

Self-Guide

What's New in the New Year

The museum is undergoing a significant transformation—and what better time to celebrate what's new than at the New Year? Use this guide to discover freshly renovated galleries, never-exhibited masterpieces, and recently returned favorites.



GALLERY 226—NEW IMPRESSIONIST GALLERIES

Young Spartan Girls Challenging Boys (c. 1860) by Edgar Degas

The museum's world-renowned Impressionist and Post-Impressionist collection is back! In addition to the transformative new installation, some of the collection's long-time favorites have been reframed, including this painting by Edgar Degas. The beloved Impressionist considered the proper frame to be essential to his work and often designed complementary frames. The power of this composition, part of the artist's early effort as a history painter, had been dampened by its mid-20th-century frame for the last 50 years. French and contemporary with Degas's painting, the new frame's flat molding and gilded scroll motifs set off the nearly monochromatic image and harmonize with the classical subject matter.



GALLERY 203A—THE MEDIEVAL TREASURY

Reliquary Casket of Saints Adrian and Natalia (12th century), Spain

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christian churches amassed treasuries full of prized devotional objects, including bejeweled crosses and golden reliquaries. The reinstated Gallery 203A offers visitors the chance to savor the splendor of a medieval treasury in an intimate and dramatically lit space. Among its treasures is this reliquary casket, now situated so that the narrative showing the gruesome fate of Saint Adrian can be read on three sides. Beginning with the short side on the left, Saint Adrian bravely declares his belief in Christianity. He is then brutally attacked and dismembered on both long sides, and on the final short side, the martyr's wife Natalia sails to Constantinople with his salvaged hand.



GALLERY 205—THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Nautilus-Shell Cup (17th century), Germany

Step into Gallery 205 and experience a Renaissance-style *Wunderkammer*. Rooms filled with assorted natural wonders and man-made treasures, *Wunderkammern*, or cabinets of curiosities, first became fashionable with wealthy Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries. Reflecting the period's increasing interest and knowledge of the universe, the collections aimed to capture the breadth and complexity of the world in a single room. Voyages to new lands brought back striking cultural artifacts and exotic prizes such as this nautilus shell from the Indian Ocean. The silver gilt-enhanced cup makes its sparkling Art Institute debut alongside geological riches from the Field Museum and astronomical instruments from the Adler Planetarium.



GALLERY 245—NEW INSTALLATION

Landscape: Window Overlooking the Woods (1899)
by Édouard Vuillard

Hung alone on a blank gallery wall, this enormous landscape is surely striking, but the work was never intended to be viewed in such a solitary, separate space. As a *décoration*, or a decorative painting created for a specific interior, Édouard Vuillard's large-scale work was originally conceived as an integral part of a home and home life. The newly reinstalled Gallery 245 returns this *décoration* to a domestic setting, gathering around it contemporary decorative arts such as chairs by Carlo Bugatti and Hector Guimard, graceful art nouveau vases, and a beautiful walnut sideboard. The assembly of artworks also captures the thinking of the 1890s that promoted the unity of all arts, breaking down the hierarchy between the "fine art" of painting and sculpture and the applied art of decoration.



GALLERY 178—NEW ACQUISITION

Vase (c. 1909) by Arthur E. Baggs, designer, John Swallow, potter, and Hannah Tutt, decorator

Think art therapy is a recent development? Think again. Marblehead Pottery, who produced this elegant vase, actually began at a Massachusetts sanatorium in 1904 for the express purpose of rehabilitating "nervously worn out patients for the blessing and privilege of quiet manual work." The handicrafts shop's leader, Arthur Baggs, gradually replaced patients with professionals, and Marblehead achieved acclaim for its Japanese-inspired designs on simple shapes with matte glazes. This recently acquired Marblehead vase marks a significant addition to the museum's growing Arts and Crafts collection and will be featured in a special exhibition opening in November 2009.



GALLERY 140—BRAND NEW GALLERIES

Avalokiteshvara (11th century), India

Adding over 17,600 square feet to the viewing of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic art, the light-drenched new Alsdorf Galleries now feature one of the largest installations of South and Southeast Asian art in the United States. This stele depicting Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, seated in a gracefully arched posture of royal ease, has not been on view since 1997 when it was displayed as part of a special exhibition. The 11th-century Indian masterpiece now holds a distinguished permanent place in the new galleries, bathed in the natural light coming in through the galleries' new windows.

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