

# 1776 A Nation of Artists 2026



**Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts: April 12, 2026–September 5, 2027**  
**Philadelphia Museum of Art: April 12, 2026–July 5, 2027**

## Press Preview: April 10, 2026

**Philadelphia, February 12, 2026** – The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) present *A Nation of Artists*, a landmark exhibition and collaboration with the private Middleton Family Collection, on view from April 2026 to September 2027.

Organized in conjunction with America's 250th anniversary, *A Nation of Artists* examines how artistic production in the United States has been shaped by creativity, exchange, expansion, conflict, and innovation. At PAFA, works made from the late 18th century to today will be arranged thematically to explore scenes of westward expansion, the rise of industry, and international exchange. At PMA, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2026, visitors will encounter a chronological display of American art from 1700 to 1960, revealing the global connections that spurred artistic and technological innovation, as well as makers inspired by the natural world, western expansion, and dramatic shifts in economic abundance and disparity.

Installed throughout PAFA's recently restored Historic Landmark Building and PMA's newly renovated American art galleries, the exhibition will chart America's history from 1700 to the present day through more than 1,000 paintings, photographs, sculptures, decorative arts, and more. Across both museums, more than 120 rarely seen works from the Middleton Family Collection—one of the nation's most significant private holdings of American art—will be on public view for the first time.

Collective highlights from *A Nation of Artists* will include:

- Large-scale portraiture and figurative paintings, from **Charles Willson Peale**'s self-portrait and portrait of George Washington to **Thomas Eakins**'s famous *Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (The Gross Clinic)*.
- Lush landscapes and scenes of the natural world by **Albert Bierstadt**, **Frederic Edwin Church**, **Winslow Homer**, **Rookwood Pottery**, and **Georgia O'Keeffe**
- Explorations of the Civil War period, including a monumental jar made and inscribed by the enslaved potter **Dave, who later took the name David Drake**.
- Textiles, ceramics, and sculpture by Native American artists from Haida, Hodínöhšö:ni:h (Iroquois Confederacy), Diné, Hopi, and Pueblo nations and contemporary Lenape artist **Laura Watters Maynor (Delaware Tribe of Indians, Wolf Clan)**.
- Impressionist paintings by **Mary Cassatt**, **William Merritt Chase**, **Daniel Garber**, and **John Singer Sargent**, as well as work by modern masters such as **Jasper Johns** and **Andy Warhol**.
- Contemporary artists such as **Njideka Akunyili Crosby**, **Rina Banerjee**, **María Berrío**, **Willie Cole**, **Clarity Haynes**, **Gisela McDaniel**, **Toyin Ojih Odutola**, **Catherine Opie**, **Stephanie Syjuco**, **Mickalene Thomas**, and **Kara Walker**, and many more.

"Our aspiration is that this exhibition is for everyone—no prior knowledge of art or history required," noted John S. Middleton. "We believe in the power of storytelling to connect

people and are thrilled to partner with these two storied institutions to share the works that have brought our family so much joy and inspiration. Like baseball, art has the power to bring people together and surprise us when we least expect it. With every viewing, there's something new to discover. It's an honor to help bring American art to life in a new way during this very special 250th commemoration of our country's founding."

"This is a transformative moment for PAFA and for Philadelphia," said Kristen Shepherd, President and CEO of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. "As PAFA celebrates its 220<sup>th</sup> anniversary as America's first art museum and school and the reopening of the Historic Landmark Building, we invite audiences into a renewed experience—one that reflects our storied legacy as the nation's first art school and museum, while offering a powerful setting for a reimagined installation of our collection, enriched by works from the Middleton Family Collection. In collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, we are proud to present *A Nation of Artists* in a way that is deeply rooted in PAFA's history, yet forward-looking in its exploration of what defines American art today."

"Commemorating the country's semiquincentennial and PMA's 150th anniversary, we are honored to collaborate with the esteemed Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the rarely seen Middleton Family Collection," said Daniel Weiss, George D. Widener Director and CEO of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. "A *Nation of Artists* will span three centuries of art to trace the ever-evolving story of American creativity. This exhibition, a cultural milestone, will bring together voices from around the country through innovative programs, partnerships, and scholarship."

- **For expanded details about the exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, download a supplemental guide [HERE](#).**
- **For information on the learning, engagement, and programming offered throughout the duration of the exhibition, download a supplemental guide [HERE](#).**

To learn more about *A Nation of Artists*, including exhibition details, programming, and visiting information, visit [ANationofArtists.org](http://ANationofArtists.org).

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## Notes to Editors

- *A Nation of Artists* will run from April 12, 2026 to September 5, 2027 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and from April 12, 2026 to July 5, 2027 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- A joint press preview will be held at both institutions on April 10, 2026.
- Visitors are encouraged to experience both venues, each requiring separate but discounted admission.
- *A Nation of Artists* will be accompanied by a program of live events including community murals, classes, talks, guided tours, performances, and workshops throughout the year.

## Exhibition Support

Support for *A Nation of Artists* is organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Lead support for the exhibition and programs is provided by The Middleton Family. Major support is offered by the Connelly Foundation, Citizens Bank, and The Victory Foundation. Gratitude also goes to The City of Philadelphia and Mayor Cherelle L. Parker, the Philadelphia Funder Collaborative for the Semiquincentennial, Comcast Corporation, Asplundh, the Henry Luce Foundation, Schoelkopf Fine Art Advisors, Grace and Andrew Schoelkopf, the 25th Century Foundation,

Lawrence H. and Julie C. Berger, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Nyheim, Marsha and Richard Rothman Family Foundation, an anonymous donor, and other generous supporters.

The renovation and reinstallation of the American galleries was provided by Robert L. McNeil, Jr., Leslie Miller and Richard Worley, Laura and William C. Buck, Kathy and Ted Fernberger, Joan and Victor Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Nyheim, Lyn M. and George M. Ross, Marsha and Richard Rothman, and other generous donors. Ongoing support for American Art initiatives and programs is provided by the Center for American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, established by Robert L. McNeil, Jr.

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This exhibition is sponsored by



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#### About the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Founded in 1805, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) is America's first museum and school of fine arts. A world-renowned institution, PAFA fosters the study of American art and the training of artists while offering a diverse collection of American painting, sculpture, and works on paper from the 18th century to the present day. PAFA's museum and school provide an environment for learning, critical inquiry, and making art. To learn more, visit [pafa.org](http://pafa.org).

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### **About the Philadelphia Museum of Art**

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is a national and international destination for art, but first, we are Philadelphia's art museum—for all of the many diverse communities of the city. Through our collections, exhibitions, events, educational activities, celebrations, and more, the museum is a storyteller, and we welcome everyone to be part of the story—our doors are wide open. To learn more, visit [philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org).

Instagram/Facebook/X/Threads/YouTube: @philamuseum. TikTok: @philaartmuseum.

### **About the Middleton Family Collection**

John S. Middleton, widely admired as the managing partner of the Philadelphia Phillies, and his wife Leigh Middleton, a champion in the fight to end homelessness, have been passionate art collectors throughout their nearly 50-year marriage. Presented publicly for the first time, more than 120 works from the Middleton Family Collection, assembled over five decades, will bring added depth and dimension to *A Nation of Artists*. Works not previously available for public exhibition will offer fresh perspectives on the story of American creativity and history.