



Smithsonian American Art Museum

## **The Object of Civility and the Art of Politeness in British America (1740–80)**

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My dissertation examines the way that objects created and maintained civility in colonial America. Using portraits, cityscapes, dressing tables, and other goods, the project employs visual and documentary analysis to uncover objects' function in creating the civil self. Civility, defined during the period as politeness and freedom from barbarity, was an interior state achieved through exterior appearance. This project employs an Atlantic World approach to explore the ways that colonists used objects to enact and to monitor their civility for themselves and an imperial audience. My dissertation argues for the importance of transatlanticism in the study of colonial America, moving beyond a nationalistic viewpoint to understand colonial objects' role in carving out a polite space at the margins of empire.