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## The Met's American Wing

Adrienne Spinozzi and Sylvia Yount

when you fill this Jar with pork or beef / Scot will be there; to get a  
peace, - / Dave

These eighteen words inscribed on the shoulder of a [stoneware jar](#) collapse history, time, and place. The words are direct and concise, and the jar's impact is immediately felt: We know how this object functioned and that it held sustenance. We know a man named Scot ate from this jar and that a man named Dave created it. We know that peace was on their mind. We do not need to know about utilitarian stoneware, or the rich clay deposits in the Carolinas, or industrial slavery in the plantation economy to be humbled in the jar's presence and to feel profound admiration, awe, and anguish. This vessel by the enslaved potter and poet David Drake (ca. 1801–1870s) demands attention and recognition.



Fig. 1. Installation view of Gallery 723, The American Wing, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2026. Photo: Eileen Travell · Metropolitan Museum of Art

A relatively recent addition to The Met's collection, this powerful storage jar anchors a new introductory gallery in the American Wing (fig. 1). The centrality of its display underlines our commitment to recovering challenging and truthful narratives and to foregrounding our shared histories of displacement, enslavement, and extraction in various artworks. Highlighting over two centuries of creative expression, material innovation, and stylistic and cultural developments, the artworks in this gallery reveal the pluralities present in the American Wing's hemispheric collection—from [early porcelain](#) experiments in the British

colonies to a [distinctively carved commemoration](#) of Mexican independence, to meaningful items of Native American artistry in beadwork and [basketry](#), to Neoclassical refinement in [silver](#), along with key paintings, sculpture, and furniture. Together, these varied works provide an expansive representation of American art, one that is as diverse, imaginative, and ambitious as the vast continent that produced it.

— Adrienne Spinozzi

In 2024, The Met’s American Wing marked our one hundredth anniversary with the first major reinstallation since 2012. Refreshed galleries on three floors now reveal interconnections across the wing’s hemispheric holdings of art and design, and foreground meaningful interpretive narratives through various means.

Since the last major renovation, the department has expanded its collection with diverse artworks by African American, Asian American, Euro-American, Latin American, and Native American makers. To welcome visitors to the wing today and share a fuller scope of our holdings, two pivotal entrances to the first-floor galleries feature varied, multilayered works—from the colonial to modern periods, with select contemporary expressions—arranged in thematic contexts of “origin stories,” or founding narratives of art and history. On the second floor, six galleries were reinstalled with eighteenth-century [furniture](#) highlighting process and materiality, while a sequence of neighboring spaces display a range of paintings, sculptures, and works on paper from the late eighteenth to twentieth century, newly interpreted and recontextualized in narrative frameworks of American [identities](#), [places](#), and [temporalities](#).

The juxtaposition of the American Wing’s well-known holdings with recent acquisitions and works from other Met departments—as well as strategic [loans](#)—encourages visitors to embrace fresh transhistorical dialogues that complicate and deepen our shared knowledge of American culture. Revealing the department’s ongoing redefinition of a broadly conceived American art, the centennial anniversary offered staff and visitors a chance to consider how our evolution mirrors and is constitutive of increasingly nuanced understandings of what it means to be American, both historically and today.

—Sylvia Yount

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