

Collection Highlights

WEST BUILDING, GROUND FLOOR

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



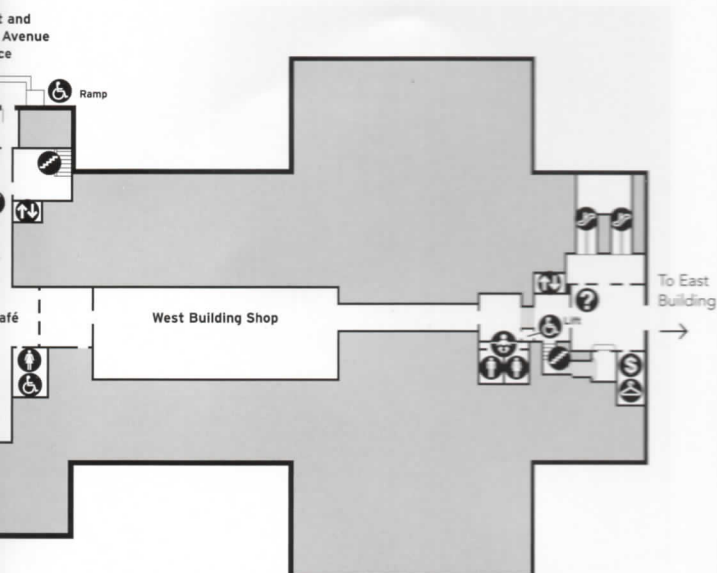
This short tour offers an overview of collection highlights. Note that some works of art may be temporarily off view, so please enjoy the others on display. Do not touch works of art; please maintain a one-foot distance.



Auguste Rodin, Katherine Seney Simpson (Mrs. John W. Simpson), 1902–1903

A Gallery 2

Mrs. Simpson was the first American to commission her portrait from Rodin. By carving her eyes with a distant gaze, and tilting her head and shoulders off-center, Rodin portrayed her as an introspective, intelligent woman. In 1914, she wrote to Rodin that the sculpture was "the most precious thing I own." Gallery 1C houses the plaster study of her face.



Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, *Allegory of Africa*, 1863/1865

C Gallery 3

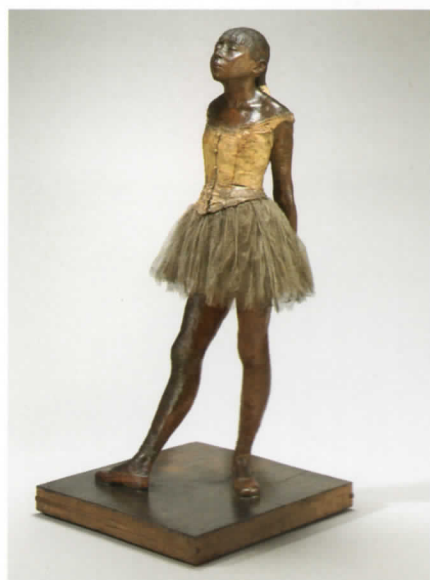
A few years before Bartholdi designed the Statue of Liberty (*Liberty Enlightening the World*, 1869/1870–1886), he won a commission for a fountain honoring a French admiral. Destroyed in 1940, but known from photographs, it included reclining figures symbolizing the continents. This bronze is a reduction of "Africa." Even on a small scale, the bronze conveys the strength and profound sadness of the large sandstone original.



Paul Gauguin, *Père Paillard*, 1902

D Gallery 5

Late in his short life, Gauguin moved to the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia. The artist displayed this satiric figure outside his house near the Catholic mission. In the small village, the subject of the devil-horned totem was clear: he was the hypocritical French bishop ("Lewd Father," loosely translated) who decried lechery while enjoying affairs with several women. The eyes and the name once glittered with gold-colored paint.



