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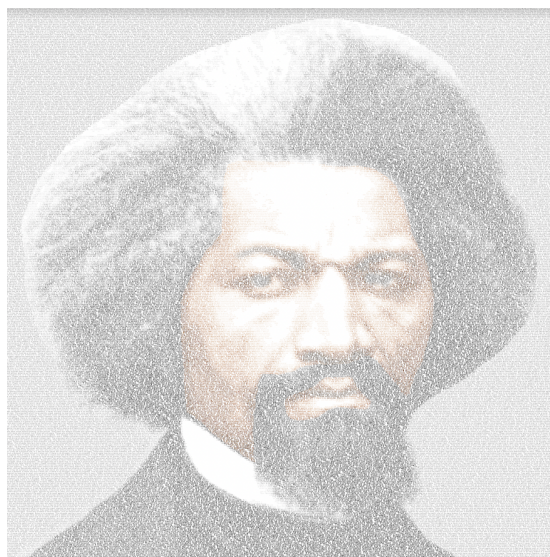
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**Major Reinstallation of *Seeing America: 18th & 19th Century*
Galleries**

*Opening March 9, Renovations Present 30 New Artworks, Including Two Site-Specific
Installations, Alongside the Museum's Historical American Art Collection*



February 10, 2023 — **The Newark Museum of Art** is pleased to announce it has completed reinstallation of its *Seeing America: 18th & 19th Century* galleries. The newly reinterpreted and renovated galleries present fresh perspectives on American art, using slavery and Black history as a

lens to foreground issues of race, representation, and power in America. The galleries will open to the public on **March 9**.

In order to address the erasure of Black and Native histories in American art, this long-term installation integrates new commissions alongside both contemporary and historical artworks from the Museum's collection. This marks the first time the Museum's historical galleries have been fully reimagined since 2001. It's also the first time the historical artworks are placed in dialogue with living artists of color. Offering new themes, such as Black abolitionism, the politics of representation, and enslaved labor, *Seeing America* kindles a unique collaboration between contemporary artists and the Museum's canonical holdings, context that is often absent from traditional curatorial models in American art.

"The history represented in 18th & 19th century American art is, by its nature, deeply colonialist and Eurocentric, while slavery and the experiences of Black and Indigenous people are largely absent or misrepresented," said **Tricia Bloom, Senior Curator of American Art**. "The question we're asking with *Seeing America* is 'how can we address these erasures?' The new galleries disrupt conventional narratives by bringing in contemporary artists of color, voices from the community, and critical perspectives."

Comprising nearly 80 artworks, the suite of eight connected galleries draws largely from the Museum's holdings and also features objects that highlight the outgrowth of the transatlantic slave trade and the African diaspora. Some of the newest additions include a 19th century stoneware jug by the enslaved Edgefield, South Carolina potter Dave (later recorded as David Drake), a revisioning of Mount Vernon by multidisciplinary artist Ron Norsworthy, and 10 artworks from Adebunmi Gbadebo's series *True Blue: 18th Hole*. Her series comprises Black human hair, cotton fibers, indigo dye, and other mixed media to honor the enslaved people of True Blue Plantation in South Carolina.



Two site-specific installations were also commissioned for the galleries, including artist Leon Morton's text-based, new media portraits, *Rev. Richard Allen, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass* (2022) from the series *Freedom Portraits*. Both decorative and conceptual, printmaker Terence Hammonds' *Black Abolitionists Wallpaper* (2022-23) provides a provocative setting for Hiram Powers' *The Greek Slave*, one of the most well-known marble sculptures of the nineteenth century.

"For generations, American art collections in museums have mirrored art historical models, revering almost exclusively Euro-American subjects and artists," said **Linda C. Harrison, Director and CEO**. "We're excited to finally welcome galleries that reframe and interrogate the American art

canon by bringing modern and contemporary artworks by artists of color into the same galleries with historical examples and material culture.”

The physical renovations are also paired with new themes, fully bilingual labels, and a number of engaging visitor experiences. These include a space for visitors to share their written responses, a reading nook to view antiracist books, and the opportunity to make an abolitionist bookmark. The American Voices program, launched in 2019, invites members of the community to create a wall label in response to an artwork on view. The new American Voices labels include texts by Noelle Lorraine Williams, Margie “Mia X” Johnson, Catherine McKinley, and Roger C. Tucker.

In conjunction with the reopening of *Seeing America*, the Museum will also host Community Day: [HerStory/Our Story](#) on March 11, celebrating the newly unveiled Harriet Tubman monument in Harriet Tubman Square with live performances, art-making activities, a fashion show, tours of the galleries, and more. Visitors can enjoy free general admission to the Museum all day during Community Day. For more information on HerStory/Our Story and *Seeing America 18th and 19th Century* galleries, please visit the Museum’s website.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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About the Newark Museum of Art

Founded in 1909, The Newark Museum of Art (NMOA) is the largest museum in New Jersey and ranks twelfth nationally in collection size, with more than 130,000 artworks and significant holdings of science and natural history. The NMOA is committed to the values of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion by responding to the evolving needs and interests of diverse audiences through participation, visitor experiences, and community engagement.

From the ancient world to contemporary art, the Museum boasts a renowned collection of exceptional quality and depth, spanning concentrations in the Arts of Global Africa; Arts of Global Asia, featuring a Tibetan Buddhist altar; Arts of the Americas; American Art, with a particular strength in Native American art; Decorative Arts; Arts of the Ancient Mediterranean; and Science.

With a focus on welcoming everyone with inclusive experiences that spark curiosity and foster community, the NMOA offers groundbreaking exhibitions, engaging programming, a research library with 60,000 volumes, paid internships, and impactful local and global partnerships. A four-acre campus includes The Ballantine House (1885), a National Historic Landmark; the Ward Carriage House (1860); the Old Stone School House (1784); the Alice Ransom Dreyfuss Memorial Garden; and Horizon Plaza. Under the leadership of Director and CEO Linda C. Harrison, the NMOA has launched an era of transformation to create an engaged citizenry by reimagining the role of the art museum in the 21st century.

Image caption 1: Leon Morton, *Frederick Douglass*, 2022, from the series *Freedom Word Portraits*. Algorithmic digital drawing, 26 ½ x 26 ½ in. (67.31 x 67.31 cm). Purchase 2023 Helen McMahon Brady Cutting Fund 2023.2 © Leon Morton

Image caption 2: Adebunmi Gbadebo, *TrueBlue, 18th Hole: Clarinda*, 2020, from the series *True Blue*. Black human hair, cotton fibers, denim, indigo dye, blue pigments, silk screen printing on rice paper, 30 1/8 x 25 1/8 x 2 ½ in. (76.5 × 63.8 × 6.4cm) each. Purchase 2021 Collections Exchange Fund 2021.7.1. ©Adebunmi Gbadebo