

Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum Celebrates 200th Anniversary with Dynamic Programming, Special Exhibitions, and Transformative Initiatives

A yearlong celebration kicks off in October 2024, honoring the Museum’s legacy and looking toward the future



Brooklyn Museum plaza, April 2023. (Photo: Andrew Brincka)

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the Brooklyn Museum—one of the oldest, largest, and boldest museums in the United States. Starting in fall 2024, the Museum will celebrate its legacy and chart its future as a cultural organization that has continually evolved and innovated since its founding. Tracing its origins to 1824, when it was incorporated as Brooklyn’s first free circulating library, the Museum is grounded in a mission of building community, knowledge, and opportunity through art and culture. Today, the Brooklyn Museum is a global cultural hub, nurtured by the freethinking spirit and creative energy of its home borough.

The anniversary lineup, generously supported by Bank of America, will reinterpret the Museum’s collection in daring new ways, highlight the Museum’s commitment to Brooklyn and its artists, introduce notable gifts of art, and spark wonderment through numerous special exhibitions. The Museum will also introduce initiatives that provide more access and more space to experience art that changes us—including the launch of a mobile “Museum on Wheels.”

“This is a time of great momentum at the Brooklyn Museum! Always a trailblazer, the Museum has a long history of transformation and defying convention,” says Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum. “We are a space that welcomes diverse points of view, challenges the status quo, and weaves together all forms of art and culture to truly represent the people we serve. At this exciting moment in our journey, we look forward to celebrating our history and future ambitions as a museum that is both rigorous and joyous, historic and contemporary.”

“The Brooklyn Museum is a cornerstone of the city’s culture,” adds Barbara M. Vogelstein, Chairman of the Brooklyn Museum’s Board of Trustees. “For 200 years, we have brought people together to engage in the dynamic energy of Brooklyn and all that the borough represents, from creativity to innovation to community. Throughout my years supporting the Museum, I have seen an exceptional trajectory. Our next chapter will build on our strengths as we continue to champion art that awakens, provokes, and inspires.”

The anniversary will kick off October 4–5, 2024. Two landmark exhibitions open on Friday, October 4: *The Brooklyn Artists Exhibition*, a major group show highlighting Brooklyn artists, curated by an artist committee including Jeffrey Gibson, Vik Muniz, Mickalene Thomas, and Fred Tomaselli; and a significant reinstallation of the Museum’s American Art galleries, foregrounding Black feminist and BIPOC perspectives on American art history. On Saturday, October 5, a celebratory edition of First Saturdays themed “Birthday Bash” will feature a host of activities, performances, and vendors from across the borough. The fall festivities continue with an immersive exhibition exploring gold in art history, fashion, and global culture, opening November 15.

Anniversary programs in 2025 will include an exhibition of new gifts to the Museum’s collection, an installation from the Museum’s Archives tracing the history of the collection and building, and the launch of the Brooklyn Museum’s Museum on Wheels, a social impact initiative that will bring art and action to communities across the borough. The full anniversary program is detailed below.

Throughout the year, the Museum will embark on and share plans for important institutional projects that will define its future. This month, the Museum celebrated the reopening of the [Toby Devan Lewis Education Center](#). The revamped 9,500-square-foot space allows the Museum to better serve the more than 50,000 visitors who participate in its education programs each year. Later this spring, the Museum will expand its Shop on the first floor and upgrade the retail experience to bring in more local makers and elevated brand partnerships. Other exciting plans include a brand and website refresh, visitor experience improvements, and critical infrastructure and building updates that will support greater energy efficiency and lay the foundation for future renovations.

Celebrating 200 Years at the Brooklyn Museum: Anniversary Programming

First Saturday: Birthday Bash | October 5, 2024: The Brooklyn Museum will kick off its anniversary celebration with a special edition of First Saturdays. The event will be a tribute to the creative contributions of the Museum’s local artist community, as well as to its newly opened exhibitions. Programming will include live music, poetry, dance, artist and curator talks, and opportunities to shop the wares of local vendors. Infused with the magic that distinguishes First Saturdays and all Brooklyn Museum programs, the Birthday Bash will highlight the best of the borough and mark two centuries of doing things “the Brooklyn way.”