Edgar Degas, *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, 1878–1881, wax statuette

B Gallery 3

One of the many poor girls who danced for the Paris Opéra, Marie van Goethem stands with head high, arms tautly stretched behind her. Degas dressed her image, the only sculpture he ever exhibited publicly, in cloth garments and human hair. This famous statue and other sculptures he modeled in mixed media, many on view in galleries 3 and 4, were cast in bronze after his death.



Pietro Magni, *The Reading Girl (La Leggitrice)*, modeled 1856, carved 1861

E Gallery 8

The content of the book balanced on the back of the woven cane chair has drawn a tear from its reader. A poem once attached to the open pages foretold Italian independence, represented by the medallion of Garibaldi around the girl's neck. Simple garments identify her as an ordinary person rather than the classical heroine typical of formal exhibition sculptures of the time.



Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Monsignor Francesco Barberini*, c. 1623

F Gallery 10

The subject of this bust, the uncle and mentor of Bernini's patron Pope Urban VIII, had died long before the work was commissioned. Bernini studied a painting and brought the old man to life in marble, subtly turning his shoulders and carving his pliant, bearded face above a crinkly linen surplice.



Philippe-Laurent Roland, *Thérèse-Françoise Potain Roland, Wife of the Sculptor*, c. 1782/1783

G Gallery 11

Because moist clay lends itself to subtle modeling before it is fired to become terracotta, sculptors used it for finished works as well as preliminary models. Here, Roland heightened his wife's grace by turning her face to the left and dipping her neckline on the right.



Andrea Briosco, called Riccio, *The Entombment*, c. 1516/1520s

H Gallery 14

Resembling Roman funerary sculpture, this relief depicts a procession with several almost freestanding figures. Expressing the enormity of their grief, the mourners wail, collapse, or hold their heads as they accompany Christ to the tomb. The largest relief Riccio ever made, perhaps intended for his own tomb, it ranks among the most important Renaissance sculptures in this country.



Andrea del Verrocchio, *Putto Poised on a Globe*, probably 1480

I Gallery 15

With cheeks puffed out and hair blowing, Verrocchio's infant balances on one foot in a pose that invites examination from multiple viewpoints. Modeled over a metal armature, the figure is fashioned of clay that was then allowed to dry instead of being fired in a kiln. This work may have been a study for a bronze fountain figure.



Giovanni Paolo Negroli, *Helmet (burgonet) in the Form of a Dolphin Mask*, 1540/1545

K Gallery 19

Such deluxe armor was intended for ceremonial use, but its manufacture from hammered steel in the best armor workshop in Italy lends it battle-ready authenticity. The surfaces are decorated with crisp foliage and fantastic hybrid creatures, probably meant to suggest the wearer's ferocious power. Rivet holes on the back right side would have held plumes.



Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*, model 1841–1843, carved 1846

L Gallery 41

"With face averted, and with shackled hands, clothed only with her chastity, she stands," went one tribute to Hiram Powers's sculpture, whose nudity was a daring gamble in the context of nineteenth-century morality. Yet, as the poem suggests, the artist was able to sidestep controversy by relating the statue's meaning to virtue. The title refers to the Greek struggle for independence of the 1820s, but the subject also tapped into the American public's growing concerns about the morality of slavery in the U.S. These interpretations, along with the sculpture's lyrical form, ultimately helped bring it critical and popular acclaim. Powers, born in Cincinnati, learned marble carving in Italy, where *The Greek Slave* was made.



French 12th century, *Chalice of the Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis*, 2nd/1st century BC (cup); 1137–1140 (mounting)

J Gallery 18

This chalice consists of an ancient sardonyx stone cup set in a twelfth-century gold, silver, and jeweled mounting. The powerful Abbot Suger commissioned many such resplendent liturgical objects to reflect God's glory. Suger oversaw a major expansion of the church of Saint-Denis, which is considered the first manifestation of Gothic architecture. The chalice was used during the church's rededication, attended by King Louis VII and his queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, in 1144.