

● BROOKLYN MUSEUM ●

TIMELINE

1823

Brooklyn citizens, including Augustus Graham, found the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library on August 7, 1823. The mission of the Library is to educate and provide an intellectual outlet for tradesmen and local youths. It becomes the first public circulating library in Brooklyn. Graham solicits donations of books by taking a wheelbarrow around Brooklyn. Erastus Worthington, the first librarian, is employed to open the Library every Saturday from 4 to 9 pm; he earns 75 cents per day.

1824

The Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association is incorporated on November 20, 1824.

1825

During a Fourth of July event, Revolutionary War hero General Lafayette helps lay the cornerstone of the first building of the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library, at the corner of Henry and Cranberry Streets. Walt Whitman would later recount the day in his series "Brooklyniana," published in the *Brooklyn Standard* in 1862. Whitman, seven years old at the time of the event, was picked up by Lafayette in order to get a better view.

1826

In November 1826, the Library opens a free reading room for anyone to use. The Library is originally open Monday through Saturday, 9 am–10 pm, although the hours can vary. A membership fee is required for checking out books.

1827

Professor James Freeman Dana offers the first lecture series at the Library, on chemistry and natural philosophy.

1828

According to the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association's November 19, 1828, meeting minutes, the 189 members of the Library have one of the following professions: baker, barber,

blacksmith, bookbinder, cabinetmaker, carpenter, coach maker, cooper, druggist, grocer, hatter, mason, painter, printer, rope maker, sadler, scholar, shoemaker, tanner, tailor, tin smith, turner, and watchmaker.

1831

The Library directors commission a portrait of Library President Robert Snow to celebrate his achievements. The painting, by William Dunlap, becomes the first artwork in the Library's (and the Brooklyn Museum's) collection.

1835

An entry in the January 31, 1835, minutes of the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association features a report by Walt Whitman, Acting Librarian. Whitman, a teenager at the time, reports that the Library has 1,200 volumes and 172 readers.

1841

Drawing classes are offered at the Library for the first time. Classes included mechanical and architectural drawing, as well as landscape and figure drawing.

1842

From October 3 to 5, 1842, the Library holds its first exhibition of student drawings, mechanical displays, and natural-science specimens.

1842–1843

The Brooklyn Apprentices' Library and the Brooklyn Lyceum are legally consolidated and renamed the "Brooklyn Institute." The Library's collections move to the Lyceum's building on Washington Street, where they join the Lyceum's natural-history and science collections. As the Brooklyn Institute, the institution's mission now expands beyond library activities to include exhibits, collections, and lectures. According to its brochure, it goes "beyond the advantages now afforded to minors by establishing a reading room, courses of lectures of a high order, classes for instruction in literature, science, the useful and fine art, and for hearing descriptions of new discoveries and inventions which may be pleasing and instructive, together with annual public exhibitions of such articles and subjects connected with the object of the [Institute]."

1844

The Brooklyn Institute starts to hold annual exhibitions of artwork.

1846

A permanent gallery of art is formed.

1848

Augustus Graham gives a generous donation of a bond and the mortgage of the Institute's building, which enables the Institute to be debt free.

1851

Augustus Graham's estate bequeaths \$27,000 to the Institute, partly to create funds for lecture series and for collecting American art.

1855

The Institute commissions Asher B. Durand to paint *The First Harvest in the Wilderness* (1855), the first artwork purchased using the Graham fund.

1876

By 1876 there are fifteen paintings in the Brooklyn Institute's collection, as well as natural-science specimens and plaster casts used for education.

1887–1890

The Brooklyn Institute establishes departments in order to make the Institute "the nucleus of a broad and comprehensive institution for the advancement of science and art, and its membership a large and active association." Departments have monthly or weekly meetings, organize exhibitions, arrange for lectures on various topics, and even collect items like books, objects, and specimens. By 1890 the Institute has the following departments: Archaeology, Architecture, Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry, Electricity, Engineering, Entomology, Fine Arts, Geography, Geology, Mathematics, Microscopy, Mineralogy, Painting, Philology, Photography, Physics, Political and Economic Science, Psychology, and Zoology.

Of special note is the Department of Photography, which is formed from the Linden Camera Club of Brooklyn between 1887 and 1888. The department begins a series of annual photography

exhibitions in 1889, in addition to sponsoring lectures on developments in the field and having a dedicated darkroom for members to use. The Brooklyn Institute was an early supporter of photography as a documentary, artistic, and scientific form.

1888–1890

Similar to the founding of the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library, a group of Brooklyn citizens organizes to advocate for a museum of both art and science in Brooklyn to be spearheaded by the Brooklyn Institute. The purpose of the museum is threefold: "to provide means for the education, refinement, elevation, and pleasure of all people"; "to aid in developing and perfecting those other agencies for education and inspiration which already exist"; and "to encourage the specialist, either as an investigator in the sciences or as a creator in art."

1890

The Brooklyn Institute is reorganized into the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (BIAS), which would eventually become the parent organization of the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the Brooklyn Children's Museum.

1890–1891

The Brooklyn Art Association, with the cooperation of the Brooklyn Institute's Department of Painting, establishes the Brooklyn Art School.

1891

The New York State Legislature passes an act authorizing the construction of a complex of buildings to serve as free museums, libraries, and other educational buildings, which would eventually become the Brooklyn Museum.

1891

Franklin Hooper, Professor of Chemistry and Geology at Adelphi Academy, is named the first Director of the BIAS. Hooper would later act as the first director of the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, before retiring in 1913.

1892–1893

The BIAS Department of Architecture organizes an architectural competition to source a design for a new museum building. The firm McKim, Mead & White is selected for the commission.

1893

On May 9, 1893, the BIAS Department of Physics hosts a lecture by scientist George M. Hopkins. After his lecture, Hopkins holds the first public demonstration of Thomas Edison's kinoscope, a machine used to view moving images.

