

GALLERY GUIDE

**LIFE
LIBERTY
AND THE PURSUIT OF
HAPPINESS**



American Art from the
Yale University Art Gallery

SAM

GALLERY GUIDE

This guide for the exhibition *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* is divided into two sections. “Building a Nation: Historical Highlights” focuses on works of art that help illustrate key moments in 250 years of American political history. “Material and Cultural Aspirations: Artistic Highlights,” revisits that history by exploring America’s efforts to define its cultural identity.



Exhibition catalogues, featuring full-page reproductions of the paintings and objects seen here, and other memorabilia are available at the SAM SHOP.

Building a Nation

Historical Highlights



Religious persecution abroad and the desire to expand the Christian church into the **New World** were major forces in the settlement of the North American continent in the 1600s and 1700s. Diverse religious groups of Scottish, German, Dutch, Swiss and French heritage established communities along the eastern seaboard. John Smibert's group portrait shows the Scottish Bishop George Berkeley as he landed in America en route to Bermuda to establish an Anglican seminary in the New World, a feat the group never accomplished because of a lack of funds.

The Bermuda Group (Dean Berkeley and His Entourage), begun 1728, completed 1739, John Smibert, b. Scotland, 1688–1751, oil on canvas, 69 1/2 x 93 in., Gift of Issac Lothrop, 1808.1



During the mid-eighteenth century, the British closely regulated the importation of foreign goods and luxury items to the American colonists through a series of acts—the Sugar Act (1764), Stamp Act (1766) and Townshend Acts (1767). In 1773, angered by the tea tax and the British **East India Company's monopoly** on the tea trade, colonists dumped crates of tea into Boston Harbor. This event later became known as the **Boston Tea Party**. This bowl, in the shape of a Chinese porcelain rice bowl, was used to hold sugar, one of the many commodities taxed by the British.

Sugar Bowl, New York City, 1738–45, Simeon Soumaine, b. England, ca. 1660 or ca. 1685–ca. 1750, silver, 4 11/16 x 4 11/16in., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1930.1056



Interactions between colonists and Native Americans from the 1600s through the 1800s ranged from peaceful co-existence to all-out war. In 1621, Puritan English settlers—pilgrims—signed a peace pact with the Wampanoag tribe, one of the first treaties between colonists and Native Americans. By contrast, in 1830, just eight years before William John Wilgus painted this image of Captain Cold or Ut-ha-wah, President Andrew Jackson signed the **Indian Removal Act**, which removed Native American tribes living in the eastern states to federal land west of the Mississippi. From 1830 to 1840, thousands of Native Americans were forcibly removed from their homelands.

Captain Cold or Ut-ha-wah, 1838, William John Wilgus, American, 1819–1853, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in., Gift of de Lancey Kountze, B.A. 1899, 1939.39



African slavery began in colonial America in 1619 when a Dutch ship sold twenty Africans to Jamestown, Virginia as indentured servants. By the 1660s, plantation owners changed the laws and revoked contracts so that Africans could not earn their freedom. From these early years through the end of the **Civil War**, enslaved Africans fought for their freedom and struggled to maintain **connections with their African heritages**. This

cane, created in 1867, illustrates the rich cultural ties many African-Americans maintained despite years of oppression. The carvings of humans and reptiles on this cane connect to the healing arts of West Africa that survived in the traditions of many African-Americans.

Cane, ca. 1867, Henry Gudgell, American, 1826-1895, ebonized wood, 37 x 11/2 in., Director's Purchase Fund, 1968.23



The foundations of the American republic are encompassed by four documents: the **1774 Articles of Association** and the **1776 Declaration of Independence**, both of which asserted America's right to self-rule; and the **Articles of Confederation** and the **Constitution**, which established the laws of governing. Though we think of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and John Hancock as the country's most ardent patriots, it was Connecticut patriot Roger Sherman (shown here in a portrait made at the time of the Revolution) who was the only man to sign all four of founding documents. Sherman's relentless patriotism is a sharp contrast to the British loyalist views of Ralph Earl, the painter of this portrait. Earl's loyalist leanings eventually caused him to flee the American colonies just three years after he painted Sherman's portrait.