The Brooklyn Artists Exhibition | October 4, 2024–January 26, 2025: As a testament to its longstanding commitment to Brooklyn’s many talented denizens, the Museum will spotlight Brooklyn artists with a major group exhibition reflecting the range of creativity in the borough. Artists of all backgrounds and disciplines will be invited to submit their work through an open call. The exhibition will be curated by an artist committee, including Jeffrey Gibson, Vik Muniz, Mickalene Thomas, and Fred Tomaselli, and will include the largest number of Brooklyn artists ever featured at once in a Brooklyn Museum exhibition.

Transformation of American Art Galleries | Opening October 4, 2024: A groundbreaking reinstallation of the American Art galleries will offer bold new experiences with the Brooklyn Museum’s renowned collection. The reinstallation brings together art and material culture of the Western Hemisphere spanning 6,000 years and will feature over 400 artworks, including more than 120 that have never been exhibited. Galleries will be organized into frameworks that address the question of how American art might be experienced at this moment and promote a range of encounters with our collection. Building on the rich contributions of BIPOC thinkers and cultural producers, the framework model offers a way to boldly experiment with representation in the galleries, to explore innovative curatorial ideas and actions, and to systematically center more diverse voices and perspectives.

Black Feminist approaches to care, liberation, and space-making inform our curatorial work, which also draws on Indigenous and African diasporic ways of seeing and knowing as guiding principles. The installation will lay down important foundations for new approaches to engaging with collections across the museum. Led by Stephanie Sparling Williams, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of American Art, and a team of seven curators from the departments of American Art, Arts of the Americas, and Decorative Arts and Design, the reinstallation aims to inspire joy, wonder, and curiosity in the Brooklyn Museum’s audiences.

Sections of the Museum’s fifth-floor American Art galleries are closed to prepare for this extensive reinstallation.

Solid Gold | November 15, 2024–May 4, 2025: The majesty of gold will be explored in an immersive exhibition that combines showpieces from the Brooklyn Museum’s collection with international loans. As a material and a color, gold has been a symbol of beauty, honor, joy, ritual, spirituality, success, and wealth throughout history. From millennia-old depictions of the sun to thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian paintings and Japanese screens, to modern couture fashions, gold has taken on myriad forms and meanings. With a global perspective, the Museum will trace the many journeys of the metal that has shaped cultures and legacies.

Gifts of Art in Honor of the 200th | Opening February 28, 2025: As our celebrations continue into 2025, the Museum will host an exhibition of recent acquisitions given in honor of the 200th anniversary. The works will come together in our fourth-floor galleries, honoring our donors, artists, and community partners who care so deeply about the evolution and expansion of the Brooklyn Museum collection.

Brooklyn Made | Opening February 28, 2025: Expanding on the Museum’s homage to its borough, this exhibition will highlight our remarkable collection of art and design made in Brooklyn from the nineteenth century to today. The exhibition will consider Brooklyn’s reputation as an artistic epicenter, whose multicultural communities have produced innovative and provocative objects and artworks. The works on view will illustrate a

range of subjects, from local residents and performers to popular spectacles such as sporting events, festivals, and celebrations.

Building the Brooklyn Museum and Its Collection | Opening February 28, 2025:

This exhibition charts 200 years of Brooklyn Museum history, from the initial spark of an idea for the institution to the formation of its collection, to its present-day role as one of the country's largest and boldest museums. Featuring selections from the Museum's collection and Archives, the exhibition explores Brooklynites' quest to create a monumental institution with a groundbreaking collection that attests to humanity's greatest artistic achievements. Together the works will reveal the stories behind the Museum's distinguished holdings and the individuals who have made the institution so acclaimed.

