



**2024**

**ELIZABETH AND IRWIN WARREN FOLK ART SYMPOSIUM**

# “The Picture Is Still Out There”: Reframing Black Presence in the Collections of Early American Art and Material Culture

**FULL SCHEDULE**

**DAY 1 – FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

---

## Potential Portraits: Reckoning with the Gaps of History

**INTRODUCTORY CONVERSATION**

**11:00 AM-1:00 PM EDT**

Using the groundbreaking 2006 exhibition *Portraits of a People: Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century* as a starting point, Dr. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw and Dr. Jennifer Van Horn illuminate the advancement of scholarly engagement with early representations of Black subjects. The speakers will discuss what archival absences and sustained academic inquiry have meant for the field of early American portraiture.

**Jennifer Van Horn**, Associate Professor of Art History and History, University of Delaware

**Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw**, Class of 1940 Bicentennial Term Associate Professor of History of Art, University of Pennsylvania

---

# Reframing Early American Art Collections

## PANEL 1

1:30-3:30 PM EDT

Recognizing the power of naming, the speakers share their efforts to honor African American subjects and artists in American art collections. This session will address the challenges of including those who have been omitted from public history while making palpable in the museum galleries the traumatic histories of enslavement.

**Introduced and moderated by Anne Strachan Cross**, Assistant Teaching Professor of American Art, Pennsylvania State University, author of the exhibition's publication essay "Questions of Recovery in Photographic History"

### **Elizabeth S. Humphrey**

Former Curatorial Assistant and Manager of Student Programs, Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Delaware

### **The Canon and Permanent Collection as Sites for Critical Curatorial Intervention**

This talk will offer several strategies for reckoning with the canon of "American" art and its utility for curating representation, absence/presence, and challenging and traumatic histories. Elizabeth S. Humphrey will share approaches to excavating diverse and overlooked narratives in overwhelmingly white and Anglo permanent collections, drawing from her co-curated exhibitions: *African/American: Two Centuries of Portraits* (2019) and *Re|Framing the Collection: New Considerations in European and American Art, 1475-1875* (2021). She will highlight collaboration and knowledge-sharing as strategies for challenging the canon thoughtfully and meaningfully.

### **Janine Yorimoto Boldt**

Associate Curator of American Art at The Chazen Museum of Art

### **Re-Encountering the Permanent Collection at the Chazen Museum of Art**

In my scholarship, I seek to uncover how Indigenous people and people of African descent influenced the development and creation of early American art, especially portraiture. I foreground perspectives and stories that have been overlooked in favor of settler narratives and priorities. As a curator, I apply the same methods to collections-based and exhibition research and development. However, curatorial research manifests differently than peer-reviewed academic scholarship and serves a broader audience. There are also practical limitations and challenges in museums, including concerns around budgets, acquisitions, and display. In this presentation, I will discuss strategies applied to recent curatorial projects at the Chazen Museum of Art, including the upcoming permanent collection reinstallation, that attempt to unsettle colonialist museum practices and tell more inclusive stories about historical American art.

**Michael Hartman**

Jonathan Little Cohen Associate Curator of American Art Hood Museum of Art,  
Dartmouth College

**Challenges and Possibilities: Incorporating Historical Black Artists, Perspectives, and Voices in Collection Reinstallations at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College**

The problems and possibilities of equitably reinstalling collections hinge upon a curator's ability to draw on institutional support; deeply research collections; make strategic acquisitions; and frequently challenge temporal categories that typically preclude African American artists and images of Black people from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century focused galleries. I use my exhibition *Liquidity: Art, Commodities, and Water* (Hood Museum of Art, 2023-2024) as a case study, to meditate on the possibilities and challenges of reinterpreting permanent collections to include historical Black presences.

Can a portrait of Daniel Webster by Gilbert Stuart provide insight into Neptune Thurston, a man who was enslaved as a cooper in Newport, Rhode Island, *and* who taught Gilbert Stuart how to paint? Does Daniel Webster's tea set provide an opportunity for our visitors to learn about Paul Jennings, a man once enslaved by James Madison and who worked in Webster's household as a servant before writing the first White House memoir? Our galleries display these and other stories of perseverance, but connections to enslavement must be balanced with, or outshone by, optimistic representations and joyful narratives. At the Hood Museum of Art, few historical objects speak to positive Black histories. Taking a thematic approach focused on the relationships between art, water, and commodities, I incorporated twentieth- and twenty-first-century artworks by Black artists (such as Henry Ossawa Tanner or Daniel Minter) from the earliest planning stages. They were not blatantly inserted into pre-existing chronological narratives to disrupt linear histories. As opposed to a chronological framework, *Liquidity's* thematic organization enabled generative comparisons and broadened the museum's ability to incorporate a multitude of art histories as equal in value and importance.

