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Three new exhibitions now on view at the Walters Art Museum highlight new perspectives

By Jose Villarreal



Vase with Hundred Treasures Motif, Chinese (Artist). 19th-century, Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Porcelain with overglaze enamels and applied molded decoration.

BALTIMORE, MD.- Three exhibitions open at the [Walters Art Museum](#) this Winter, providing visitors with new ways to experience works in the museum's expansive historic collection. Selections From the North American Collection: People And Places; Objects Of Curiosity: What Will We Discover?; and Stitched Memories: Celebrating Elizabeth Talford Scott are now on view at the Walters. These exhibitions reveal new conservation and curatorial insights, celebrate Baltimore artists, and provide visitors the opportunity to experience works that have previously not been on view to the public.

The Walters collection spans seven millennia, from 5,000 BCE to the 21st-century, and encompasses 36,000 objects from around the world. This trio of exhibitions, featuring paintings, ceramics, sculptures, fiber work, and more, demonstrates the ability of the museum to engage visitors with a variety of compelling stories told through its permanent collection.

"Connecting people and art is the mission of the Walters, and each of these exhibitions realize that goal in a different way. Selections from the North American Collection: People and Places delves into the cultural production of American artists during a period of shifting dynamics in the country; the mysteries on display in Objects of Curiosity: What Will We Discover? brings to life the unifying thrill of unearthing new facets of complex art objects; and the partnerships with local artists and institutions activated in Stitched Memories: Celebrating Elizabeth Talford Scott means that we can welcome new visitors into the Walters' community," said Julia Marciari-Alexander, Andrea B. and John H. Laporte Director. "Juxtaposing recent acquisitions and works by contemporary artists with historic objects allows us the opportunity to reflect on and speak to the diverse and evolving nature of our region and our collection, while encouraging audiences to forge new connections to the art we steward."

Selections From the North American Collection: People and Places

Bringing together paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and silver, Selections from the North American Collection: People and Places shows the variety of North American artists working during the 19th

century.

Curated by Jo Briggs, Jennie Walters Delano Curator of 18th- and 19th-Century Art, and Earl Martin, Deborah and Philip English Curator of Decorative Arts, Design, and Material Culture, with assistance from Kristen Nassif, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow, the exhibition touches on the way that artists from North America drew inspiration from diverse places and cultures at home and abroad, whether the Hudson Valley, the western frontier of the United States, Japanese ceramics, or the gardens of India.

“The 19th century witnessed violent and dramatic change in the United States that still resonates today. Although it might not be obvious at first glance, this history shaped the paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and silver seen in this exhibition,” said Jo Briggs, Jennie Walters Delano Curator of 18th- and 19th-Century Art. “We are thrilled that several artworks here are on view for the first time, including a painting by Sandford Gifford that required a lengthy and complex treatment in the Walters Conservation Lab. The 16-work exhibition also includes one of the first paintings acquired for the museum’s initial collection, a landscape by Asher B. Durand, and one of the most recently acquired works, a vase made by Baltimore ceramics factory D.F. Haynes and Company. In fact, about a third of the works were either made in Baltimore or are by artists from Baltimore.”

Other standout pieces in the exhibition include an early 19th-century portrait by Baltimore-based painter Joshua Johnson and a mid-century bust by Edmonia Lewis, along with works by Robert Seldon Duncanson and Henry Ossawa Tanner.

Objects of Curiosity: What Will We Discover?

Objects of Curiosity: What Will We Discover? presents objects long held in the Walters collection that members of the curatorial and conservation staff have unanswered questions about. Curated by Lisa Anderson-Zhu, Associate Curator of Ancient Mediterranean Art, the second phase of the exhibition answers the questions asked in the first, which opened September 2023.

Works are grouped by one of four questions: What is this? Why does it look like this? Is it real? and Where does it belong? In addition to answered questions, visitors also discover even more works that have inspired curiosity in staff members. This iteration includes 18 additional works, many of which have never been on view, and features fragments of an Egyptian glass shrine, monumental vases, Bust of a Napoleonic Military Figure and more. Visitors can also view the Walters’ Copy of the “Mona Lisa.”