Roger Sherman, ca. 1775, Ralph Earl, American, 1751-1801, oil on canvas, 64 5/8 x 49 5/8 in., Gift of Roger Sherman White, B.A. 1899, LL.B 1902, 1918.3



During the post-Revolutionary period, American citizens looked for symbols of their new nation. Images of **liberty**, like the standing figure atop this chest-on-chest from Massachusetts, became popular decorative motifs on household items. Other expressions of patriotism like the bald eagle can be found on paintings and decorative arts items throughout this room.

Chest-on-Chest, Boston, Massachusetts, 1791, Stephen Badlam, American, 1751-1815, cabinetmaker, John Skillin, 1746-1800 and Simeon Skillin, Jr., 1757-1806, carvers, mahogany, mahogany veneer on chestnut, and eastern white pine and red pine, 8 ft. 5 1/8 in. x 51 1/2 in. x 23 3/4 in., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1930.2003



The complex history of **United States/Indian relations** encompasses stories of alliances and conflicts. Indians supported the Americans against the British in the Revolution and participated in treaty councils to bring about peaceful co-existence between Native Peoples and colonists in the **Northwest Territory**. Recognizing the important place that the Native chiefs occupied in the building of the new nation, painter John Trumbull included several of them in his great portrait gallery of founding fathers. Here he shows Hauaugaikhon, Chief of the Senecas, who sat for Trumbull in Philadelphia on the occasion of a meeting with President George Washington.

"The Infant" Chief of the Seneca Indians, 1792, John Trumbull, American, 1756-1843, oil on mahogany, 4 x 3 1/4 in., Trumbull Collection, 1832.32



In the late 1700s, American colonists began to rebel against the restrictive British rule. Frustration over British military presence in Boston erupted in the 1770s as brawls between soldiers and civilians, eventually leading the soldiers to fire on a civilian mob. The incident, later named the **Boston Massacre**, helped spark the rebellion in the British colonies that led to the **Revolutionary War**. Paul Revere, the creator of this engraving, famously rode through the streets of Lexington and Concord on April 18, 1775, warning Bostonians of invasion by the British forces.

The Bloody Massacre Perpetuated in King-Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the 29th Regt., March 1770, Paul Revere, Boston, Massachusetts, 1734–1818, hand-colored engraving, 11 1/2 x 9 3/4 in., Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan for the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1943.87



In 1786 American artist **John Trumbull** began painting a famous series of history paintings based on the principal events associated with the American Revolution. This painting of the signing of the **Declaration of Independence** has become one of his best-known paintings. Interestingly, the event that it depicts—a single day on which all the members of the Congress signed the Declaration—never happened. While the individuals depicted in the painting did all sign the Declaration and the architectural details of the room are historically accurate, the Declaration of Independence was actually signed over a period of weeks through the summer of 1776.

The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, 1786–1820, John Trumbull, American, 1756–1843, oil on canvas, 20 7/8 x 31 in., Trumbull Collection, 1832.3



Memorabilia of **George Washington** was popular during his lifetime but even more so after his death in 1799. During the nineteenth century, images of the United States' first president flooded American and global markets. In this gallery alone, coins, paintings, glassware and silverware all depict the iconic profile of George Washington. This national obsession with memorabilia of the president became known as the **“Cult of Washington.”** The figure of Washington on this mantel clock was modeled after a painting also found in this gallery, John Trumbull's *General George Washington at Trenton*.

