



BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART

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BMA Opens Groundbreaking Exhibition on 15th- to 18th-Century European Women Artists on October 1

***Making Her Mark* captures women's integral contributions to the production of art through more than 200 objects across fine art, craft, and design**

BALTIMORE, MD (UPDATED September 12, 2023)—On October 1, 2023, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open a groundbreaking exhibition exploring the wide-ranging achievements of women artists and artisans working in Europe between the 15th and 18th centuries. Co-organized with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400-1800* is the most comprehensive exhibition of women makers from this period, dispelling the myths that women artists were rare or less talented than their male counterparts. More than 200 objects include examples by acclaimed practitioners such as Rosalba Carriera, Artemisia Gentileschi, Elisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun, Judith Leyster, Luisa Roldán, and Rachel Ruysch, as well as those by lesser-known professional and amateur artists and often unnamed makers in collectives, workshops, and manufactories. Collectively, these works demonstrate the many ways women played an integral role in the development of art, culture, and commerce across more than 400 years.

While scholarship about historic women artists has seen an increase in recent years, these investigations remain largely focused on an elite group of artists working in large-scale painting and sculpture. *Making Her Mark* explores the breadth of women's artistic endeavors with works that range from royal portraits and devotional sculpture to tapestries, printed books, drawings, clothing and lace, metalwork, ceramics, furniture, and other decorative objects—arguing for a reassessment of European art history to incorporate the true depth and variety of their contributions.

Making Her Mark is co-curated by Andaleeb Badiee Banta, Senior Curator and Department Head of Prints, Drawings & Photographs at the BMA, and Alexa Greist, Curator and R. Fraser Elliott Chair, Prints & Drawings at the AGO. It is a special ticketed exhibition with audio guide presented in Baltimore from October 1, 2023, to January 7, 2024, and in Toronto from March 27 to July 1, 2024. The exhibition features several new BMA acquisitions on view for the first time, as well as loans from the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, the National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and many other significant public and private collections in North America and Europe.

For centuries, women artists in Europe who achieved professional artistic careers were deemed anomalous or exceptional, while those who engaged in creative pursuits

in the home were dismissed as amateurs. *Making Her Mark* aims to correct these commonly held beliefs by examining the different ways in which women contributed to the production of art and their pursuit of professional and commercial successes. Their roles as artists, designers, laborers, and businesswomen are given life through a variety of objects and narratives unfamiliar to today's audiences. In this way, the exhibition expands our understanding of women's contributions to the history of Western art beyond the established dominance of painting and sculpture.

"We are delighted to present this groundbreaking exhibition that will bring together exceptional works of art, craft, and design by women artists from a period that has largely equated talent and artistic excellence with men," said Asma Naeem, the BMA's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "The exhibition explores women's essential engagement with ideas, aesthetics, creative movements, and commerce of the time. By recontextualizing this period in history and offering these women artists the attention they deserve, we hope to inspire our community to reimagine what they have previously held to be true about both art and history, and to contribute to the critical work of rectifying centuries of omissions."

The exhibition purposefully casts a wide scope, examining a variety of circumstances under which women participated in artistic production across the European continent over four centuries:

- Women artists who achieved the highest recognition by the ruling classes in church and state are represented by works such as Luisa Roldán's terracotta *Education of the Virgin* (1689-1706), Artemisia Gentileschi's painting *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (c. 1623-25), and a luxurious 17th-century tapestry produced in the papal Barberini workshop in Rome under the direction of Maria Maddalena della Riviera.
- Women's personal worlds and domestic labor are represented by luxury objects created for the home and the private arts of calligraphy, drawing, and embroidery. Beautiful still life paintings by Anne Vallayer-Coster and Josefa de Ayala and an 18th-century wooden cabinet with paper filigree and hairwork panels by Sophia Jane Maria Bonnell and Mary Anne Harvey Bonnell are among the highlights.
- Professional and amateur naturalist drawings and images of flora and fauna illustrate the important role that women played in the development of scientific knowledge. Examples by Giovanna Garzoni, Maria Sibylla Merian, Rachel Ruysch, Pauline Rifer de Courcelles (Madame Knip), and many others demonstrate women artists' involvement in the documentation of natural phenomena brought to Europe through the extractive trade of empire, as well as their exploration of the intersection between empirical and aesthetic presentation.
- The exhibition also illuminates women's roles in the business of arts production, self-promotion, and the education of fellow women practitioners. Highlights include self-portraits by Sarah Biffin and Judith Leyster, an elaborate porcelain tea service by Marie-Victorie Jaquotot, textiles by Anna Maria Garthwaite, and an exquisite marble sculpture of a Maltese dog by Anne Seymour Damer.

