



Smithsonian American Art Museum

Citizenship by Design: Art and Identity in the Early Republic

Julia Sienkewicz

Joshua C. Taylor Postdoctoral Fellow

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Although modern disciplinary practices separate art, architecture, and landscape, this project, entitled *Citizenship by Design: Art and Identity in the Early Republic*, explores a period in the United States preceding such boundaries. It considers the diverse creative practices and theoretical convictions of Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827), Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764–1820), Thomas Cole (1801–1848), and Horatio Greenough (1805–1852). By studying painting, sculpture, architecture, and landscape architecture in the context of artists who worked across these fields, this study locates meaning in the particular modes of viewing and reception these artists invoked. This project suggests that Peale, Latrobe, Cole, and Greenough all developed creative techniques that utilized the embodied experience of the viewer to transmit social and moral values. It identifies a multisensory viewing experience theorized by these artists and present in their works—a mode of viewing through which these artists believed that their art objects could alter a viewer’s character. In pursuing creative careers that juxtaposed paintings with buildings or gardens with galleries, these artists were not simply following a young nation’s economic and social caprices, but rather were working to create social change through artistic practice. Ultimately, this project suggests that these artists, who were working in a country still struggling to define itself, hoped to mold receptive individuals into ideal citizens.