George Washington Mantel Clock, Paris, 1809–19, Nicolas Dubuc, French, worked ca. 1809–19, gilt bronze, 18 1/2 x 14 1/2 x 5 1/2 in., Yale University Art Gallery, 2001.11



In 1839 Senbe Pieh, later known as Joseph Cinque, led fifty-three Africans in a revolt against their Spanish captors aboard the **Amistad**. The ship drifted up the coast of the United States and was seized by the Navy off Connecticut. The African captives were imprisoned in New Haven, where they were drawn by local artist John Warner Barber. In 1841 the United States Supreme Court ruled them free and they returned to Africa. The *Amistad* mutiny was one of the few successful rebellions by enslaved Africans before 1865, when **Abraham Lincoln** signed the **13th Amendment** to

the United States Constitution, outlawing slavery throughout the United States.

Sketches of the Amistad Captives: Kimbo, ca. 1840, William H. Townsend, American, 1822–1851, graphite, 6 5/8 x 5 1/2 in., Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, General Manuscript no. 335



In 1861 South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina seceded and formed the **Confederate States of America**. Confederate forces attacked the United States military at Fort Sumter in South Carolina on April 12, marking the beginning of the **Civil War**. The scene on this pitcher from 1861 commemorates the violent deaths of Union officer Elmer Ellsworth and secessionist James Jackson. The story of their deadly encounter served as an inspiration for men on both sides of the conflict to enlist.

Pitcher, Trenton, New Jersey, 1861, American, porcelain, 8 1/4 x 8 1/2 x 7 1/2 in., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1931.1843



American artist **Winslow Homer** was an artist correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* during the Civil War. He documented the daily lives of the New York regiments, focusing in particular on the boredom and loneliness of camp life. After nearly five years of fighting between the North and the South, Robert E. Lee surrendered his Confederate troops to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865 and **ended the Civil War**. In the years that followed, the United States experienced a transition from a daily life focused on war and conflict to one focused on reconstruction, growth and unification.

In Front of Yorktown, probably between 1863 and 1866, Winslow Homer, American, 1836–1910, oil on canvas, 3 3/4 x 19 1/2 in., Gift of Samuel Rossiter Betts, B.A. 1875, 1930.15

Material and Cultural Aspirations

Artistic Highlights



In the late seventeenth century, the merchant class in colonial Boston became prominent. Many strove to imitate the English upper class, by acquiring luxurious foreign imports. A growing America-based industry in decorative arts like furniture and silverware also developed to support the tastes of the merchant and other professional classes. These candlesticks, made by **Jeremiah Dummer**, the **first native-born New England silversmith**, are the earliest surviving American-made silver candlesticks known.

Candlesticks, probably 1686, Jeremiah Dummer, Boston, 1645–1718, silver, each 10 13/16 x 7 7/16 x 7 7/16 in., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1953.22.1 and 1935.234



Despite periodic conflicts like the French and Indian War and hostilities with Native Americans, by the mid-1700s the **American colonial economy** was prospering. Cities like Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Charleston served as major trade depots and manufacturing hubs and became home to many talented artists. The portraits of wealthy merchant Isaac Smith and his wife Elizabeth Storer were painted by **John Singleton Copley**, one of New England's most famous artists of the time. With sitters surrounded by the luxurious goods often found in wealthy households, such as mahogany and damask upholstered chairs, these portraits illustrate the attachment many Americans had to their material possessions.

Mrs. Isaac Smith (Elizabeth Storer), 1769, John Singleton Copley, American, 1738–1815, oil on canvas, 50 1/8 x 40 1/8 in., Gift of Maitland Fuller Griggs, B.A. 1869, L.H.D. 1938, 1941.74



Made in New York City, this couch is an expression of luxury and opulence common to decorative items in wealthy American households in the early 1800s. After the **War of 1812**, in which the United States fought the British over trade relations and the ongoing British occupation of areas within United States borders, Americans turned their backs on English design and instead looked to the **elaborate French Empire style** for artistic and aesthetic inspiration.