## Remembering Early American History

### PANEL 2

11:00 AM-1:00 PM EDT

This session will offer methodologies to identify the early contributions of African American individuals and communities, with reference to the strategies of remembering, misremembering and forgetting enslavement and its aftermath. The speakers will discuss their attempts to undermine legacies of racism in their evaluation of public sites, while fostering an expanded vision of American heritage and history.

**Introduced and moderated by Jill Vaum Rothschild**, Luce Foundation Curatorial Fellow, Smithsonian American Art Museum, author of the exhibition's publication essay: "Joshua Johnson: Black Artisanship & Artistry in Early National Baltimore"

### **Alexandra Chan**

Archaeologist, member of the academic advisory board of the Royall House and Slave Quarters, a National Historic Landmark and museum in Medford, Massachusetts, and author of *Slavery in the Age of Reason: Archaeology at a New England Farm* (2015)

### **On the Creative Praxis of Personhood: The Archaeological Search for Identity Negotiations of the Enslaved at the 18th-Century New England Slaveholding Estate of Isaac Royall**

In scholarship about the mechanics and politics of "forgetting," people who were silenced, misunderstood, or ignored in life have sometimes continued to be silenced, misunderstood, or ignored in the present by tired academic theories and practices that fail to address the dynamic *praxis* of personhood. Archaeological research, for example, and the evaluation and public interpretation of early African American material culture have evolved greatly in the past sixty years. The early search for "Africanisms" in the material record has finally given way to understanding identities as being dynamic and relational in nature. In public history, the emphasis needs to be on the translation of material culture over mere display; on identifying dynamic patterns of use over making static lists of traits; and on finding the arenas for communication, teaching, kinship, self-expression, self-help, and recreation where personhood could be reasserted, and the power dynamics of slavery contested.

**Marc Howard Ross**

William Rand Kenan, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Political Science at Bryn Mawr College, and author of *Slavery in the North: Forgetting History and Recovering Memory* (2018), which begins with a study of the President's House/Slavery Memorial at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia

**Remembering Slavery in the President's House in Philadelphia, 1790-97**

George Washington was a slave owner, a fact that a good number of Americans know. What far fewer realize is that while he was President, living in Philadelphia from 1790-1797, one block from Independence Hall, he brought nine enslaved men and women there to live and work in his house, which also contained the Presidential offices. In 2002, while plans were being made to move the Liberty Bell to a new home in Independence National Historical Park, the story of Washington's Presidential house and its household appeared in a historical journal, an account that was soon picked up in the city's media outlets. Learning that these enslaved people had lived and worked in Washington's house encouraged people to raise more questions about sites of slavery in Northern towns and cities. The news stunned many people in the city and state, and local groups formed that sought to understand how this was possible in what they thought was a free state, leading to a rise in public mobilization demanding a public memorial to mark Washington's actions. It took almost a decade to produce a memorial that would remind visitors of slavery on the site, helping to encourage the discovery of sites of enslavement and Black communities in Philadelphia and other parts of the North from Maine to Delaware and Maryland. Their recent existence has further encouraged people to tell the painful stories of slavery throughout the region and to better understand why they were forgotten for so long.

**Tiffany Momon**

Assistant Professor of History and Mellon Fellow at Sewanee, University of the South, founder and co-Director of Black Craftsmanship Digital Archive

**Someone Knows My Name: Frameworks for Researching the Lives and Experiences of Black Craftspeople**

Since 2019, the Black Craftspeople Digital Archive has been dedicated to sharing the stories of lesser-known Black craftspeople involved in the decorative arts. Our mission is to recognize, honor, and celebrate the contributions of Black craftspeople to the diaspora through research and interpretation. This session will discuss our research process and make a case for why we should all review our sources and objects more deeply.

---

## Revisiting the Exhibition *Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North*

### CLOSING CONVERSATION

1:30-3:00 PM EDT

Exhibition curators discuss the making of the exhibition *Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North* which offers a new window onto Black representation in American art and material culture. Through over 120 remarkable works including paintings, needlework, and works on paper from the late seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, the exhibition shares the untold stories of Black experiences in New England and the Mid-Atlantic. By focusing on a region that is often overlooked in narratives of early African American history, this curatorial project seeks to challenge faulty popular memory and reassert Black presence, agency, and creativity in areas that we might assume by common knowledge to be unlikely.