A hands-on learning gallery features a worktable of touchable materials such as jasperware and metallic thread found in artworks in the exhibition. Baltimore-based fiber artist Sasha Baskin created a bobbin lace sample as well as a demonstration of a bobbin lace composition in progress. A digital touchscreen library allows for a closer look at manuscripts and books in the show. Visitors can also sit and relax to read the *Making Her Mark* catalog or explore their own creativity with sketchbooks available in the gallery.

“The presence of women as makers remains largely anomalous or anonymized in European and North American museums displaying pre-modern art. Their absence speaks to the biases inherent to the study of women’s artistic output as well as to the ongoing gendered notions of the heroic and spectacular as the standard measures of quality, significance, and legitimacy in Western culture,” said Banta. “*Making Her Mark* challenges these criteria and promotes the depth and range of women’s acumen within historical European artistic culture, working to establish a new, more expansive and inclusive art history that speaks to these achievements.”

Sponsors

This exhibition is generously supported by Nancy L. Dorman and Stanley Mazaroff, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Anne L. Stone, Laura Freedlander, PNC Foundation, The Gladys Kriebler Delmas Foundation, Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, Samuel H. Kress Foundation, The Stoneridge Fund of Amy and Marc Meadows, Sheela Murthy/MurthyNAYAK Foundation, and Susan B. Katzenberg.



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The exhibition is also supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities.

Tickets

Tickets are on sale beginning September 1 at artbma.org. Prices are \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors, \$12 for groups of 7 or more, \$5 for students with ID, and \$5 for youth ages 7-18. BMA Members, children ages 6 and under, and student groups are admitted free.

Audio Guide

Visitors can use their personal devices to access insightful commentary on 16 objects from BMA Senior Curator Andaleeb Banta and four contemporary women makers. Baltimore-based painter Monica Ikegwu and fiber artist Sasha Baskin speak to oil paintings and lace objects in the show. Boston-based embroiderer, scholar, and engineer Tricia Nguyen Wilson discusses embroidered works and Philadelphia-based sculptor Syd Carpenter represents ceramics objects.

Public Programs

Community Day – Sunday, October 1, 1–5 p.m.

Celebrate the opening of *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400-1800* with free admission to the exhibition all day, plus tastings, hands-on artmaking, and gallery talks during the event.

Art After Hours – Friday, October 13, 8–11 p.m.

Baltimore’s best late-night art party is back celebrating local women artists. Enjoy specialty cocktails, music, interactive experiences, delicious appetizers, late-night access to galleries, and free admission to *Making Her Mark*. \$25: Members \$30: Non-Members

Catalog

The fully illustrated *Making Her Mark* catalog is an important re-examination of pre-modern European art by an international team of scholars and curators who address the critical concepts that have shaped Western culture’s understanding of what constitutes great art. In addition to its recalibration of gender imbalances, the 264-page volume also sheds light on the collaborative nature of the creation of individual works and the interconnected histories of politics, religion, science, and economics. *Making Her Mark* is edited by and features essays from exhibition co-curators Banta and Greist with BMA Exhibition Research Assistant Theresa Kutasz Christensen. Other contributors include Babette Bohn, Professor Emeritus of Art History and Women and Gender Studies, Texas Christian University; Virginia Treanor, Curator, National Museum of Women in the Arts; and Madeleine Viljoen, Curator of Prints, New York Public Library. The book is published by Goose Lane Editions and available for purchase at the BMA Shop and other retailers.

Baltimore Museum of Art

Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 97,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world’s largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation’s finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

Visitor Information

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours on Thursdays until 9 p.m. The Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk. The museum and gardens are closed New Year’s Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org.

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