1895

Brooklyn City Mayor Charles A. Schieren lays the cornerstone for the Museum building. In his address at the event, BIAS Director Franklin Hooper states, "If the Museum is wisely planned, it will take into account all human history, the infinite capacity of man to act, to think, and to love."

1897

The West Wing of the Museum building is completed, the collections are installed, and the building opens to the public as the "Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences."

1899

William Henry Goodyear is appointed the Museum's first Curator of Fine Arts. During his tenure, from 1899 to 1923, the fine-art collection rapidly grows with the assistance of donors and collectors.

1899

C. T. Goodwin is hired as the first Curator of Natural Science. He is promoted to Superintendent in 1900. The Department of the Superintendent oversees gallery attendants, engineers, and workshops.

1899

Alfred Goldsborough Mayor is hired as Curator of Natural Science. Together with Director Franklin Hooper, Mayor expands and deepens the scope and breadth of the natural-history collections to include vertebrates, invertebrates, birds, insects, shells, and fossils. Mayor also oversees the acquisition of early Indigenous arts—mostly Native American and Pacific Islander works—which sparks a need for an ethnology department. A collection of Southwest pottery is transferred to the Museum from the Smithsonian (then the United States National Museum). Under Mayor, the Museum accepts the loan of Appleton Sturgis's collection of mostly Pacific art, which goes on view in 1900.

1899

The Brooklyn Children's Museum is founded as part of the BIAS. The museum housing the art and natural-science collections is now called the "Central Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences," or the "Central Museum" for short.

1900

Susan A. Hutchinson is appointed the first Museum Librarian. During her tenure, from 1900 to 1935, she astutely builds the research collections in collaboration with curators. Hutchinson also reorganizes the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library into the Museum Library, and in 1913 she establishes the Print Collection as part of the Library and starts to curate print exhibitions.

1900

Public subscriptions are organized for major purchases of art, including James Tissot's *Life of Christ* series (1886–84).

1902

The Museum acquires objects from the prominent Egyptologist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, beginning the Egyptian antiquities collection. Through Petrie, the Museum begins a long relationship with the Egypt Exploration Society.

1903

Stewart Culin is appointed the first Curator of the Department of Ethnology. From 1903 to 1908, Culin travels through the Southwest, California, and the Northwest Coast, collecting more than nine thousand Native American objects and acquiring or creating an astonishing amount of attendant documentation. From 1909 to 1914, he turns his interest to the cultures of Asia, visiting China, Japan, Korea, and India. During this time, he acquires important works, such as objects representing Ainu culture and Indian textiles. In the 1920s, Culin's trips focus on acquiring European decorative arts, primarily costumes and textiles. He is also responsible for acquiring the Museum's initial holdings of African and Islamic art.

Culin's legacy is complicated. Today we must contextualize his role, opinions, and biases in building these collections, such as in projects like the 2023–25 exhibition *Sakimatwemtwe: A Century of Reflection on the Arts of Africa*.

1905

Around 1905, the Museum hires a printer to operate the printing press used for producing object labels, panels, publications, fliers, and other materials for and about the Museum.

1907

The East Wing and the Central Pavilion (with its Grand Staircase) of the Museum building are completed. By this time, the fine-art collection comprises 532 paintings, watercolors, photographs, plaster casts, and decorative arts.

1909

Thirty allegorical statues designed under the direction of Daniel Chester French are added to the facade of the Museum building. Symbolizing literature, religion, philosophy, law, science, and politics, the statues are intended to exemplify the museum as a place for all knowledge.

1913

The Museum holds a solo exhibition of the works of sculptor Bessie Potter Vonnoh from March 2 to 31, 1913—the first of many exhibitions at the Museum dedicated to women artists.

1913

Mary B. Morris is hired as the Museum's first docent, paving the way for the founding of the Department of Education in 1930. Morris and other docents play an integral role in providing visitors with a deeper understanding of the collections. According to the 1914 annual report, Morris gave gallery talks to over six thousand children and over three hundred teachers in 1914 alone. The beginning of the docent program makes the Museum one of the first U.S. museums to explore the importance of museum education.

1913

William Henry Fox is appointed Curator-in-Chief of the Museum. In 1914 he is officially named Director of the Museum.

1916

Director William Henry Fox shortens the title of the Central Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Science to the "Brooklyn Museum."

1916

Objects collected by Charles Edwin Wilbour, one of America's first Egyptologists, begin to enter the collection. This major gift is followed by additional donations from his wife and children, including objects; the establishment of the Wilbour Fund to support the collecting activities that helped form today's Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Near Eastern Art Department; and Wilbour's papers and personal library, which would later serve as the foundation of the Wilbour Library of Egyptology.

1916

The *Swedish Art Exhibition*, on display from January 30 to February 28, 1916, is widely attended. For the month of February alone, Museum attendance is over 123,000 people.

1916

The Museum hosts the first Teachers Institute, from September 11 to 21, 1916. Organized by the city's Department of Education, the institute welcomes teachers from Districts 33 and 35 and offers lectures as part of a two-week course. The Museum's Education department has worked with public-school educators since this time.

1916

The Museum holds its first exhibition for Brooklyn artists, *Brooklyn Society of Etchers: Annual Exhibition*, from November 28, 1916, to January 18, 1917.

1917

After the United States enters World War I, the Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden create a war garden for employees of both institutions in the space where the parking lot now stands. Museum employees purchase Liberty Loans and participate in the Second Red Cross War Drive of 1918.

1918

The Brooklyn Museum produces its first film, a documentation of the mounting and arranging of six caribou specimens obtained in a 1917 expedition to Newfoundland, Canada, which were displayed in the Natural Sciences galleries.

1920

The Eastern Parkway Brooklyn Museum subway stop opens in front of the Museum, and attendance increases markedly.

1921

The Brooklyn Museum organizes a significant retrospective of Art Nouveau artist Alfons Mucha's work, *Historic Paintings of the Slavic Nations by Alfons Mucha*. Five of the works in his *Slav Epic* series (1910–28) are exhibited along with original posters and drawings.