**Emelie Gevalt**, Curatorial Chair for Collections and Curator of Folk Art, AFAM

**RL Watson**, Assistant Professor of English and African American Studies,  
Lake Forest College

**Sadé Ayorinde**, Terra Foundation Predoctoral Fellow in American Art at the  
Smithsonian American Art Museum

---

## Speaker Biographies

**Sadé Ayorinde** is a Terra Foundation Predoctoral Fellow in American Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and recently served as Warren Family Assistant Curator at the American Folk Art Museum. She is also a PhD candidate in the department of History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University. Viewing art as a form of visual communication that questions, manipulates, and/or distorts racial, social, and gender relationships, her research focuses on constructions of identity via modern and contemporary American art, mass media, and visual culture.

Sadé earned a B.S. BA (bachelors of science in business administration) in International Business and an M.A. in Art History from University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL). She has held various curatorial and educational roles including a position at the Sheldon Museum of Art, and collaborations with Cornell's Kroch Rare Manuscript Division, the Johnson Museum of Art, and the International Quilt Museum.

**Dr. Janine Yorimoto Boldt** is the Collection Reinstallation Project Associate at the Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she is involved in planning the comprehensive reinstallation of the permanent collection galleries. Previously, she was the Associate Curator of American Art at the Chazen and a Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at the American Philosophical Society. She holds a PhD in American Studies from William & Mary and specializes in early American visual culture. Recent curatorial projects include *re:mancipation, Resource & Ruin: Wisconsin's Enduring Landscape, and Dr. Franklin, Citizen Scientist*. Her scholarship on colonial art has been published by *Winterthur Portfolio, American Art, Panorama*, and the DAR Museum. She is the researcher behind *Colonial Virginia Portraits*, a digital project produced in collaboration with the Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture.

**Alexandra A. Chan** is the author of *Slavery in the Age of Reason: Archaeology at a New England Farm*, and the forthcoming book, *In the Garden Behind the Moon: A Memoir of Loss, Myth, and Magic*, now available for pre-order. Dr. Chan has worked in various capacities within the archaeological discipline. She developed and taught numerous courses for the Vassar College Anthropology Department in historical archaeology, comparative colonialism, material culture studies, archaeological ethics and the law, and the archaeology of early African America. She also worked for many years as a Principal Investigator in cultural resource management and continues to serve on the Advisory Council for the Royall House & Slave Quarters Museum in Medford, Massachusetts. She remains active in public outreach about archaeology, but is primarily engaged now with her Chinese brush painting business, writing, and preparing for the launch of her new book.

**Dr. Anne Strachan Cross** is a specialist in nineteenth and early twentieth-century American visual culture, with a focus on the histories of photography and illustrated journalism. Her research considers the relationship between the circulation of images as objects and the illustration of the news, with a particular focus on issues of race and representation. Her work has appeared in the journals *Panorama*, *History of Photography*, and *Civil War History*, and her current book project examines photographs of atrocity and their publication as wood engravings within *Harper's Weekly's* illustrated reporting of the American Civil War. Dr. Cross received her Ph.D. from the University of Delaware, and currently serves as an Assistant Teaching Professor of American Art at Pennsylvania State University.

**Emelie Gevalt** is Curatorial Chair for Collections and Curator of Folk Art at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. Her exhibitions at AFAM include the critically acclaimed *What that Quilt Knows About Me* (2023) and *Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North* (2023). Gevalt received her BA in art history and theater studies from Yale University and her MA from the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture. Her two decades of art-world experience include positions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Christie's, New York, where she was a Vice President in the Estates, Appraisals & Valuations department. She is a doctoral candidate in art history at the University of Delaware.

**Michael Hartman** is the Jonathan Little Cohen Associate Curator of American Art at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. He holds a BA in art history and German from the University of Arkansas; an MA in the history of art from Williams College; and is completing his PhD in art history at the University of Delaware. His dissertation project, *Art, Technology and Aesthetics within Landscapes of Enslavement in the Colonial South, 1740-1810*, reflects his desire to critically reframe and redefine approaches to art made in North America. He has previously held positions at the Biggs Museum of American Art; the Clark Art Institute; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; the Dallas Museum of Art; and the Winterthur Library, Museums, and Gardens.

