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Fact Sheet Smithsonian American Art Museum

Director: Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director

Total Full-Time Employees: 124

Approximate Number of Artworks: 43,000

Visits (2013): 1.2 million (total includes attendance for both its main building and its Renwick Gallery)

The Smithsonian American Art Museum, the nation's first collection of American art, is an unparalleled record of the American experience. The collection captures the aspirations, character and imagination of the American people throughout three centuries.

Collections

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is the home to one of the largest and most inclusive collections of American art in the world. Its artworks reveal America's rich artistic and cultural history from the colonial period to today. More than 7,000 artists are represented in the collection, including major masters such as John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, Mary Cassatt, Georgia O'Keeffe, Edward Hopper, Joseph Cornell, Jacob Lawrence, Helen Frankenthaler, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, David Hockney, Jenny Holzer, Lee Friedlander, Roy Lichtenstein, Nam June Paik, Irving Penn, Martin Puryear, Robert Rauschenberg and Bill Viola. In recent years, the museum has strengthened its commitment to contemporary art, and in particular media arts, through curatorial appointments, endowments, awards, acquisitions and commissions.

The museum has been a leader in identifying and collecting significant aspects of American visual culture, including photography, modern folk and self-taught art, African American art, Latino art and video games. The museum has the largest collection of New Deal art and exceptional collections of contemporary craft, American impressionist paintings and masterpieces from the Gilded Age.

Two Historic Buildings

The museum's main building, a National Historic Landmark located in the heart of Washington's downtown cultural district, has been meticulously renovated with expanded permanent-collection galleries and innovative public spaces. Begun in 1836 and completed in 1868, it is one of the oldest public buildings constructed in early Washington and is considered one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States. The major renovation (2000-2006) revealed the full magnificence of the building's architectural features, including porticos modeled after the Parthenon in Athens, a curving double staircase, vaulted galleries, large windows and skylights as long as a city block.

The museum shares its main building with the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery; both museums share entrances at Eighth and F streets N.W. and Eighth and G streets N.W., as well as the Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, the Lunder Conservation Center and the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard, a

public gathering space designed by the world-renowned architectural firm Foster + Partners, which features a café and free public wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi).

The Renwick Gallery, a branch of the Smithsonian American Art Museum that showcased the best craft objects and decorative arts from the 19th century to the present, is closed for renovation. The building housing the Renwick Gallery is located steps from the White House in the heart of historic federal Washington. The Second Empire-style building, a National Historic Landmark, was designed by architect James Renwick Jr. in 1859 and opened as a museum in 1874. It became the home of the museum's craft and decorative arts program in 1972. The current renovation, the first comprehensive restoration of the building in 40 years, will provide completely renewed infrastructure, enhanced historic features and other upgrades that will make the Renwick Gallery a 21st-century destination attraction.

Innovative Public Spaces

The Luce Foundation Center for American Art, a study center and visible art storage facility, displays approximately 3,000 artworks from the museum's permanent collection in a three-story skylight space. A variety of programs are offered in the center, including themed scavenger hunts for children, a weekly sketching workshop and Art + Coffee tours and musical performances. Ten award-winning interactive computer kiosks provide the public with information about every object on display and include discussions of each artwork, artist biographies, audio interviews, still images and nearly 70 videos created exclusively for the center. Audio tours with more than 180 stops can be accessed through a cell phone, iTunes or free MP3 players available at the center's information desk. Free public wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi) is available in the center.

The Lunder Conservation Center—state-of-the-art labs with glass walls—is the first art conservation facility to allow the public permanent behind-the-scenes views of the preservation work of the museums. In addition to providing expanded space for conservation projects, the center is a destination for learning about conservation and modern techniques that conservators use to examine and treat artworks. Public outreach and interpretive programs, including weekly behind-the-scenes tours and monthly conservation clinics, are offered. In 2008, the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works awarded the prestigious Keck Award to the Lunder Conservation Center. This facility is shared by the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery.

Connecting Online

The museum has been engaging audiences online since 1993 when it launched one of the earliest museum websites through America Online; its stand-alone site, americanart.si.edu, was launched in 1995. The museum now uses an array of social media sites, including Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Flickr, iTunes U and ArtBabble to connect with online communities. In 2005, the museum debuted "EyeLevel," the first blog at the Smithsonian, which has approximately 8,000 readers each month. The museum produces several podcast series, available on its website or through iTunes, which feature voices of artists, curators, visiting lecturers and students.

National Outreach

In addition to a robust exhibition program in Washington, D.C., the museum maintains a highly regarded traveling exhibition program. It has circulated hundreds of exhibitions since the program was established in 1951. From 2000 to 2005 while the museum's main building was closed for renovations, the museum organized 14 exhibitions of more than 1,000 major artworks from its permanent collection that traveled to 105 venues across the United States. More than 2.5 million visitors saw these exhibitions. In 2014, the museum is touring seven major exhibitions—"African American Art: Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Era, and Beyond," "Annie Leibovitz: Pilgrimage," "The Art of Video Games," "George Catlin's American Buffalo," "Multiplicity," "Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art" and "Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget."

The museum is a leader in providing electronic resources to schools and the public through its national education programs. The museum offers an array of interactive activities online featuring rich media assets, such as its Picturing the 1930s virtual movie theater and “Artful Connections,” real-time video conference tours. In 2012, the museum debuted Oh Freedom! Teaching African American Civil Rights Through American Art at the Smithsonian, an educational website that offers insights into the civil rights movement. The museum offers in-depth professional development programs for educators, including week-long national summer institutes in which teachers learn digital tools and teaching techniques for integrating art across the curriculum.

The museum maintains six online research databases with more than a half million records, including the Inventories of American Painting and Sculpture that document more than 400,000 artworks in public and private collections worldwide. Each year, thousands of researchers contact the museum directly for assistance, and millions of virtual visitors from across the globe use the database resources available online. “Save Outdoor Sculpture” (SOS!), a joint project between the museum and Heritage Preservation, is dedicated to the documentation and preservation of outdoor sculpture. Since 1970, the museum has hosted more than 400 scholars, who now occupy positions in academic and cultural institutions across the globe, through its highly regarded fellowship program. The museum also produces *American Art*, a peer-reviewed journal for new scholarship.

Location and Hours

The Smithsonian American Art Museum’s main building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W. above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Its Renwick Gallery, located on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W., is closed for renovation. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000. Website: americanart.si.edu.

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