1923

The Brooklyn Museum presents a landmark exhibition of African art from April 11 to May 20, 1923. Despite its problematic title, *Primitive Negro Art, Chiefly from the Belgian Congo* showcases over 1,400 objects from African regions, and, importantly, presents them as art. The exhibition includes African art collected by Stewart Culin as well as textiles by contemporary designers. It is the first museum exhibition to display African works as fine art; the exhibition is shown in the fine arts wing, not in the ethnology section.

1925

The final sections of the Museum building are completed, bringing its capacity to four hundred thousand square feet.

1925

In December, the Rainbow House opens as a reinstallation of the Ethnology collections, curated by Stewart Culin. The Rainbow House is an exemplary display of Culin's philosophies on collecting, curating, and museology. In a large, open space, he installed nearly all of the ethnological collections in a square hall symbolic of the world. According to Culin, "This Gallery of Ethnology . . . is not merely a symbol of the people of the world. It is intended as a home of their spirit. [It is meant] as a place for its concrete expression."

1926

The International Exhibition of Modern Art Assembled by the Société Anonyme opens on November 19, 1926, and is on view until January 10, 1927. The comprehensive exhibition is one of the first modern art exhibitions in a U.S. museum, pre-dating the founding of the Museum of Modern Art by three years. The Société Anonyme was founded in 1920 by Katherine S. Dreier, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp, and the exhibition features many notable artists, including Duchamp, Man Ray, Alexander Archipenko, Constantin Brancusi, Stuart Davis, Giorgio De Chirico, Max Ernst, Juan Gris, Marsden Hartley, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Fernand Léger, El Lissitzky, Franz Marc, John Marin, Joan Miró, Piet Mondrian, Georgia O'Keeffe, Antoine Pevsner, Francis Picabia, Gino Severini, Alfred Stieglitz, and Jacques Villon.

1927

The interiors of the East Wing and Grand Court are completed. These are the last two sections of the Museum completed according to the original architectural plans by McKim, Mead & White.

1927

The Brooklyn Museum's first restaurant—a lunch and tea room—opens on the fourth floor, with a view of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

1927

The Museum hosts Georgia O’Keeffe’s first solo exhibition in a museum. Showcasing fifteen paintings, *Paintings by Georgia O’Keeffe* is on view from June 6 to September 1, 1927.

1927–1929

The Museum is the first art museum in the United States to open a series of nineteenth-century period rooms.

1930

The Department of Education is formally established, continuing and expanding the educational efforts begun by the Brooklyn Institute and the docent program. It is led by Herbert Spinden, who was appointed Curator of Ethnology in 1929.

1932

International Photographers, on view from March 8 to 31, 1932, is one of the first major exhibitions to feature photographers from England, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, and the United States, including Walker Evans, Tina Modotti, Man Ray, and Charles Sheeler.

1932

Jean Capart, considered the “Father of Belgian Egyptology,” becomes the first Honorary Curator of Egyptology.

1933

A record 887,878 people visit the Museum in 1933, one of the highest annual attendance years up to this time. This is likely due to the fact that the public could visit the Museum for free, a welcome opportunity during the Great Depression.

1934–1935

Under new director Philip N. Youtz, the Museum reorganizes its curatorial departments and hires new staff in professional positions. Herbert Spinden is appointed Curator of American Indian Art and Primitive Cultures; Laurance Page Roberts, Curator of Oriental Art; Edwin L. M. Taggart, Assistant Curator for Ancient Art; Louise Chase, Assistant Curator for Medieval Art; Frederick A. Sweet, Curator of Renaissance Art; Elizabeth Haynes, Assistant Curator of American Rooms; and Herbert B. Tschudy, Curator of Contemporary Art. Herman de Wetter is hired as Museum Photographer. The Registrar’s Department is founded with John D. Cooney as

the first Registrar. The Editorial, Public Relations, and Membership Office is organized with Grant Code as Editor.

The Museum establishes a new collecting policy emphasizing the fine arts, cultural history, and the social and industrial aspects of art. The natural-science collections are removed from the gallery spaces and dispersed to several institutions, including the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the American Museum of Natural History.

1934–1935

The Restoration Laboratory—one of the first conservation laboratories in America—is established with Sheldon Keck as Restorer.

1934–1935

The Wilbour Library of Egyptology—one of the world's important resources on ancient Egypt—opens to scholars and the public.

1934–1937

In addition to establishing and reorganizing the professional departments at the Museum, Director Philip N. Youtz embarks on a hefty project to renovate the building's facade and the gallery spaces on every floor to create a more modern-looking institution. Between 1934 and 1935, the front steps of the Museum are removed and a new entrance is created. Between 1935 and 1937, almost the entire museum is reorganized: the oldest art in the collection is displayed on the first floor, leading up to a small gallery dedicated to living artists on the sixth floor.

1935

The first internship program at the Museum is offered through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

1937

The Education department creates a Loan Room. Designed primarily for teachers, the Loan Room allows users to borrow motion pictures, records, school-service plates, and mounted pictures.

1937

The Prints and Drawings department is separated from the Library, and a Print Room is established for viewing artworks not on display in the galleries.

1938

Laurance Page Roberts, Curator of Oriental Art, is appointed Director of the Museum.

1941

The Brooklyn Museum Art School, formerly the Brooklyn Art School, which was jointly organized by the BIAS and the Brooklyn Art Association in 1891, is installed in the Museum's West Wing. The school remains active until 1985, educating thousands of students. Faculty members over the years include William Baziotis, Max Beckmann, Yonia Fain, Helen Frankenthaler, Chaim Gross, Donald Judd, Alex Katz, William King, Toshio Odate, Gabor Peterdi, Joan Semmel, Ben Shahn, George Kendall Shaw, Reuben Tam, Rufino Tamayo, and many other artists.

