

HISTORIC DEERFIELD  
PUBLIC COLLOQUIUM

# Reawakening Materials:

AMERICAN ART, EMPIRE, AND MATERIAL HISTORIES  
IN HISTORIC DEERFIELD'S COLLECTION



November 7-8, 2024

AT HISTORIC DEERFIELD AND ON ZOOM

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Historic Deerfield  
*Opening Doorways To The Past.*

[HISTORIC-DEERFIELD.ORG/EVENTS](https://historic-deerfield.org/events)

# Reawakening Materials:

## AMERICAN ART, EMPIRE, AND MATERIAL HISTORIES IN HISTORIC DEERFIELD'S COLLECTION

*Reawakening Materials* is a public colloquium centered on Historic Deerfield's collection of paintings, works on paper, and decorative arts. Questions of "empire" emerged from an interest in scholars rethinking the American experience from the lens of global European empires (England, Spain, France, The Netherlands, etc.) and U.S. imperialism. Historic Deerfield's collection focuses on 18th- and 19th-century American art and material culture, and it is based in a landscape tied to Indigenous

communities, histories of enslaved and free people of African descent, and settler colonialism. Our colloquium and speakers will explore relationships between empire and the materials of objects in the collection, specifically asking how these art historical topics can be generative for recontextualizing HD's place in the study of New England history, art, and culture. The program will engage with interpretations of settler colonialism through Historic Deerfield's collection and ask how objects with their material histories broaden understandings of American empire, especially ones tied to the New England landscape and Indigenous histories.



*Canton from Massachusetts state flag, 1800-1815. HD 2003.37.10*

The program will also workshop methods for telling these narratives and interpretive strategies through historic interiors, including objects tied to violence, trauma, and absence, and opportunities to bring in stories of joy and survivance. Our program reconsiders how empire and materials in Deerfield's collection can be understood within a more complicated and entangled historical narrative, generating knowledge and new frameworks that can speak to the complexity of American art. The program includes invited scholars working in the fields of historical American art, African American and Diasporic Studies, Native American Studies, Conservation, and other allied fields. Speakers will investigate materials that exhibit new ideas of empire, including: pastels, lacquer, birch, engravings on paper, and linen. Rather than limiting the discussion to traditional fine arts materials, scholars discuss material often neglected or forgotten in narratives of American art to uncover new ways we can reveal ideas of empire.



Needlework picture, after Edward Savage, *George Washington and Family*, wool, linen, Gift of Mrs. Harold G. Duckworth, HD 88.047

# Colloquium Schedule

## Thursday, November 7, 2024: Reception and Keynote

### **12:00 PM–4:30 PM**

Registration. Location: Lobby, Flynt Center of Early New England Life.

Participants who arrive early are welcome to walk the Street and enjoy Historic Deerfield's house museums. At the Flynt Center, the museum displays decorative arts and paintings in the Collections Study Gallery and in several exhibitions: *In Pursuit of the Picturesque: The Art of James Wells Champney*, *Building a Collection: Recent Acquisitions at Historic Deerfield*, and *Into the Woods: Crafting Early American Furniture*, and *Vermont Furniture from the Alley Collection*. Attendees can also participate in walking tours, view the Witness Stones, and the Encountering Pocumtuck Walking Tour App.

### **5:00–5:10 PM**

Welcome. John Davis, President, Historic Deerfield. Location: Deerfield Community Center.

### **5:15–6:15 PM**

Keynote Lecture. Dr. Charmaine Nelson, Provost Professor, Black Diasporic Art & Visual Culture, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Location: Deerfield Community Center.

### **6:30–7:30 PM**

Opening Reception. Location: Hall Tavern.

### **7:30 PM**

Dinner on own or optional prix fixe dinner at the Deerfield Inn.

## Friday, November 8, 2024: Public Presentations

Unless otherwise stated, all Friday events are located at the Deerfield Community Center.

### **8:30–9:15 AM**

Registration, Coffee, and Refreshments.

### **9:15–9:30 AM**

Welcome and Introduction. Lea Stephenson, Luce Foundation Curatorial Fellow in American Paintings and Works on Paper, Historic Deerfield.

### **9:30–10:30 AM**

Panel 1: Contested Pigment and Paper.

“Sarah Bushnell Perkins and the Texture of Pastel”

Megan Baker, PhD Candidate in Art History, University of Delaware; 2024–2025 Smithsonian Institution Predoctoral Fellow at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery.

“Printing the Seven Years War”

Dr. Michael Hartman, Jonathan Little Cohen Associate Curator of American Art, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College.

### **10:30–10:45 AM**

Break.

### **10:45–11:45 AM**

Panel 2: Indigenous Presence and Materials

“The Settler Colonial Cosmos in Horatio Hamilton's Medical Chest”

Anthony Trujillo (Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo), PhD Candidate in American Studies, Harvard University.

“The Massachusetts State Flag and the Aestheticization of Conquest”

Dr. Mary Amanda McNeil, Assistant Professor, Department of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora, Tufts University.



## Friday (continued)

### **12:00–1:30 pm**

Buffet Lunch. Location: Deerfield Inn (included with in-person registration).

### **1:30–2:30 PM**

Free time.

Tour historic houses, Apprentice's Workshop, Silver Shop, Flynt Center, or walk the Street. Participants can also tour the Encountering Pocumtuck Walking Tour App or Witness Stones.

### **2:30–3:30 PM**

Panel 3: Natural Matter and Framing Landscape

"Sylvan Nationalism: The Birch Example"

Joseph Litts, PhD Candidate in Art History, Princeton University.

"'Conquer difficulties': Investigating Eliza Clarkson's Chinese Lacquer"

Lan Morgan, Associate Curator, Peabody Essex Museum.

### **3:30–3:45 PM**

Break

### **3:45–4:45 PM**

Panel 4: Material Legacies and Histories

"Threads of Power: Needlework, Enslavement, and the Fabrication of Washington's Legacy"

Dr. Jonathan Square, Assistant Professor of Black Visual Culture, Parsons School of Design.

"Memory and Performance: Reenacting The Battle of Bloody Brook"

Morgan Freeman, PhD Candidate in American Studies, Yale University.

### **4:45–5:00 PM**

Final Questions and Closing Remarks.



Chinese export black lacquerware table, ca. 1849, Gift of Ray J. and Anne K. Groves, [HD 2005.9.1](#).

## HISTORIC DEERFIELD EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

Read about some of our upcoming events below or see the full calendar at [historic-deerfield.org/events](https://historic-deerfield.org/events).

A Gown in a Day with Emily Stringham  
November 9-10

Redware Pottery with Stephen Earp  
November 16

Gravestone Carving with Allison Steel  
November 16

Powder Horn Carving with Laurie McCarthy  
November 16

Winter Pastimes and the Society of the 17th Century  
November 30

Free Winter Lecture Series - Tempus Fugit/Time Flies:  
Measuring, Perceiving, and Living Time in Early America  
January 26, February 23, March 30, April 27



Click to see all of our upcoming events.