

# NEWS



from the Worcester Art Museum

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF AMERICAN DECORATIVE ARTS COMES TO WORCESTER**

**More than 300 masterpieces from Henry Francis du Pont's remarkable  
"Collection of Collections" will be on view at the Worcester Art Museum  
November 4, 2007—April 6, 2008.**

Winterthur Museum & Country Estate, located in Delaware's picturesque Brandywine Valley, is the former family home of the legendary du Pont family. Open to the public since 1951, Winterthur displays Henry Francis du Pont's (1880-1969) magnificent collection of American decorative arts. In celebration of Winterthur's 50th anniversary in 2001, an exhibition of the rarest and most renowned objects from the museum's collection was organized for the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Now, for the first time ever, some of Winterthur's most prized possessions are traveling the nation; **An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum** will be on view at the Worcester Art Museum from **November 4, 2007 through April 6, 2008.**

### **MEDIA PREVIEW - Thursday, November 1, 3:30pm**

Tour of the exhibition followed by cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in the Renaissance Court.  
RSVP to [allisonberkeley@worchesterart.org](mailto:allisonberkeley@worchesterart.org) or 508.799.4406 x3073.

This installation presents more than 300 masterpieces from Winterthur's collection of 85,000 objects, including furniture, textiles, paintings, prints, drawings, ceramics, glass, and metalwork, all made or used in America between 1640 and 1860.

"Winterthur's celebrated collection of American decorative arts tells the story of American taste, and is most important to our nation's history," said James A. Welu, Director of the Worcester Art Museum. "In a sense, some of these objects are 'coming home,' as many of them were made in New England or were commissioned for New England homes. This exhibition is an opportunity for the Worcester Art Museum to present a rare glimpse of some of our country's most important decorative arts, as well as to highlight Worcester's own important holdings in American Art. We are most grateful to Winterthur for sharing its exceptional collection with us."

## EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION

The exhibition explores major style periods and themes that mark Henry Francis du Pont's accomplishments as a collector. Several themes run through each section, including documented works signed or labeled by their makers; English, European, and Asian sources of inspiration; and the uniquely American aspects of the works on view.

### EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOPHISTICATION

The exhibition begins with decorative arts of the earliest settlers in colonial America. Many of these works are reminiscent of Mannerist and late Renaissance designs that were popular in England and the Netherlands at the time. The showpiece of this section, an impressive 1680 court cupboard from Essex County, Massachusetts, displays fine examples of silver, pewter, and ceramic objects.

### PASSION FOR ROCOCO

This section includes outstanding pieces created by mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century artisans working in urban centers such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. The style in which they worked is commonly called Chippendale, named after the English craftsman whose design books helped disseminate a taste for extravagant curves and ornamentation. A particular favorite of Henry Francis du Pont, objects in this style conveyed true status and beauty, often rivaling foreign products. A magnificent 1769 mahogany high chest, 8 feet high, with gilded hardware, and matching dressing table and chair made *en suite* for Michael and Miriam Gratz of Philadelphia will be on view, as will five major paintings by preeminent American artists of the day.

### EAST MEETS WEST

The influence of China on 18<sup>th</sup>-century American design captivated du Pont. He collected objects that were imported from the East by wealthy colonials as well as those produced by European and English craftsmen who interpreted the Oriental motifs in their own fashion. Among the items brought to America from China were towering porcelain pagodas and enormous dinner sets of individually monogrammed porcelain made specifically for export to Europe and America. Hand-painted and printed cottons produced in India were among the most popular and influential exports from the East. Among Western interpretations of Oriental designs in the exhibition are a brilliantly lacquered, or japanned, Boston high chest of drawers circa 1750 and a tea table with Oriental fretwork galleries and stretchers.

### THE ARTS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS

Among the earliest collecting interests of Henry Francis du Pont and one of the great strengths of the Winterthur collection are the colorful decorative arts of the German settlers of eastern Pennsylvania. This section offers cupboards filled with boldly decorated pottery, chests painted and inlaid with symbolic images of flowers and birds, woven coverlets and quilts, and illuminated manuscripts called *fraktur*, which served as

paper records of births, marriages, and house blessings. Such objects, made by and for these rural communities, document various aspects of their daily lives and the wealth of their cultural heritage.

### **AMERICAN CLASSICISM**

The last section in the exhibition displays the brilliance of the classical revival in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as colonials became Americans and created their own patriotic heroes reinterpreted from French and English versions of Greek and Roman designs. One such hero was George Washington, who was depicted in scores of textiles, ceramics, paintings, and other decorative objects from this period. These images of America's first president, including John Trumbull's renowned painting, *Washington at Verplanck's Point* (1790), reinforced the concept of democracy and the birth of a new nation.