1941

The exhibition *America South of U.S.* opens. On view from November 13, 1941, to January 2, 1942, it showcases the Museum's newly acquired collection of colonial Latin American art.

1941

Herman de Wetter, Staff Photographer, begins to collect contemporary photographs for the Museum, which are housed in the Prints and Drawings department.

1941

Una Johnson, Assistant Curator of Prints and Drawings, is promoted to Curator of Prints and Drawings. While she is not the first Prints and Drawings curator, she builds the print collection with contemporary works, establishes relationships with well-known artists, and enhances the collection's reputation, laying the foundation for what it is today.

1941

The Museum is one of the first American museums to exhibit art from the Pacific Islands.

1942

Isabel Spaulding Roberts, art historian, museum educator, and patron of the arts, and wife of Director Laurance Page Roberts, becomes Interim Director of the Museum when Laurance is drafted into the Army and granted a leave of absence. She is later promoted to full Director, becoming the first female director of the Museum. During her tenure, through World War II, she

emphasizes the Museum as an important place for education and hope, and promotes wartime causes through programming and exhibitions.

1942–1945

The Brooklyn Museum is greatly affected by World War II. Several staff members are drafted into or volunteer for service, including Laurance Page Roberts, John Baur, Charles Braham, John D. Cooney, George Kirk, Augustus Peck, William Ross, and Walter Taras. With a reduced staff and budget, the Museum continues to create and produce educational programming and exhibits. The Museum also hosts War Stamp Concerts, and employees purchase War Bonds to help support the war.

During the war, Sheldon Keck, Restorer at the Museum, enlists and is selected to join the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) program. Frederick Pleasants, who would join the Museum staff in 1949, is also involved in the MFAA. He serves with the Pictorial Research Branch of the United States Office of Strategic Services and later holds a leadership position at the Munich Central Collecting Point.

1944

The Museum organizes the exhibition *Jose Guadalupe Posada: Printmaker to the Mexican People*, on view from September 7 to October 15, 1944—the first solo exhibition of a Mexican artist at the Museum.

1945

The Museum hosts its first exhibition on contemporary African American artists, titled *The Negro Artist Comes of Age*, from November 2 to 25, 1945.

1946

Laurance Page Roberts formally resigns after finishing his military service, and architect Charles Nagel is appointed Director of the Museum.

1947

Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington (1796), acquired by the Museum in 1945, is placed on view for first time, in the Entrance Hall, to celebrate the Museum's fiftieth anniversary as well as the first President's birthday.

1947

Hannah T. Rose, who was hired in the Education department in 1931, is promoted to Curator of Education. Over the course of her career at the Museum, Rose develops the Education Division's

goal of interpreting the collections for members of the public of all ages. Under her guidance, Education creates internationally recognized programming, tours, loans of education material, and art classes.

1947

Volunteers form the Community Committee to aid in promoting the exhibition *Know Your United Nations*, open from September 16 to November 23, 1947. After the exhibition, the committee continues volunteering for the Museum, serving as an outreach tool and raising funds for the Museum through programming.

1948

The Edward C. Blum Design Laboratory opens to the public. Known as the Design Lab, it is a unique, state-of-the-art facility within the Museum that houses offices, exhibition space, and eight soundproof workrooms with scientific and industrial equipment. With a special membership, designers and scholars could view any work in the Costume and Textile Collection. The Lab also works with designers, firms, and department stores. This iteration of the Design Lab grew out of the Museum's trailblazing Industrial Division. Led by Michelle Murphy, the division was officially established in 1940 with its own laboratory.

1948

The Brooklyn Museum and the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico complete plans for an international exchange of art objects. Ten pre-Hispanic sculptures from the Valley of Mexico are to be displayed in Brooklyn Museum galleries.

1952

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) chooses the Brooklyn Museum as the site of a seminar highlighting the Museum's educational role and encouraging countries to further develop educational activities in museums.

1953

The newly renovated and reinstalled Egyptian Galleries open to high praise. A. L. Chanin writes in *Art Digest* that visitors who make the trek to the galleries "will be rewarded by the Museum's sensitive, thoughtful, and painstaking labor of love."

1954

The groundbreaking exhibition *Masterpieces of African Art* is on view from October 21, 1954, to January 2, 1955. The exhibition signals a long-overdue shift in how museums are representing non-Western art.

1954

The Museum opens its first Gallery Shop. The Shop displays and sells folk art, ceramics, crafts, prints, reproductions of works in the collection, and other merchandise.

1954

The exhibition *Take Care* is on view from January 18 to February 28, 1954. Mounted under the leadership of Caroline Keck, a conservation consultant, the exhibition showcases techniques of the investigation and scientific conservation of paintings.

1955

Art historian Edgar Craig Schenck is appointed as Director of the Museum.

1957

Brooklyn Museum employees join the District Council 37 (DC 37) union for representation and collective bargaining. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees grants a charter to the Brooklyn Museum Local 1502 in 1957, and its first contract is signed in 1962.

1958

The first Brooklyn Museum Ball—a popular fundraising event—is held. Each year has a specific theme; in 1958 the ball celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Brooklyn Bridge.

1960

Thomas S. Beuchner, former Director of the Corning Museum of Glass, in New York, is appointed as Director of the Brooklyn Museum after the untimely passing of Director Edgar Craig Schenck. At thirty-three years old, Beuchner is one of the youngest museum directors in the country.

1960

The Department of Installations and the Department of Publications are created to “develop a visual image for the Museum through co-ordination of design.” By 1963 the two departments are merged along with Graphic Design, forming the Installations, Publications, and Graphic Design Department.

1960

The Museum hosts the retrospective *Paintings of Jacob Lawrence*, its first solo exhibition of a Black artist, from November 22, 1960, to January 2, 1961. The Museum would host another retrospective of Lawrence’s work in 1987.

