

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY'S RENOWNED AMERICAN ART COLLECTION
RETURNS FOR A YEARLONG, THREE-PART EXHIBITION

Paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, prints, and photographs – including many of the Gallery's greatest treasures – document two centuries of American culture.

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery

Part One: *We the People*

July 29–December 31, 2011



John Trumbull, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, 1786-1820*. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Trumbull Collection

The Yale University Art Gallery presents the three-part exhibition *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery*. Drawing upon the Gallery's renowned collection of American paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, coins and medals, and works on paper, the exhibition seeks to illuminate the diverse and evolving American experience from the European colonial settlements of the 17th century to the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Originally organized as a traveling exhibition, it

returns to New Haven this summer with *We the People*, the first in a three-part presentation featuring more than 100 works, on view from July 29 through December 31, 2011. The second installment, *Defining the Nation*, will be on view January 31 through April 8, 2012; the third and final installment, *America Rising*, will be on view May 8 through July 8, 2012. Patricia E. Kane, Friends of American Arts Curator of American Decorative Arts, states, "Our hope is to do more than display the masterpieces of the American collection. We want to present works that span several collections, side by side, allowing the visitor to see the objects in a cultural context."

The exhibition and accompanying publication have been organized by Helen A. Cooper, the Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture, with Robin Jaffee Frank, the Alice and Allan Kaplan Senior Associate Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture; Elisabeth Hodermarsky, the Sutphin Family Senior Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; and Patricia E. Kane, Friends of American Arts Curator of American Decorative Arts, all of the Yale University Art Gallery.

Exhibition Overview

We the People begins with the arrival of the first English settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607 and explores the cultural blending that took place as a steady tide of European immigrants and enslaved

people of various religious and political affiliations brought new energies and rich cultural heritage to the objects they created in the New World. The enduring predominance of English religious traditions is reflected in works such as John Smibert's imposing portrait of *The Bermuda Group (Dean Berkeley and His Entourage)*, while the heritage of America's other cultural communities is preserved in objects including a silver beaker engraved with moralizing allegories in the Dutch tradition.

As the nation expanded across the continent, a distinctive American artistic language emerged. With the colonists' struggle for independence from the British Empire, they found their voice in paintings, prints, and decorative arts. Mass-produced broadsides and cartoons broadcast potent messages that galvanized revolutionary sentiments. After independence, expressions of patriotism such as depictions of the bald eagle and the female figure of Liberty became national symbols. Amplified by the rise of a "cult of Washington," these emblems found their way onto many domestic objects, including a stylish mantle clock from the early 1800s bearing Washington's likeness.

By the mid-19th century, the presidential race between William Henry Harrison and Martin Van Buren had sparked national interest in politics, as seen in John Sartain's lithograph of George Bingham's *The County Election* (1854), which depicts a diverse group of men gathered to vote in an election. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 left its mark on a broad range of works of art—from a simple pitcher commemorating a violent encounter between a Union officer and a Secessionist innkeeper to Winslow Homer's painting of wearied soldiers at rest—revealing the sectional loyalties of their makers. *We the People* concludes with the new nation torn apart in the aftermath of the Civil War, as seen in Thomas Eakins's portrait *The Veteran (Portrait of George Reynolds)* (1885). Eakins depicts a former student and veteran as a living monument to the war. With a visible scar on his forehead and serious mien, Reynolds conveys both the history and the anxiety of a reunified and healing nation.



Cornelius Vander Burgh, *Beaker*, 1685. Silver. Yale University Art Gallery, Mabel Brady Garvan Collection



John Smibert, *The Bermuda Group (Dean Berkeley and His Entourage)*, 1728–39. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Isaac Lothrop

Exhibition Schedule

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness:
American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery

Part One: *We the People*

July 29–December 31, 2011

Part Two: *Defining the Nation*

January 31–April 8, 2012

Part Three: *America Rising*

May 8–July 8, 2012

Exhibition Catalogue

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, copublished by the Yale University Art Gallery and Yale University Press. It contains an introduction by David McCullough and essays by Yale professors Jon Butler, Joanne B. Freeman, Howard R. Lamar, and Jules David Prown.

Audio Tour

Produced by the Yale University Art Gallery in association with Antenna Audio, a free audio tour is available for *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. The tour for the first installation, *We the People*, features commentary by Gallery curators Helen A. Cooper, Robin Jaffee Frank, and Patricia E. Kane, along with David McCullough and Yale professors Jules Prown, Robert Farris Thompson, and others.

Exhibition Support

Made possible by generous funding from Happy and Bob Doran, B.A. 1955; Carolyn and Gerald Grinstein, B.A. 1954; Mrs. William S. Kilroy, Sr.; Mrs. Frederick R. Mayer; Nancy and Clive Runnells, B.A. 1948; Ellen and Stephen D. Susman, B.A. 1962, for their special support of the audio tour; the Eugénie Prendergast Fund for American Art, given by Jan and Warren Adelson; and the Friends of American Arts at Yale, and supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Additional support for the presentation at the Yale University Art Gallery is provided by Barbara G. and James E. Duffy, B.S. 1951; Laura M. and James A. Duncan, B.A. 1975; Teresa Heinz and the Heinz Family Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. Alexander K. McLanahan, B.A. 1949; Jennifer W. Monsky, B.A. 1981, M.A. 1984, and John Monsky, B.A. 1981; Mr. and Mrs. Oscar L. Tang, B.A. 1960; and the S. Alexander Haverstick II Director's Resource Fund at the Yale University Art Gallery.

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, America's oldest and one of its most important university art museums, was founded in 1832, when patriot-artist John Trumbull donated more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then, the Gallery's collections have grown to number more than 185,000 objects, spanning the globe and ranging in date from ancient times to the present day. In addition to its celebrated collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for its important holdings of Greek and Roman art; early Italian paintings; later European art; Asian art; African art; Indo-Pacific art; art of the ancient Americas; and Impressionist, modern, and contemporary works. Located at the corner of Chapel and York Streets in New Haven, Connecticut, the Gallery is open to the public free of charge: Tuesday–Saturday 10:00 AM–5:00 PM, Thursday until 8:00 PM (September–June); Sunday 1:00–6:00 PM. Closed Mondays and major holidays. For additional information, visit www.artgallery.yale.edu, or call 203.432.0600.

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