Couch, New York City, 1820–30, American, white pine, ash, tulipwood and cherry, 29 15/16 x 20 3/4 x 60 in., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1930.2622



By the mid-nineteenth century, American society had developed a fascination with science and a dedication to domestic education. The resulting quest for knowledge led to many **scientific innovations** including the development of photography. In 1839 the introduction of the **daguerreotype**, the first permanent or fixed photographic image, forever changed the way humans documented the world around them. Later advances in photographic technology led to innovations

like arrest-motion photography, as seen in Eadweard Muybridge's images in this gallery.

The Moon, 1864, George Frederic Barker, American, 1835-1910, albumen print, 16 3/4 x 21 1/8 in., Gift of Eleanor Wallace Hendrickson in memory of her great-grandfather, Thomas Wallace, 1993.48.1



The mid-nineteenth century marked a major moment in American art history. Expanded travel beyond the Mississippi region, spurred by advances in water and rail transportation, elevated the public's fascination with the **American landscape**. The paintings in this gallery are rich with political and cultural commentary. In this painting by Fitz Henry Lane, a seemingly simple maritime scene is actually a message about the destiny of the nation and the **forthcoming end of American slavery**. The island on the right of the composition was one of nine in Maine occupied by freed African slaves. Like many Northerners of his time, Lane struggled with the realities of "free labor" in the North and the continued existence of slavery in the South.

Lighthouse at Camden, Maine, 1851, Fitz Henry Lane, American, 1804-1865, 23 x 34 in., Gift from the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation, 1992.122.1



During the colonial era and the new nation's early years, timepieces were rarely found in American households. An inventory of thirty prosperous households in Boston, Newport and New York City in the early 1800s lists a total ownership of thirteen clocks and five watches. That changed when Eli Terry's production of shelf clocks with wooden works, rather than brass, made clocks more affordable. By the middle of the century the United States was experiencing **large-scale industrialization**, with new technologies and innovations significantly changing Americans' daily lives.

Shelf Clock, Plymouth, Connecticut, 1816-25, Eli Terry, American, 1772-1852, mahogany, yellow poplar, cherry, and white oak, 28 7/8 x 16 7/8 x 4 1/8 in., Bequest of Olive Louise Dann, 1962.31.26



During the nineteenth century the United States economy gradually shifted from agriculture to industry, marking a period of transition from manual to mechanical labor. The post-Civil War period, or **Reconstruction Era**, brought about even more rapid urbanization and extensive industrialization. During this time many **women went to work in factories** and mills. The central female figure in this painting by Winslow Homer walks to her job with a bowed head. Her path along the bridge links the landscape of the rural past on the right with the industrial present represented by the old mill.

Old Mill (The Morning Bell), 1871, Winslow Homer, American, 1836-1910, oil on canvas, 24 x 38 1/8 in., Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903, 1961.18.26



During the nineteenth century, the United States experienced a **revolution in transportation technology** that opened up new trade routes and greatly benefited the economy. This urn was presented to James C. Fisher, Esq., president of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company. In 1829 the company completed the canal that connects the Delaware River and Chesapeake Bay. Similarly, the 1825 opening of the Erie Canal connected New York City to Buffalo and the Great Lakes and opened up major transportation and trade routes into the West.

Covered Two-Handled Urn, Philadelphia, 1830, Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, American, active 1813-1825, silver, 21 x 12 1/4 x 6 3/8 in., Gift of Joseph B. Brenauer, 1942.245



In 1853 Congress authorized Secretary of War Jefferson Davis—who later served as President of the Confederate States of America from 1861 to 1865—to organize four expeditions to locate a route for a transcontinental railroad. The **Transcontinental Railroad** was completed in 1869, linking the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads. In this lithograph by Frances F. Palmer, one of the few female artists in this exhibition, we see an invented location somewhere along the transcontinental route. Although fictional, the scene represents the many towns that cropped up as the train line extended westward.