1961

The Education department starts the Junior Membership program. Junior Members receive special membership cards to show their love of the Museum, and the department organizes special classes, activities, and tours for them. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the program develops into a robust art program for youths and even has a small gallery space for displaying their artworks. Jean-Michel Basquiat was a notable Junior Member of the Brooklyn Museum.

1962

The Museum helps to organize and hosts the Exposition of Painting Conservation, a conference featuring displays of museum-quality materials and conservation methods and machines. It is also a space for learning and collaboration in the field. The film *The Hidden Life of a Painting* is created during the exposition.

1963

The Museum hosts an Arts Festival to benefit the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Artists donate their work to be sold, and all proceeds go to the Fund. Elaine de Kooning is the first artist to donate work for the event.

1964

Daniel Chester French's sculptures *Manhattan* and *Brooklyn*, installed on the Manhattan Bridge in 1916, are removed from the bridge and installed on the exterior of the Brooklyn Museum.

1964

The Jan Martense Schenck House is installed in the Museum and opens to the public. Originally built in the late seventeenth century, the house represents the oldest architecture in the Museum's period-room collection.

1965

The Hall of the Americas (now the Great Hall) is reinstalled with Indigenous art from North and South America and opens to the public.

1966

The Frieda Schiff Warburg Memorial Sculpture Garden, containing architectural fragments from demolished New York buildings, opens behind the Museum.

1966

The Community Committee and Anne Estern, Coordinator of Development of the Edward C. Blum Design Lab, organize the first annual *Fence Art Show*. Sixty-eight amateur and professional artists hang their work on the fence surrounding the Museum for two days of judging. After 1969 winners are awarded with a group exhibition in the Community Gallery. The *Fence Art Show* lasts through 1981 and is well loved.

1966

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designates the Brooklyn Museum building a landmark.

1967

The Painting Study Gallery opens. This gallery functions as open storage and provides space for the study of artworks not usually on display. Users are required either to apply for entry or to join a tour of the space.

1967

The Roebling Society is founded in December 1967 by Friends of the Brooklyn Museum. The Society aims to promote greater understanding and enjoyment of the Museum's collections, to

improve the collections by purchasing artwork, and to encourage members to be avid art collectors.

1968

The installation *Listening to Pictures*, on view from 1968 to 1973, is the first at the Museum to use audio guides. Audio stations are set up next to the artworks, and each station plays a segment of an interview with the artist explaining their work.

1968

The exhibition *Some More Beginnings: Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.)*, is presented by Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), Incorporated, an organization that pairs engineers and artists to create unique projects, “works that totally involve the onlooker, and in many cases require him to participate. Objects talk, move, blink, whirl, make music, and demand response.” The exhibition is on view from November 25, 1968, to January 5, 1969.

1968

The Community Gallery—one of the first in the United States—is founded after the local arts group F.I.C.E. (Federated Institutes of Cultural Enrichment) called on the Museum to increase the representation of artists of color in its galleries and collections. Led by Director Henri Ghent, and later Richard Waller, the Community Gallery holds six to eight exhibitions a year and focuses on showing work by local and BIPOC artists, as well as nontraditional art. Exhibitions include *Contemporary Afro-American Arts* (1968), *Contemporary Puerto Rican Artists* (1969), *Image d’Haiti* (1969), *Touch’N’See* (1970), *Brooklyn’s Comic Book Artists* (1974), *Inside Outside: Art from the Brooklyn House of Detention for Men* (1975), *Thread, Wool, and Fabric* (1978), and more. Under Ghent, an advisory committee is formed to help select exhibitions. The original committee includes the Honorable Shirley Chisholm and the artist Romare Bearden.

1969

Many cultural institutions in New York City face heavy budget cuts. Brooklyn Museum visitors, staff, and other supporters hold a demonstration to support the Museum.

1969

J. Stewart Johnson is named Vice Director for Collections, a position that later evolves into the Chief Curator position. He is succeeded in 1970 by Bernard V. Bothmer.

1970

The exhibition *Touch'N'See* is featured in the Community Gallery from December 6, 1970, to January 10, 1971. The artworks were created by members of the Industrial Home for the Blind in Brooklyn, and many of the works are intended to be touched. This is the first exhibition of artworks by blind artists at the Brooklyn Museum.

1970

The Brooklyn Museum Art School sponsors the exhibition *Attitudes: Don Judd, et al*, on view from July 27 to October 1, 1970. Judd taught at the Art School in 1963 and 1964. For the exhibition, he invited artists to pair their work with a statement about their views on art, life, and philosophy. The artists included Toshio Odate, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Smithson, and Lenore Tawney; for some, it was their first time exhibiting at the Brooklyn Museum.

1971

Duncan F. Cameron is appointed Director of the Museum.

1971

Museum attendance reaches 1.2 million visitors, due in part to the success of the exhibitions *Vincent van Gogh: Paintings and Drawings* (February 14–April 4, 1971) and *Van Gogh's Sources of Inspiration: 100 Prints from His Personal Collection* (February 1–April 4, 1971).

1971

Hannah T. Rose is promoted from Curator of Education to Vice Director of Education. This marks the first time the Education department is represented in the Administrative Suite.

1972

Hannah T. Rose, Vice Director of Education, retires. Julia Hotton is appointed as Assistant Director of Interpretation, beginning a new era of the Education department. The department begins to work closely with the curatorial departments to create interpretative materials and special programming for exhibitions. Uniquely, the Education department has a Community Programs division that works with local entities, including the Brooklyn Arts and Cultural Association (BACA), the Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance (BECA), day cares, senior centers, and small local arts organizations.

1972

The Middle Eastern Art Galleries open on April 13, 1972.

1972

The Brooklyn Museum hosts the West Indian Day events for the first time. The celebration of West Indian Day in New York City has a long history dating back to the 1920s.

1972

The Museum opens its first galleries dedicated solely to the Costume and Textile Collection. Designed by Paul Hayer, the galleries have a special-exhibition section, an open-storage section, and a space called the Costume Theater, which features costumes displayed on mannequins on a conveyor belt.

