the clothing in this portrait **(6)** was a statement of the wearer's taste and wealth. Before the synthetic materials found in clothing today, the prices of colorful dyes and opulent fabrics were exorbitant, in part because they had to be imported from great distances. Willoughby Lacy's vivid red suit was likely dyed with cochineal, a pigment made from crushed insects native to the Americas and exported to Europe by the Spanish Crown. The delicate color and sheen of Maria Lacy's gown are recognizable features of very fine silk. The fabric of this gown likely arrived via a different route; raw silk was exported from many places, including British-occupied India, where it was one of the most lucrative commercial goods of the British East India Company.



5



6

PICTURING NATURE

How do artists depict human relationships with the natural world?

Landscapes appear throughout this gallery as real and imagined scenes that illustrate both harmony and tension between humans and the natural world. The artists who created these landscapes used symbols and settings across a range of materials to evoke stories about leisure and escape in nature.

This Qing-dynasty bowl **(7)** features an auspicious landscape made up of symbols of prosperity and renewal. Three rams rest beneath the shade of a flowering tree—signs of spring and wishes for good fortune in the New Year. The bowl was commissioned by the imperial household at the Forbidden City in Beijing, where palace life was strictly regulated by social, political, and ceremonial protocols. The imperial family often retreated to private gardens beyond the city walls to seek relief from the pressures of governance. We might imagine that this bowl's picturesque symbols inspired similar moments of relaxation and reflection.

George Inness' landscape painting **(8)** is a different kind of pastoral scene. In the center, cows graze lazily under a tree as two people look on. Inness painted this work at his studio in Boston after a summer in New Hampshire, a popular spot for tourists and artists searching for dramatic views of the White Mountains. Here, Inness has obscured the mountains with clouds, shifting the viewer's focus to an idyllic scene in the valley below. Inness' landscapes offered his patrons, many of whom were wealthy art collectors in Boston, respite from city life during a time of rapid urbanization.



7



8

THE SIZE OF THINGS

What can size tell us about the function and audience of artworks?

Though we may not always notice it, the size of a work of art influences how we interact with it. We stand back from, and move around, large works to take them in. We lean into small works so that we can appreciate intimate details. The scale of objects in this gallery—from some of the Museum's largest to some of its smallest—reveals a great deal about why they were made and their intended audiences.

When Etienne Aubry painted his grand Neoclassical composition **(9)** for the 1781 Salon, he knew that bigger was considered better. Large history paintings like his were given pride of place in the crowded gallery, hung higher on the walls than smaller paintings of other genres. This prestigious location allowed them to be viewed above the throngs of visitors, but also required painting figures at larger scale so that the compositions could be legible from a distance.

In contrast, the Loango carved ivory **(10)** invites the possibility of holding it in one's hands, turning it over to follow the band of people winding around the hippopotamus tooth, and examining the tiny figures. Limited by the size of the portable material they were carving for a European market, the artist used the tooth's shape to their advantage, creating a spiraling composition that evokes local coil motifs from the Kingdom of Kongo. The miniature figures wear both Loango waist wrappers and European tailored jackets, reflecting the blended fashion of the region in the late 19th century.



9



10

SEEING THE INDIVIDUAL IN AMERICAN ART

Why did Americans commission art?

People across the American economic spectrum wished to own beautiful art and objects. While some of these belongings can be traced to specific people, many came into the Museum without known makers or owners, like this 19th-century portrait **(11)**. Small portraits like this became popular in this period because they could be made relatively quickly, making them more affordable for buyers—as well as more profitable for artists. From within a frame, a man's face looks out at us, serious, but with the faintest smile on his lips. The title given to the work, passed down through auctions and art dealers as it changed hands, gives us only the smallest clue to his possible identity: a free man of color from New Orleans. Whoever he was, he had the means and the desire to pay an artist to capture his likeness.

More evidence of an original owner can be found on the Museum's Hadley Chest **(12)**: the initials "EK" adorn the front. Research has traced the chest to Editha Kellogg, the great-great-grandmother of Mount Holyoke College founder Mary Lyon. The chest was created locally by skilled artisans and carved with floral designs that were originally painted black and red. Editha Kellogg would have been gifted this upon the event of her marriage and it was likely among her most valuable possessions. Both objects demonstrate the desire for beautiful and personal artworks in 18th- and 19th-century American society.



11



12

WORLD MAP



This map highlights objects in the guide to help orient you to where they were made. The years represented in this gallery include two milestone events: the foundation of the College in 1837 and the opening of the Museum in 1876. In addition to paintings and sculptures acquired as contemporary art in the 19th century, the College and Museum also accepted gifts of objects from all over the world, including Native American art.

You will see that works made by Native American artists in this gallery are dated after 1900. These artworks were made by known artists and were created for sale on the art market. Other Native American works in the Museum's collection are protected by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). We are in the process of consulting the related Tribes to return these belongings or display them with their permission.

GLOSSARY

British East India Company: a company founded by royal charter in 1600 for the exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India; it was later heavily involved in politics and acted as an agent of British imperialism in India until the mid-19th century

Forbidden City: the imperial palace complex at the center of the Imperial City in Beijing, China, constructed in the 15th century

Free man/person of color: a term used in and around New Orleans in the 19th century for free residents of African descent

Hadley Chest: a distinctive style of carved wooden chest made in the Connecticut River Valley in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, named after an example found in Hadley, MA

Medium (plural: media): the material or materials with which an object or work of art is made

Netsuke: a small sculptural object used as a toggle to attach pouches or cases (*inrō*) to kimono sashes in Japan from the 17th to the early 20th century

Neoclassicism: an artistic style popular in late 18th-century France characterized by an interest in naturalism and the art of ancient Greece and Rome

Patron: a person who financially supports an artist or who commissions or purchases a work of art from an artist or workshop

Salon: an annual or biannual juried art show held by the Royal Academy in Paris from 1667 to the late 1800s

Western: a term used beginning in the 19th century to link Europe's history and culture to the ancient cultures of the Mediterranean, now also used for regions that have a strong European cultural tradition, including the United States and Canada

IMAGE CAPTIONS

1 Hester Bateman, *George III teapot*, London, England, 1781 (2005.17.1a)

2 Elizabeth Boott, *Flowering Arbutus Tree (Castel Fusano)*, Italy, 1877 (1992.7)

3 *Fernão Mendes Pinto and kirin*, Japan, late 19th century (1986.30.62)

4. Albert Bierstadt, *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*, United States, 1875 (1876.2.I(b).PI)

5 *Bowl depicting the Judgment of Paris*, China, ca. 1750 (1986.27.21)

6 Francis Wheatley, *Willoughby Lacy and his Wife, Maria*, England, 1776 (2002.5.2)

7 *Three rams medallion bowl*, China, 1821–1850 (1984.18.5)

8 George Inness, *Saco Ford: Conway Meadows*, United States, 1876 (1883.55.I(b).PI)

9 Etienne Aubry, *Coriolanus Taking Leave of his Wife to Join the Volscians in their Attack upon Rome*, France, ca. 1780 (2014.32)

10 *Carved hippopotamus tooth*, Loango Coast, 19th century (2019.29.1)

11 *Portrait of a Young Gentleman, Thought to be a New Orleans Free Man of Color*, United States, ca. 1830–1850 (2025.2)

12 Probably Ichabod Allis and Samuel Belding Jr., *Hadley Chest*, Hatfield, Massachusetts, ca. 1700 (1923.2.I(b).SIV)