**Elizabeth S. Humphrey** is a Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at the University of Delaware and received an M.A. in American Material Culture from the Winterthur Program. She specializes in North American art and material culture from the long nineteenth century, particularly examining Blackness and identity formation using interdisciplinary and transhistorical methods. She served as the Curatorial Assistant and Manager of Student Programs at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. At Bowdoin, she co-curated *Re|Framing the Collection: New Considerations in European and American Art* (2021) and *African/American: Two Centuries of Portraits* (2019). She curated *There Is a Woman in Every Color: Black Women in Art* (2021), currently traveling with support from the Art Bridges Foundation. Her professional experiences also include the Barnes Foundation and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

**Dr. Tiffany Momon** is a public historian and Assistant Professor of History at Sewanee: The University of the South. Additionally, her role at Sewanee brings the responsibilities of serving as assistant director of the Roberson Project on Slavery, Race, and Reconciliation, an initiative investigating the university's historical entanglements with slavery and slavery's legacies. Momon is the founder and co-director of the Black Craftspeople Digital Archive ([blackcraftspeople.org](http://blackcraftspeople.org)), a Black digital humanities project that centers Black craftspeople, their lives, and their contributions to the making and building of America. Throughout her career, Momon has lectured on Black craftspeople at organizations such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, and Winterthur Museum and Gardens. Her most recent publications include "John "Quash" Williams, Charleston Builder," featured in the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*.

**Marc Howard Ross** is the author of five books: *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict* (Cambridge, 2008), *The Culture of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective* (Yale, 1993), *The Management of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective* (Yale, 1993), *Grass Roots in an African City: Political Behavior in Nairobi* (MIT, 1974) and *The Political Integration of Urban Squatters* (Northwestern, 1973). He also edited *Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies* (Pennsylvania, 2010), and co-edited *Theory and Practice in Ethnic Conflict Management: Theorizing Success and Failure* (Macmillan, 2000) and *Cultural Strategies of Agenda Denial: Avoidance, Attack and Redefinition* (Kansas, 1999). He has published scores of scholarly essays.

**Dr. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw** is the Class of 1940 Bicentennial Term Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on portraiture and issues of representation, with an emphasis on the construction of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the United States. She has previously served on the faculty of Harvard University and as the Director of Research, Publications, and Scholarly Programs at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. In addition to her books, *Seeing the Unspeakable: The Art of Kara Walker* (Duke: 2004) and *First Ladies of the United States* (Smithsonian: 2020), she has also curated numerous exhibitions, including "Portraits of a People: Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century" (2006), "Represent: 200 Years of African American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art" (2015), and "I Dream a World: Selections from Brian Lanker's Portraits of Remarkable Black Women," at the National Portrait Gallery.

**Dr. Jennifer Van Horn** holds a joint appointment as associate professor in Art History and History at the University of Delaware. She is the author of *The Power of Objects in Eighteenth-Century British America* (2017) and *Portraits of Resistance: Activating Art during Slavery* (2022). She recently co-edited a special double issue of *Winterthur Portfolio* entitled "Enslavement and Its Legacies" and is now at work with Jaipreet Virdi co-editing a collected volume entitled *The Disabled Gaze: Multi-Sensory Perspectives of Art, Bodies & Objects*. She serves as the president of HECCA (Historians of Eighteenth-Century Art and Architecture) and on the editorial boards for *The Art Bulletin* and the University of Delaware Press.

**Dr. Jill Vaum Rothschild** is a specialist in nineteenth-century American art and since 2022, she has been the Luce Curatorial Fellow at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, where she is working on the museum's reinstallation of its permanent collection galleries. She recently co-curated an exhibition on the collaborative relationship of landscape painter Robert S. Duncanson and photographer James Presley Ball. Rothschild completed her doctorate in Art History at the University of Pennsylvania in 2021; her dissertation examined portraits of free Black men and women during the antebellum period across media. This research was supported by grants from SAAM, the ACLS/Luce Foundation, the Library of Congress, and the Fred W. Smith Library at Mount Vernon.

**Dr. RL Watson**, proud native of New Jersey, is Assistant Professor of English and African American Studies at Lake Forest College. They are an alumna of Yale University (BA 2003), Yale Divinity School (MAR 2010, summa cum laude), and The University of Chicago (PhD 2018). Watson teaches courses in African American literature (18th-21st century), college writing, and creative writing. Watson's research treats racialized and racializing representations of Black Americans in American culture in an investigation of the social and philosophical import of (racialized) color in American identity formation. They are now honing a book manuscript based on this research, tentatively titled *Dark Masks: The Representational Lives of Black Americans*. This project has as its focus the doubled problem of darkness: i.e., the darkness of sin and the darkness of the skin. They have also recently completed the first manuscript for their novel entitled *Anatomy of a Judas*, which asks the question, If the devil is black, as he has so often been depicted, what would he have to say about the moral system to which he finds himself so malignantly attached? Watson currently lives in Waukegan with their plants, their thin pens, and their dog Grover "Sugar Foot" Watson, dear Levi's furry little brother.