1972

The Museum's Personnel department is founded.

1973–1977

The Brooklyn Museum Art School provides art classes to inmates in the Brooklyn House of Detention from February 1973 to 1977 and in the New York City House of Detention for Men, on Rikers Island, from April 1975 to about 1977. Students have the opportunity to exhibit their work in Community Gallery exhibits, and some receive scholarships to the Art School after completing their time.

1974

Michael Botwinick, former Assistant Director for Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is appointed as Director of the Brooklyn Museum.

1974

The Museum becomes the first museum in the continental United States to open a permanent gallery space for the presentation of Korean art.

1974

The first and only staff strike is held in May 1974. Members of the staff who were not represented by the District Council 37 (DC 37) union successfully go on strike for the right to join DC 37. As a result, an additional fifty people are allowed to vote and join the union.

1976

The Brooklyn Museum is added to the U.S. National Park Services' National Register of Historic Places. Construction to expand the museum begins.

1976

The Museum breaks ground on a five-story New Service Extension at the rear of the building, designed by the architectural firm Prentice & Chan, Ohlhausen. The addition includes new elevator banks, mechanical spaces, Education department offices and classrooms, and more.

1976

The Museum hosts a small retrospective of Consuelo Kanaga's photographs. On view from December 28, 1976, to February 6, 1977, it is the first solo museum exhibition for Kanaga. The Museum would curate a much larger retrospective of the artist's work in 1993.

1977

To complement the landmark exhibition *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (October 1–November 27, 1977), Joan Semmel, a faculty member of the Brooklyn Museum Art School, curates *Contemporary Women: Consciousness & Content* (October 1–27, 1977), held in the Art School's galleries. This exhibition features contemporary women artists addressing feminist themes.

1977

Curated by artist and scholar David C. Driskell, the historic exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art* travels from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) to the Brooklyn Museum, where it is on view from June 25 to September 5, 1977. Programming is paired with the exhibition to create a space to recognize and celebrate Black artists. During a daylong symposium, one panel features autobiographical talks by Romare Bearden, Robert Blackburn,

Selma Burke, Ernest T. Crichlow, Roy DeCarava, Jacob Lawrence, Valerie Maynard, John Rhoden, Vincent DaCosta Smith, and William T. Williams. The artists speak about their life and art and celebrate each other's work.

1980

Fourteen period rooms are reopened to the public, along with new installations of metalware, glass, and ceramics.

1980

The Museum begins to ask visitors for a voluntary admission contribution of \$1.50. Historically, the Museum was free, although in some years throughout its history it operated with "paid days."

1980

Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) is on view from October 18, 1980, to January 18, 1981. Before coming to Brooklyn, the work was hosted in San Francisco, Houston, and Boston and then was in storage after two institutions canceled their exhibitions. Art critic Hilton Kramer called the work "crass and solemn and single minded." However, eighty thousand people come to view *The Dinner Party* during its Brooklyn Museum show—making up 54 percent of the Museum's daily visitors during this period.

1982–1983

The Genius of Charles James, organized by the Brooklyn Museum, is the first major retrospective of the couture fashion designer. It is on view from October 16, 1982, to January 16, 1983.

1983

Art historian Robert T. Buck is appointed as Director of the Museum.

1983

The Public Affairs department is created to strengthen relationships with local and state governments. In 1985 it branches into two departments: Government and Community Relations, and Public Information.

1984–1997

Between 1984 and 1997, numerous contemporary artists display their work in Grand Lobby installations. The artists include Vito Acconci (1985), Sol LeWitt (1985), Robert Longo (1985), Jenny Holzer (1988), Félix González-Torres (1989), Joseph Kosuth (1990), Jin Soo Kim (1992), Ida Applebroog (1993), Dale Chihuly (1994–95), and Alison Saar (1995–96).

1985

The Education department rebrands its youth art program as the Raiders of the Fine Arts.

1985

Working in Brooklyn, a series of contemporary exhibitions devoted entirely to Brooklyn artists, begins. It remains active until 2004.

1985

The Brooklyn Museum Art School closes, and the courses transfer to the Pratt Institute to become part of that institution's long-established fine-arts program.

1985

The Brooklyn Museum Archives are established with Deborah Wythe as the first Archivist.

1985

The Planning department is established to help with long-range planning for the building program, with Joan Darragh as the Assistant Director of Planning.

1985

Charlotta Kotik is hired as Curator of Contemporary Art.

1985

The Gallery Shop is relocated on the first floor and reinvigorated with new merchandise, focusing on activities and items for children.

1985

The Marketing and Development departments expand their activities to produce the Museum's first dedicated membership campaign and a paid TV ad campaign.

1986

The Museum sponsors a competition for a Master Plan, meant to address long-standing architectural and space issues. The plan by Arata Isozaki & Associates and James Stewart Polshek and Partners is chosen, as it "respects the intentions of the original McKim, Mead and White plan, yet translates it with a 20th-century vocabulary into the 21st Century."

1986

After being closed for five years for reinstallation, the galleries of Islamic art reopen to the public.

1986

The Education department develops workshops called Children Meet the Artist, including one with the artist Jacob Lawrence. Other children's activities include Artyfacts, a drop-in art-making workshop on Saturdays for kids ages four and up, and What's Up?, a drop-in art-making workshop on weekends for kids ages six and up.

1989

On December 1, 1989, the Brooklyn Museum participates in A Day Without Art, a day of observance at museums across the nation that coincides with the World Health Organization's second AIDS Awareness Day.

1989–1990

Between 1989 and 1990, the Brooklyn Museum begins a program called A Year of Video Art, which examines the history of video art and its current directions. The program includes a lecture series and exhibits of examples of video art.

1991

The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium opens on the third floor of the Museum. The 460-seat facility is part of the Master Plan designed by Arata Isozaki & Associates and James Stewart Polshek and Partners.