Across the Continent: "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way," 1868, Frances F. Palmer, artist and lithographer, American, born England, 1812-1876, James Merritt Ives, American, 1824-1895, published by Currier & Ives, active 1857-1907, hand-colored lithograph, 24 1/8 x 32 5/8 in., Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, 1946.9.1361



During the 1840s American politicians and expansionists argued that it was their **"manifest destiny"** to overrun the continent and acquire the territories of Texas, Oregon and California. Grand visions of western landscapes like Albert Bierstadt's painting of **Yosemite Valley**, along with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and the 1872 opening of the first national park at Yellowstone, helped shape American attitudes toward western expansion and build a new industry of western tourism.

Yosemite Valley, Glacier Point Trail, ca. 1873, Albert Bierstadt, born 1830, Sölingen, Germany, died 1902, New York City, oil on canvas, 54 x 84 3/4 in., Gift of Mrs. Vincenzo Ardenghi, 1931.389



Artists and craftsmen in the nineteenth century looked to many different times and places for inspiration. This sofa represents the general fascination with Egypt that followed the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. At the **1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia**, the first official World's Fair in the United States, the Egyptian pavilions displayed ancient objects that further stimulated Americans' interest in all things Egyptian.

Sofa, New York City, 1865-75, unidentified furniture maker, P.E. Guerin, 1864-present, manufacturer of bronze mounts, rosewood, ash, gilded bronze and silk upholstery, 34 1/2 x 72 x 35 in., Gift of Archer M. Huntington, B.A. 1897, in memory of his mother Arabella D. Huntington, by exchange, 1997.62.1



In 1854, American **Commodore Matthew Perry** and the Tokugawa shogunate signed the Kanagawa treaty, opening Japan to trade with the West and ending Japan's 200-year period of self-imposed isolation. Gradually Americans were reintroduced to the arts and culture of Japan. The makers of this coffeepot, Tiffany & Co., capitalized on this fascination with Japan by creating silverwares with Japanese-inspired motifs.

Coffeepot, 1878–88, Tiffany & Co., New York, New York, founded 1837, sterling silver, ivory, and silver, copper, and brass alloys, 10 3/4 x 8 x 5 3/4 in., Mrs. Alfred E. Bissell, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Schwartz, Mr. and Mrs. E. Martin Wunsch, and the American Arts Purchase Funds, 1981.98



After the Civil War ended in 1865, the United States tried to find stability again. The period brought a new class of professionals who valued living an honorable life, maintaining strong moral and religious beliefs, seeking self-betterment through the arts, education and recreation, and an attraction to leisurely activities like croquet and rowing. In *John Biglin in a Single Scull* (1874), **Thomas Eakins** merges the American interest in healthy athleticism with an equally popular style of realistic artistic representation. His first-hand knowledge of rowing enabled him to depict it with technical accuracy, as seen in the faithful construction of Biglin's boat and the oarsman's form.

John Biglin in a Single Scull, 1874, Thomas Eakins, American, 1844–1916, oil on canvas, 24 3/8 x 16 in., Whitney Collections of Sporting Art, given in memory of Harry Payne Whitney, B.A. 1894, and Payne Whitney, B.A. 1898, by Francis P. Garvan, B.A. 1897, M.A. (Hon.) 1922, 1932.263



In his 1895 painting *At the Sculpture Exhibition*, Charles Courtney Curran illustrates the desire to showcase the work of **emerging American sculptors**. Exhibitions such as this, as well as the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, helped introduce a more general population to the art of the United States and the larger world. **John Adams**, who stated over 100 years prior his hope that instead of studying just politics and war, future generations might have the freedom to study **"painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain,"** would have undoubtedly been pleased to see the develop of such scenes.

At the Sculpture Exhibition, 1895, Charles Courtney Curran, American, 1861–1942, oil on canvas, 18 x 22 in., Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903, Fund 1973.103

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