A spectacular 1790 New York sideboard is adorned with six matching tankards made by Boston silversmith Paul Revere in 1772, two mahogany urn-shaped knife cases owned originally by wealthy merchant Elias Hasket Derby, and a selection of exquisite pieces of Chinese porcelain made for the American market provide a stunning grouping. These objects demonstrate Henry Francis du Pont's quest to collect pieces with historical significance and his genius for arranging works with relation to color, proportion, and composition. Above the sideboard hangs Benjamin West's important unfinished painting *American Commissioners of the Preliminary Peace Negotiations with Great Britain* (1783-1784), a scene which heralds the official conclusion of the American Revolution.

The exhibition is organized by Winterthur and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. It is curated by Wendy A. Cooper, the Lois F. and Henry S. McNeil Senior Curator of Furniture at Winterthur. An illustrated catalogue as well as Winterthur-inspired gifts will be available in The Museum Shop.

### **EXHIBITION AND RELATED PROGRAMMING CREDITS**

**An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum** was organized by Winterthur Museum and Country Estate. Funding for the Worcester presentation was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent federal agency that grows and sustains a "Nation of Learners," because lifelong learning is critical to success. Additional support provided by Skinner, Inc., Courtyard by Marriott Worcester and WICN Public Radio 90.5 FM.

Program funding for *Treasure or Trash Day*, *Decorative Arts Symposium*, *All Things American Online Forum*, *Audio Tour*, *Teacher Institutes*, and the *Gallery Guide* was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services. *Decorative Arts Symposium*, *Audio Tour*, *Teacher Institutes*, *Amelia & Robert Hutchinson Haley Memorial Lecture*, and *Family Day* funding provided by Bank of America. Additional support for the *Decorative Arts Symposium* provided by Skinner, Inc.

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**RELATED EVENTS**

**Appraisal: Treasure or Trash Day**

*Sunday, October 28, 12–5pm*

*Lancaster Lobby, Higgins Education Wing*

*Single item appraisals: \$10 members, \$15 nonmembers*

*Up to 3-item appraisal: \$25 members, \$30 nonmembers*

*Drop-ins Welcome! Pre-registration is available by calling 508.793.4334, or 508.793.4333, or online at [www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org).*

Do you have a family heirloom passed down through generations? Maybe a great yard sale item or flea market finds that might be a treasure? Would you like to know what it is worth? Bring your special items to Treasure or Trash Day at the Worcester Art Museum. Appraisers from Skinner, Inc., Auctioneers and Appraisers of Boston and Bolton, MA will provide verbal appraisals for your items. You may have seen these appraisers on the popular PBS series the Antiques Roadshow. Please do not bring coins, stamps, jewelry or musical instruments. Good quality photographs can be substituted for large or fragile items. A sample place setting from a full set of china is all that is necessary. Arrangements can be made with Skinner's appraisal services department at 978.779.6241 for a written appraisal.

**Opening Celebration: An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum**

*Saturday, November 3, 8-11pm*

*Museum-wide*

*\$15 members, \$25 nonmembers*

*RSVP to 508.799.4406 x3105 or online at [www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org)*

Join us to celebrate the arrival of one of the premier American Decorative Arts collections in the United States from the Winterthur Museum and Country Estate in Winterthur, Delaware. Henry Francis du Pont, an advisor to Jackie Kennedy when she redecorated the White House, lovingly collected American Decorative Arts, and this exhibition showcases some of the finest examples from his personal collection. Enjoy music, hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. A party not to be missed!

**Tour: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum**

*Wednesday, November 14, 2pm*

*Saturday, November 17, 2pm*

*Free with Museum admission.*

Join Docent Emily Wolf as she takes you through an in-depth look at the culture of Early America via the exhibition An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum.

**Family Day: Celebrate America!**

*Sunday, November 18, 1-4:30pm*

*Museum-wide, enter through Lancaster Street Entrance*

*Free with Museum admission. Admission is always free for members and Youth 17 and under.*

Discover the art and culture of early America at the Museum! Held in conjunction with the exhibition **An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum**, take part in this adventure for all ages through art-making activities, performances, and much more! Family Day is sponsored by Bank of America.

**Amelia & Robert Hutchinson Haley Memorial Lecture**  
**'Bought of Nobody for Nothing': China Collecting in 19th-Century New England**

*Sunday, December 9, 2pm*

*Conference Room*

*Free with Museum admission*

Renowned American Decorative Arts curator Thomas Michie (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) will visit the Worcester Art Museum in conjunction with the exhibition **An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum**. This talk will focus on Anne Allen Ives (1810-1884), a pioneer collector who lived in Providence, and includes highlights of her counterparts in Hartford and Worcester. This insightful lecture will focus on the shift from antiquarianism to a more scholarly interest in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as reference books appeared in print and as global tourism expanded. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some of these collections were among the earliest gifts presented to American art museums. *Funding provided by Bank of America and the Amelia & Robert Hutchinson Haley Memorial Lectures Fund.*

**All Things American Online Forum: [www.worcesterart.org/wbb2](http://www.worcesterart.org/wbb2)**

Chat with other art lovers on the Museums first-ever message board. Post messages to communicate with others about the decorative arts and beyond. For more information, e-mail [martinatanga@worcesterart.org](mailto:martinatanga@worcesterart.org).

