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## **BMA to Open Major Exhibition on the Achievements of European Women Artists from the 15th to 18th Centuries**

*Making Her Mark* features more than 175 objects across fine art, craft, and design, capturing women's integral contributions to the evolution and production of art across 400 years

BALTIMORE, MD (February 15, 2023)—On October 1, 2023, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open a major exhibition exploring the vast artistic achievements of women artists and artisans from across Europe between the 15th and 18th centuries. Co-organized with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400-1800* focuses on works that reflect the ways in which women played an integral role in the development of art, culture, and commerce across more than 400 years. Acclaimed artists such as Rosalba Carriera, Artemisia Gentileschi, Élizabéth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Judith Leyster, Luisa Roldán, and Rachel Ruysch are positioned alongside lesser-known professional and amateur fine artists, as well as talented but often unnamed makers in collectives, workshops, and manufactories. While scholarship about historic women artists has seen an increase in recent years, the investigations remain largely focused on an elite group of artists working in large-scale painting and sculpture. *Making Her Mark* explores the breadth of women's artistic endeavors and innovations through the presentation of more than 175 objects—ranging from royal portraits and devotional sculpture to tapestries, printed books, drawings, clothing and lace, metalwork, ceramics, furniture, and other decorative objects—and argues for a reassessment of European art history to incorporate the true depth and variety of their contributions.

*Making Her Mark* is co-curated by Andaleeb Badiee Banta, Senior Curator and Department Head of Prints, Drawings & Photographs at the BMA, and Alexa Greist, Associate Curator and R. Fraser Elliot Chair, Prints & Drawings at the AGO. It is being presented as a special ticketed exhibition in Baltimore from October 1, 2023, to January 7, 2024, and will open in Toronto in March 2024. The exhibition features several new BMA acquisitions on view for the first time, as well as loans from the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Swedish Royal Collection in Stockholm, the National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and many other significant public and private collections in North America and Europe. A fully illustrated catalog includes essays and commentary by the curators and other scholars, including Babette Bohn, Professor Emeritus of Art History and Women and Gender Studies, Texas Christian University; Virginia Treanor, Associate Curator, National Museum of Women in the Arts; and Madeleine Viljoen, Curator of Prints, New York Public Library.

“We are delighted to present this groundbreaking exhibition that will bring together exceptional works of art, craft, and design by women artists from a period and a field that has largely equated talent and artistic excellence with men, and painting and sculpture,” said Asma Naeem, the BMA’s Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “The exhibition explores women’s essential work in the development of new ideas, aesthetics, creative movements, and commerce of the time. By recontextualizing this period in history and offering these women artists the attention they deserve, we hope to inspire our community to reimagine what they have previously held to be true about both art and history, and to contribute to the critical work of rectifying centuries of omissions.”

For centuries, women artists in Europe were considered rare and less talented compared to their male counterparts. Women who achieved professional artistic careers were deemed anomalous or exceptional, while those who engaged in creative pursuits in the home were dismissed as amateurs. *Making Her Mark* aims to correct these commonly held beliefs by examining the different ways in which women contributed to the evolution of art and to the proliferation of cultural trends and commercial successes. Their roles as artists, designers, laborers, and business professionals are given life through a variety of objects and through narratives seldom, if ever, told. In this way, the exhibition not only expands our understanding of women’s contributions but of art history more broadly, encompassing making well beyond the established dominance of painting and sculpture.

The exhibition is organized in four distinct sections:

- **Faith & Power** examines patronage of women artists by the ruling classes as well as objects made in convents and within other religious communities for ceremonial purposes. Examples include Luisa Roldán’s terracotta *Education of the Virgin* (1689-1706), Artemisia Gentileschi’s painting *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (c. 1623-25), and illuminated manuscripts, reliquaries, and lace made by cloistered women across Europe.
- **Interiority** explores the personal worlds of domestic labor, interior decoration, and the private arts of calligraphy, drawing, and embroidery. Beautiful still life paintings by Anne Vallayer-Coster and Josefa de Ayala and an 18th-century wooden cabinet with paper filigree and hairwork panels by Mary Anne Harvey Bonnell are among the highlights.
- **The Scientific Impulse** showcases both professional and amateur naturalist drawings and paintings of flora and fauna with examples by Pauline Rifer de Courcelles (Madame Knip), Giovanna Garzoni, Maria Sibylla Merian, Rachel Ruysch, and many others. In particular, it demonstrates women artists’ involvement in the documentation of natural phenomena brought to Europe through the extractive trade of empire and also explores women’s involvement in the medical and astronomical sciences.
- **The Entrepreneurial Spirit** uncovers women’s roles in the businesses of arts production, promotion, and education. Highlights include self-portraits by Sarah Biffin and Judith Leyster, an elaborate porcelain tea service by Marie-Victorie Jaquotot, textiles by Anna Maria Garthwaite, and an exquisite marble sculpture of a Maltese dog by Anne Seymour Damer.

“The presence of women as makers remains largely anomalous or anonymized in the halls displaying pre-modern art of European and North American museums. Their absence speaks to the biases inherent to the study of women’s artistic output as well as to the ongoing gendered notions of the heroic and spectacular as the standard measure of quality, significance, and legitimacy in Western culture,” said Andaleeb Badiie Banta, Senior Curator and Department Head of Prints, Drawings & Photographs. “*Making Her Mark* challenges these criteria and promotes the depth and range of women’s innovation and acumen within the creation of art and the growth of the art business, working to establish a new, more expansive and inclusive art history that speaks to these achievements.”

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*Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

### **Baltimore Museum of Art**

Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 97,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world’s largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation’s finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

### **Visitor Information**

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours on Thursdays until 9 p.m. The Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk. The museum and gardens are closed New Year’s Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

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