Head of Hatshepsut, which was recently studied in the Walters Conservation Lab, was included in the “Is it real?” section of the exhibition’s first phase. Over the course of several months, the object was examined by curators and conservators to determine its authenticity—or, whether it is a product of the time, place, and culture that experts believe it to be from.

Testing results found unusual amounts of zinc and barium in the limestone and pigments used to color the head, likely indicating that modern materials were used to create it. Experts in Egyptology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art found that the shape of the cobra and headcloth are not similar to other representations of Hatshepsut or to statues from that period, making the object a possible fake. Because of these new discoveries, Head of Hatshepsut is not likely to be on view to the public beyond Objects of Curiosity—except in displays that focus on art forgery—though the work will be used to better understand 20th-century fakes of ancient Egyptian art.

“Asking questions about objects and expanding our understanding of them is a constant process in the museum, continuing far beyond an exhibition run,” said Lisa Anderson-Zhu, Associate Curator of Ancient Mediterranean Art. “Curating can have an element of investigative work, which can be fun,

but critically it's also how we refine and update our knowledge of artworks. We want to give visitors an opportunity to engage with the works in a way that recognizes the questions they may commonly have about works of art and about how we do our jobs as curators."

Through interactives in Studio 1 West and the galleries, visitors can learn more about the research process and submit their own curiosities about the works on view.

Phase one of Objects of Curiosity: What Will We Discover? opened with 11 works, including Standing Warrior Holding a Sword, Table (Tabouret) with Enthroned Prince and Courtiers, and Mirror with Female Figure and Engraved Scene.

Stitched Memories: Celebrating Elizabeth Talford Scott

Stitched Memories: Celebrating Elizabeth Talford Scott invites visitors to experience the artworks of Elizabeth Talford Scott (1916–2011). A Baltimore artist, Talford Scott used quilts and other textiles to tell stories and to preserve memories.

Twenty-five years ago, the Maryland Institute College of Art's (MICA) inaugural Exhibition Development Seminar (EDS) organized a landmark retrospective of Elizabeth Talford Scott's vibrant mixed-media fiber works. Now, EDS students, guided by MICA instructor Deyane Moses, have organized the Elizabeth Talford Scott Community Celebration, bringing together five museums and four universities across Baltimore City that have a significant history with the artist and/or EDS for a reunion of Talford Scott's work. The Walters exhibition is part of the larger No Stone Left Unturned: The Elizabeth Talford Scott Initiative.

Curated by EDS students Kendra Brewer and Sasha Kramer *Stitched Memories: Celebrating Elizabeth Talford Scott* reveals how materials keep memories alive in an intimate, multi-sensory exhibition that aims to expand the recognition of Talford Scott's art.

"Memory is a constant theme in Talford Scott's work, so we wanted to provide an opportunity for people to reflect on their own memories and how they relate to materials in their own lives," said Sasha Kramer, EDS Student-Curator. "Finding personal connections within the work is a major focus of the exhibition and, ultimately, we hope visitors come away with an appreciation for the intimate nature of fiber art and an understanding of how their own lived experiences can be translated into art, similar to how Talford Scott used her experiences to create the works on view."

Visitors can see the works *Chinese Pillow* and *Cloud Collar Fantasy* by Talford Scott alongside *Woman's Ceremonial Collar*. On view for the first time, *Woman's Ceremonial Collar* from the Walters collection of Asian art is similar to Chinese textiles that Talford Scott used to create her pillows. The Walters collection provides a unique opportunity to place these works in conversation.

"We wanted to give visitors the experience of meeting and having a conversation with the artist," said Kendra Brewer, EDS Student-Curator. "Talford Scott's work has such individuality because of the way she incorporated unconventional materials. She's a unique artist and her art—and fiber work in general—has largely been overlooked by the museum world. This exhibition is a chance to uplift Talford Scott's legacy, while also bringing together different institutions around the city to offer new perspectives on her work."

A touch interactive featuring materials made by Sarah Zenobia Barnes, Studio Manager and MICA instructor, is also included in the exhibition. The interactive includes different types of fabrics as well as buttons and rocks to simulate the feel of Talford Scott's materials, providing visitors with a tactile experience of the artist's work.