**An American Vision/Flora in Winter Afternoon Tea**

*Sunday, January, 27, 2008*

*Two Seatings: 2:30 & 3:30pm*

Visit [www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org) for more information.

**RELATED CLASSES**

Visit the website at [www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org) or call 508.793.4334 or 508.793.4333 for more information.

**Teacher's Institute: An American Vision Integrating the Decorative Arts Across the Curriculum**

*Tuesdays, September 18–December 11, 4–7pm, (Field trip: October 13)*

*\$230 members, \$250 nonmembers*

The decorative arts, those objects that are created to be both useful and beautiful, can tell us much about the times and lifestyles of their creators and users. This art education course will examine the Museum's decorative arts collection and works in the special exhibition **An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum** to discover more about the people and places of early America. The class will take a field trip to tour Pendleton House at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Students will study American decorative arts from colonial times through the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Methods of integrating the historical and cultural significance of decorative arts into classroom curriculum will be discussed and applied. A significant portion of each class will be spent in the studio learning traditional art-making techniques including faux painting, stenciling, tin-punching, decorative painting, textiles, and ceramics, and adapting them as potential classroom projects. Students taking this course for credit will be required to complete a curriculum research and lesson plan assignment.

**Sculpture After Winterthur**

*Wednesdays, September 26–December 5, 6:30–9:30pm*

*\$225 members, \$245 nonmembers*

View the exhibition **An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum** and learn sculpting techniques inspired by the decorative arts such as rendering, molding, casting, and building. Work in clay, plaster, wood, found objects, as you learn a variety of sculpture skills. All levels welcome.

**Scarlet Letters: The Decorative Arts and American Literature**

*Sunday, December 2, 1–3pm*

*\$14 members, \$17 nonmembers*

From 1640 to 1860, American literature has used descriptions of household crafts to reveal character, plot, and theme. We'll visit the special exhibition **An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum** to

explore how Colonial, Federal, and American Renaissance writers such as Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, Thomas Jefferson, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville understood the role of the decorative arts in American life and culture.

### **Decorative Arts Symposium: Collecting and Preserving Early America**

*Sunday, March 16, 2008, Time TBD*

Held in conjunction with the exhibition *An American Vision: Treasures from the Winterthur Museum*, this symposium will focus on the need to collect and preserve the cultural history of Early America. Preeminent scholars from throughout the nation will present on a variety of topics. Pre-registration required, visit [www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org) for more details.

### **About the Worcester Art Museum**

*The Worcester Art Museum, which opened to the public in 1898, is world-renowned for its 35,000-piece collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings and new media. The works span 5,000 years of art and culture. View paintings by Cassatt, Gauguin, Goya, Monet, Sargent and Whistler; admire floor mosaics from the ancient city of Antioch; see cutting-edge contemporary art; and discover the Museum's many other treasures. Special exhibitions showcase the masterworks, seldom-seen gems, and important works on loan. Enjoy a delectable lunch in the Museum Café, and browse the Shop for unique gifts and mementos.*

*Dedicated to the promotion of art and art education, the Museum offers a year-round studio art and art appreciation program that enrolls over 7,000 adult and youth students each year. Public tours are offered Saturdays at 11 a.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m., September through May. Audio tours are also available in English and Spanish.*

*Museum hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11am-5pm, Third Thursdays of every month, 11am.-8pm, and Saturday, 10am-5pm. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and full-time college students with current ID, and FREE for Members and all youth 17 and under. Admission is also FREE for everyone on Saturday mornings, 10am-noon (sponsored by Fidelity Investments, The TJX Companies, Inc. and National Grid).*

*The Museum is located at 55 Salisbury St., Worcester, Mass., easily accessible from the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), Route 290 and Route 9. Free parking is available near entrances on Salisbury, Lancaster and Tuckerman streets. For more information, call (508) 799-4406 or visit the Museum web site at [www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org).*

Electronic images available.

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Find this release online at <http://www.worcesterart.org/Information/press.html>

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# An American Vision

## TREASURES FROM THE WINTERTHUR MUSEUM

November 4, 2007 – April 6, 2008



Sideboard, New York, 1795-1805, and urn shaped knife boxes, England, 1790-1800, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1957.85 and 1957.853; tankards, Paul Revere, Boston, 1772, Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, 1957.859



John Heaton, *Magdalena Douw (Mrs. Harme Gansevoort)*, about 1740, oil on canvas, Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, 1963.0852



Needlework picture, detail, Mary King, Philadelphia, 1754, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont 1966.978, Winterthur Museum and Country Estate



High chest, 1740-1750, black walnut, soft maple, white pine; jappaned decoration; brass, Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, 1957.1084

For available images, contact Allison Berkeley at 508.799.4406, x3073, or [allisonberkeley@worcesterart.org](mailto:allisonberkeley@worcesterart.org).