1992

After the National Endowment for the Arts revoked arts organization Franklin Furnace's grant funding because some of its featured artists had been labeled "obscene," the Brooklyn Museum and Franklin Furnace co-host a day of programming called Too Shocking to Show, on June 21, 1992. The event raises support for the organization and features performances by artists Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, Sapphire, and Scarlet O.

1992

Renovations of the Morris A. and Meyer Schapiro Wing are completed.

1993

The Museum opens renovated gallery space on three floors of the West Wing. The redesigned galleries add thirty thousand square feet in the West Wing, the oldest part of the nineteenth-century landmark building originally designed by McKim, Mead & White.

1993

The National Endowment for the Arts and the United States Information Agency select Louise Bourgeois to represent the United States at the 1993 Venice Biennale. Charlotta Kotik, the Brooklyn Museum's Curator of Contemporary Art, organizes the exhibition presented at the U.S. pavilion at the Biennale.

1993

Barbara Head Millstein, Curator of Photography, curates the first major retrospective of Consuelo Kanaga's work, *Consuelo Kanaga: An American Photographer*, on view from October 15, 1993, to February 27, 1994.

1994

The Museum produces its first CD-ROM, highlighting the Egyptian art collection. According to the September–October 1994 newsletter: "For adults and older children, the Egyptian department has left biblical times for the twenty-first century with the publication of the Museum's first CD-ROM based on its holdings in ancient Egyptian art. . . . The CD contains a total of one hundred masterworks from the Museum's distinguished collection." While today it is easy to locate images of art online, this CD represented a first step toward sharing the Museum's collections virtually.

1995

The Arts of Africa galleries are reinstalled and opened to the public. In conjunction with their opening, the Education department creates a Teacher's Guide specifically for the African art galleries.

1995

The Museum organizes one of the first exhibitions solely dedicated to the work of Elsa Schiaparelli, *A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion from the Brooklyn Museum*, on view from October 20, 1995, to March 24, 1996.

1996

The Board of Trustees changes the name of the Museum to "Brooklyn Museum of Art."

1996

The Education department rebrands the Raiders of the Fine Arts to the Gallery/Studio Program. This program—which is still in existence today as the Studio Art Program—includes classes for both children and adults.

1996

The Brooklyn Museum launches its first website.

1997

Arnold L. Lehman, former director of the Miami Art Center and the Baltimore Museum of Art, is appointed as Director of the Museum.

1997

Organized by the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, with the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the exhibition *Monet and the Mediterranean* brings together over sixty paintings that Claude Monet created during his trips to Venice and the French and Italian Rivas. The exhibition is on view in Brooklyn from October 10, 1997, to January 4, 1998.

1998

The Museum launches its iconic First Saturdays program, offering free access to visitors on the first Saturday of every month and laying the groundwork for decades of programming dedicated to radical welcome and expanding access.

1998

The Education department opens The Learning Center, a space in the Museum for children and young adults to use computers for educational activities, research artwork online, and read books about art. The Learning Center remains active until 2005.

1999

The Museum presents the controversial and acclaimed exhibition *SENSATION: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* from October 2, 1999, to January 9, 2000. Even before the public opening on October 2, people were upset that the Museum was hosting the exhibition, which included art that some considered shocking and offensive—particularly Chris Ofili's *Holy Virgin Mary* (1996), a painting depicting a Black Madonna with real elephant dung and images of female genitalia. Yet the Museum resisted calls for the show to be canceled. As a result, for the month of October, the Museum did not receive its allocated city funding, and the City of New York sent the Museum a letter stating that it was in violation of its lease. The Museum then countersued the city and Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Because of the controversy, *SENSATION* went viral: it was the subject of hundreds of national and international newspaper articles; thousands of opinionated letters about it poured into the Museum; and at least 225,000 people visited to see the works for themselves. Ultimately, the Museum and the city settled.

Fun fact: David Bowie voiced the audio tour of *SENSATION*, as he had a great love of the Young British Artists.

2001

The exhibition *Committed to the Image: Contemporary Black Photographers*, on view from February 16 to April 29, 2001, is met with acclaim and controversy. During the opening week, Mayor Rudy Giuliani accuses the Museum of promoting anti-Catholic sentiments by displaying Renee Cox's *Yo Mama's Last Supper* (1996) and calls for a "decency panel" to review artworks in New York City museums that receive state funding. The Museum receives thousands of concerned letters.

2001

The reinstatement of the American Art galleries, titled *American Identities: A New Look*, opens. For the first time, major artworks from the Museum's exceptional collections of fine and decorative American arts are displayed together with selections from its holdings of Native American and Spanish colonial art.

2001

The first Beaux-Arts Court renovation is completed.

2002

Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) enters the Museum's collection as the founding gift and future centerpiece of the forthcoming Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.

2002

The Museum's first online library catalogue is launched, providing unprecedented access to the resources held in the Museum Libraries and Archives.

2004

The Board of Trustees changes the name of the institution from "Brooklyn Museum of Art" to "Brooklyn Museum."

2004

The Martha A. and Robert S. Rubin Pavilion and Lobby is unveiled. Designed by Polshek Partnership Architects, this space offers a new front entrance and public plaza.

2004

The Museum organizes Kehinde Wiley's first solo museum exhibition, *Passing/Posing: Kehinde Wiley Paintings*, on view at the Museum from October 8, 2004, to February 6, 2005.

2005

Over one hundred works by Jean-Michel Basquiat are featured in the exhibition *Basquiat*, on view from March 11 to June 5, 2005. To complement the exhibition, the Education department creates an award-winning website for teens, called Street to Studio, where users can view and zoom in on select works by Basquiat and learn about the artist's practice and life.

2005

The Luce Center for American Art Visible Storage and Study Center opens.

