

EMBROIDERY: THE LANGUAGE OF ART OPENS THIS WEEKEND AT WINTERTHUR

New Exhibition Explores Decorative Needlework as Works of Art in 17th, 18th and Early 19th Centuries

WINTERTHUR, DELAWARE—Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library will open the new exhibition *Embroidery: The Language of Art* on Saturday, May 7, 2016, at 10:00 am. The exhibition looks at how the creation of embroidered objects fits into the changing definitions of art, craft, and design throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. It will be open through June 2, 2017.

The use of the term art has changed over time and this exhibition explores how and why decorative needlework was considered to be works of *art* in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. Early definitions of art define it as a skill, and embroidery was a skill that was taught to young women alongside drawing and painting with pastels, watercolors, and sometimes even oils. The exhibition shows how women would create or copy line drawings, and the artistry involved in turning these designs into sophisticated pictures using color, shading, and stitches. Reproducing patterns and images was once part of every artist's education, and the issue of women's own originality is discussed in connection with a series of beautifully embroidered pictures.

"Winterthur is pleased to highlight important examples from our collection in an exhibition that expands our understanding of needlework as works of art," explained J. Thomas Savage, Director of Museum Affairs for Winterthur. "Among the objects included in the exhibition is a recently acquired 18th century embroidered dressing table cover worked by Mary Flowers in 1767, a very rare form that will be seen for the first time displayed on the type of dressing table on which it would have been used—something that should be of equal interest to furniture collectors and scholars as to those interested in the embroidery."

Another important recent acquisition is a needlework picture after Benjamin West's famous painting entitled *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*. Recent research on this work has revealed that the artist, Margaret Ansell, exhibited this picture at the 1776 Society of Artists Exhibition in London alongside paintings, prints, and other works of art. Also included is an early 19th century embroidered picture worked by Sarah Ward Skinner that depicts the earliest art gallery in America, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, where such pictures were often on exhibition.

"The objects included in *Embroidery: The Language of Art* demonstrate why embroidery should not be considered separately from other forms of art. The extraordinary skill, the intricate, unique, and creative designs, and the ways these works were appreciated both in their own time and today make them much like other works that fit a more traditional definition of art," said Linda Eaton, John L. & Marjorie P. McGraw Director of Collections & Senior Curator of Textiles, one of the exhibition's co-curators. Eaton curated the exhibition with Lea C. Lane, Elizabeth and Robert Owens Curatorial Fellow, and Roberta G. Weisberg, Senior Cataloger, Winterthur.

A related conference, *Embroidery: The Language of Art*, to be held on October 14-15, 2016, will further explore the questions and issues of women's roles as artists and their choice of embroidery as an artistic medium from the 17th to the early 20th century through both lectures and workshops.

Pre-registration is required for the conference; please visit winterthur.org to learn more.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2016



Calliope and Clio. Sarah Skinner Ward (1796–1844). Samuel Folwell (designer and painter). Museum purchase with funds provided by the Special Fund for Collection Objects 1991.46.

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Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic gardens, and research library for the study of American art and material culture—offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year. General admission includes a tour of some of the most notable spaces in the 175-room house as well as access to the Winterthur Garden and Galleries, special exhibitions, a narrated tram tour (weather permitting), the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens, and the Enchanted Woods children's garden. \$20 adults; \$18 for students and seniors; \$5 for ages 2–11.

Museum hours

10:00 am- 5:00 pm, Tuesday- Sunday.

Winterthur, located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1, is closed on Mondays (except during Yuletide), Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883, 302.888.4600, or TTY 302.888.4907, or visit winterthur.org.



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