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MHC's Art Museum celebrates 140 years



All are invited to the 140th anniversary celebration on November 11.

(https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/media/images/Museum140_2_HighLight.jpg)

By [Sasha Nyary](#)

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When one of the oldest collegiate art museums in the country has a big birthday, it celebrates in big ways: hundreds of new acquisitions, gallery reinstallations, and a big birthday bash.

In honor of its 140th anniversary this November, the [Mount Holyoke College Art Museum](https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/>) is showcasing [140 Unlimited](https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/exhibition/140-unlimited?bc=node/1) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/exhibition/140-unlimited?bc=node/1>), the Art Museum's yearlong, museum-wide exhibition that features a selection of the extraordinary art that has been donated and purchased over the last five years. This infusion serves to enhance the College's commitment to the facility as a [teaching museum for its students](https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/teach-learn) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/teach-learn>).

“What makes the museum special is the range and breadth of our collection as well as the fact that we have such a rich combination of fine art and material culture,” said [Ellen Alvord '89](https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/staff) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/staff>), the Art Museum's interim director and Weatherbie Curator of Education and Academic Programs.

“We have a remarkable collection that spans 6,000 years, beginning with an ancient Egyptian vessel,” she said. “Our most recent acquisitions expand the reach of our global collection and also include

important works by women and artists of color, which is exciting because we aspire to have our incredibly diverse student body see themselves reflected in the art on view.”

In anticipation of the *140 Unlimited* exhibition, which opened in September, each of the Art Museum’s nine galleries was completely or partly reinstalled over the summer, and new wall text and labels were added throughout.

In addition, the art was reorganized in order to highlight the new works and bring out pieces that haven’t been on view in some time. The reinstallation also spotlights the museum’s material culture collection. One such physical artifact? A Sioux saddle bag borrowed from the [Joseph Allen Skinner Museum \(https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/collection/joseph-allen-skinner-museum\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/collection/joseph-allen-skinner-museum) that is now displayed next to an Albert Bierstadt painting, *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*, one of the collection’s first gifts.

Most importantly, these changes serve to better showcase the works of art for classroom use. In a given year, more than 75 faculty teaching over 100 courses representing two dozen disciplines use the facilities.

Among the nation’s oldest collegiate art museums, the Art Museum’s use as a teaching facility has been central to its mission since its first home was dedicated in 1876. W. S. Tyler, professor and president of the College’s Board of Trustees said at the time, “The objects of study in an institution like this are chiefly two: the acquisition of knowledge, and the discipline of the mind. Both these objects are accomplished by the study of Science and Art. ... A thing of beauty is a joy forever. To have seen it, to have studied and comprehended it, to have been inspired and possessed by it, not only delights the mind, but enriches and adorns it.”

The museum’s encyclopedic collection, along with its deep commitment to material culture, distinguishes Mount Holyoke’s holdings from other collegiate art museums, said [Tricia Y. Paik \(https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://www.mtholyoke.edu/media/paik-named-director-art-museum\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://www.mtholyoke.edu/media/paik-named-director-art-museum), who will become the next Florence Finch Abbott Director of the Art Museum on November 30.

“With such stellar resources, our students are truly the lucky beneficiaries,” Paik said. “They benefit from a simple casual visit or from a formal, organized class led by members of the Art Museum’s talented staff as part of our nationally respected Teaching with Art program.”

Paik plans to expand the already extensive use of the facilities as a teaching museum, she said. These uses currently occur in a variety of ways for both students and professors and include tours, class visits, research opportunities, faculty seminars, and the [Student Guide Program](#)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/student-guide-program?bc=node/1>.

The acquisitions—resulting from the *140 Gifts* campaign—are helping this expansion. More than 300 works of art were acquired through the help of more than 100 donors, among them alumnae, foundations, artists, and friends of the museum.

The works span genres and eras and include Asian sculptures and ceramics from the first to 16th centuries, an Italian pastiglia box from about 1530, a Mannerist painting depicting Judith with the head of Holofernes, a Mende dance mask from Sierra Leone, Pueblo ceramics from the 19th and 20th centuries, photographs, and global contemporary art. Many are on display in the 140 Unlimited exhibition this fall and others will appear later in the year.

The [140th Anniversary Bash](#)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180320194335/https://artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu/event/mhcams-140th-anniversary?bc=node/1>) on Friday, November 11 from 5:15 to 7:30 pm brings together the art, the community, and the interdisciplinary nature of the museum, said Susan Albert Noonan '82, chair of the Art Museum's advisory board.

“The museum will be alive with music, poetry, performances, and student art talks, showcasing creative collaborations from across campus,” she said. “This community event both celebrates the Art Museum's impressive history and shines a light on the lively and vibrant institution it continues to be today.”

The College and local communities are invited to the celebration, which features art talks, art projects, and dance and music performances. Admission is free.

Transform yourself.

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Tuesday, November 8, 2016 - 11:30am

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