Nancy Elizabeth Prophet: I Will Not Bend an Inch | March 14–July 13, 2025: This exhibition is the first major museum presentation to honor the work and legacy of Nancy Elizabeth Prophet (1890–1960), an underrecognized sculptor best known for her work in Paris during the interwar years. Organized by and first shown at the RISD Museum, this concise survey features sculptures in wood and marble, polychrome wooden reliefs, watercolors, and photographic presentations of archival documents and lost or destroyed work. The exhibition and accompanying catalogue draw from historical records revealing previously unpublished or unknown works of art, excerpts from Prophet's Paris diary, and the artist's correspondence with Black historian and civil rights advocate W. E. B. Du Bois, providing insight into how Prophet navigated the art world and sought to position her work.

Museum on Wheels | Pilot: July 2024, Launch: April 2025: An interactive art and education experience, Museum on Wheels will launch during the anniversary year and continue beyond the celebration, bringing intergenerational cultural programming to communities across the borough. The mobile art bus, led by the Museum's Learning and Social Impact teams, will be a centerpiece of a sustained, multiyear commitment to work with local communities on several of their most pressing issues: climate change, mass criminalization, and local economic growth. The Museum will also partner with the New York City Housing Authority, community-based social justice organizations, schools, and local government leaders to ensure that the Museum on Wheels responds to the needs of diverse communities throughout Brooklyn.

Activities related to the Brooklyn Museum's 200th anniversary will be detailed on the Museum's website at brooklynmuseum.org/about/200, as well as on social media channels under the hashtag **#BkM200**.

Download press images for the Brooklyn Museum's 200th anniversary.

About the Brooklyn Museum

At the Brooklyn Museum, we see art as a vital force for personal transformation and social change. For 200 years, the Museum has worked to expand the definitions of art by revealing untold stories and uplifting our shared humanity. As one of the oldest, largest, and boldest art museums in the United States, the Brooklyn Museum holds an encyclopedic collection of over 500,000 objects representing more than 5,500 years of creativity—housed in a grand 560,000-square-foot Beaux-Arts building designed by McKim, Mead & White. Highlights include the ancient Egyptian holdings and the Arts of the Americas collection, which is unrivaled in its diverse range: from Native American art

and artifacts to Spanish colonial painting, to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American painting, sculpture, and decorative objects. The Museum is also home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, dedicated to the study and exhibition of feminist art and the only curatorial center of its kind.

Always an innovator, the Brooklyn Museum has long been a leader in the field, from our groundbreaking survey of African art in 1923 to our participation in the World War II-era Monuments Men, a group devoted to returning stolen artworks to their rightful owners. We were also among the first art museums in the United States to institute a formal education program, an in-house conservation department, and a photography school. We opened a Community Gallery during the rise of the Black Arts Movement in 1968 to meet the needs of local citizens and artists, a tradition of social action we carry on today.

Two centuries ago, our founders built an institution that brought world culture and history to a manifold population of immigrants, with the hope of forming better neighbors, a better city, and a better country. Today, the Museum continues to welcome and celebrate the vibrancy and diversity of its home borough. Our trailblazing educational programming remains a cornerstone of our mission, allowing people of all ages and walks of life to tap into the transformative power of their own creativity. Our premier First Saturdays series has become one of Brooklyn's most beloved public programs, hosting approximately 1.5 million visitors since its debut in 1998. Through partnerships with local organizations, we've supported the work and needs of important community activists focused on social justice, climate change, food insecurity, and mass incarceration, among other crucial issues. As we enter our third century, the Brooklyn Museum is more committed than ever to presenting art and experiences that inspire celebration, compassion, courage, and the will to act.



Proud Sponsor of the 200th Anniversary Celebration

José Tavarez, president, Bank of America New York City, says: “New York City is home to arts and cultural institutions that have the power to broaden our horizons and foster greater cultural understanding in our local communities. It’s meaningful for Bank of America to partner with the Brooklyn Museum in celebration of their 200th anniversary because they reflect Brooklyn’s heart, driving social and cultural progress through engaging exhibitions and community-minded programming.”

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