2007

The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art is established, making the Brooklyn Museum the first museum to establish a center for feminist art. *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) by Judy Chicago, donated by Dr. Sackler in 2002, is its centerpiece. Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin curate the founding exhibition, *Global Feminisms*, the "first major exhibition to examine international feminist art at the turn of the twenty-first century." The show is on view from March 23 to July 1, 2007.

2007

The Brooklyn Museum joins social media, creating its Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts.

2008

A section of the Museum's website called "Collections" launches, providing digital images and catalogue information about works in the collections.

2009

The Costume Collection is transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it is to be known as the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

2011

The Brooklyn Museum hosts its first annual Brooklyn Artists Ball, a fundraising gala celebrating Brooklyn-based artists.

2011

The Museum joins Instagram. The first post is a photo of a mummified cat and a mummified ibis from ancient Egypt with the following caption: “cat and ibis in conservation lab ready for travel to @amcny #mummyCT #BkMConservation.”

2013

The Museum presents the first New York solo exhibition of El Anatsui’s work, titled *Gravity and Grace: Monumental Works by El Anatsui*, from February 8 to August 18, 2013.

2013

The Museum joins Tumblr in October 2013. The first post, by Shelley Bernstein, is on the exhibition *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk* (October 25, 2013–February 23, 2014).

2014

The Brooklyn Museum begins to offer free admission for visitors ages 19 and under (previously, only visitors 12 and under were admitted for free).

2015

Anne Pasternak is named the Shelby White and Leon Levy Director of the Brooklyn Museum.

2015

Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic—the first museum survey of the artist’s rich and prolific career—is on view from February 20 to May 24, 2015.

2016

The Museum launches its ASK app, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. Museum visitors can use the app to ask questions, get information, and share insights through live, one-on-one texting with museum experts.

2017

The groundbreaking exhibition *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85* opens in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. The exhibition introduction states: “As the second-wave Feminist Movement gained strength in the 1970s, women of color found themselves working with, and at times in opposition to, the largely white, middle-class women primarily responsible for establishing the tone, priorities, and methods of the fight for gender equity in the United States. Whether the term feminism was used or not—and in communities of color, it often was not—black women envisioned a revolution against the systems of oppression they faced in the art world and the culture at large.” The exhibition is on view from April 21 to September 17, 2017.

2017–2018

The Brooklyn Museum is selected to participate in the Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab, a program hosted by Race Forward. Adjoa Jones de Almeida, the Museum’s Director of Education, spearheads a series of staff programs based on the Lab called the Brooklyn Museum Racial Equity series. Topics include centering race, implicit bias, and emotional labor. Out of these staff programs grow interdepartmental committees and task forces that would have a lasting impact on the Museum, including: a racial-equity task force, a wage-transparency committee, a hiring and orientation committee, a professional-development committee, and a colonial-history and repatriation task force (the latter would become the Committee for Institutional History, Collections Practices, and Provenance). These committees and task forces aim to address and improve wage equity for all staff, provide clarity on the provenance of collection objects, create a land acknowledgement, and conduct language audits. The racial-equity task force is the predecessor of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access department, founded by its director, Keonna Hendrick, in 2021.

2019

In order to acknowledge the Brooklyn Museum's location on Lenapehoking, in October 2019 the Museum organizes a two-day workshop called "Of This Land: A Convening on Living Land Acknowledgments in Brooklyn." The program includes Lenape representatives from four federally recognized tribes and the Lenape Center, along with staff from eight Brooklyn cultural institutions. The goal of the convening is to discuss how Brooklyn institutions can implement living, or ongoing, land-acknowledgment projects that are appropriate and respectful to Lenape (Delaware) Nations. The Brooklyn Museum's land-acknowledgment statement, presented adjacent to the Museum's main entrance, grows out of this workshop.

2019

The Museum establishes the UOVO Prize, an annual award given by the Museum to an emerging artist living or working in Brooklyn. John Edmonds is named the first winner of the prize. Other winners have included Baseera Khan, Oscar yi Hou, and Suneil Sanzgiri.

2019

Several Brooklyn Museum staff members from across curatorial and education departments organize *Nobody Promised You Tomorrow: Art 50 Years After Stonewall*. On view from May 3 to December 8, 2019, the exhibition commemorates the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in New York City by exploring the rebellion's profound legacy and lasting impact on the queer artistic community.

2020

In response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the Museum, along with other cultural institutions across New York, closes its doors from March to September 2020 to help curb the spread of the virus. Upon reopening, the Museum explores alternatives for gathering that use outdoor spaces, such as the outdoor exhibition *Art on the Stoop: Sunset Screenings*.

2021

The Brooklyn Museum is awarded a historic \$50 million gift from the City of New York, the largest capital investment in its history.

2021

Employees who previously were not members of the District Council 37 (DC 37) union at the Museum vote to unionize and join the UAW (United Auto Workers) Local 2110. The first contract is ratified in November 2023.

2022

On March 2, 2022, artist Deborah Kass joins Museum staff to wrap the *O* in her vivid yellow outdoor sculpture *OY/YO* (2015) in blue fabric to show solidarity with Ukraine after the country was invaded by Russia.

2022

The Museum launches its collaboration with the arts and culture app Bloomberg Connects. The app allows for an enriched museum experience both on-site and virtually.

2022

The Museum unveils its revamped galleries for the Arts of Asia and the Arts of the Islamic World.

2023

Niles Luther is named the inaugural Composer in Residence at the Brooklyn Museum, with financial support from the Ford Foundation. Working with the Exhibitions department, Luther composes music inspired by the Museum's collection objects.

2023

It's Pablo-matic: Picasso According to Hannah Gadsby opens at the Museum to both high praise and harsh criticism. In an effort to dispute masculine narratives of modernism, the exhibition pairs works by Pablo Picasso with feminist art from the Museum's collections. The exhibition is shown from June 2 to September 24, 2023.

2024

The Toby Devan Lewis Education Center opens in January 2024. The center provides refreshed galleries and studio spaces for art-making and learning for people of all ages.