

# COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS



Smithsonian  
Institution

JANUARY 2019

## COLLECTIONS CONFERENCES NEAR AND FAR

On November 29 and 30, the Smithsonian and Google Labs united for a two-day engagement at the Smithsonian’s Castle and Google Offices in Washington, D.C.—*Exploring Artificial Intelligence with Museum Collections*. There were 44 participants from 22 Smithsonian units divided into eight different cohort themes, each brainstorming Artificial Intelligence (“A.I.”) use cases across several topics. The meeting included a presentation for the Smithsonian audience on how A.I. has been applied to cultural heritage and industry challenges, and a workshop for Smithsonian stakeholders to develop project concepts applicable to various digitized collections and disciplines. Following the conference, one or more project concepts will be identified for the Smithsonian and Google Arts and Culture team to formalize a collaboration.

In late November, in Berlin, Germany, the Global Summit of Research Museums—entitled *The Transformative Potential of Research*—brought together leaders from museums worldwide to reflect and discuss the nature, responsibilities, and future of research in museums and collections. The summit was attended by 160 people from 22 countries. The Smithsonian was represented by four directors. Convened by the Leibniz Association, this conference was a follow-up activity to the visit of Leibniz leadership to the Smithsonian in October 2017.

And finally, in late October, more than 150 Smithsonian staff from 30 offices participated in the first annual Collections Collaboration Community (“C<sup>3</sup>”) Conference. The gathering provided an opportunity for collections staff to collaborate pan-Institutionally through open discussions about important collections-related topics, such as deaccessioning, visitor interaction and object safety, open access to collections metadata, sharing documentation and loans strategies, and sustainability in collections management and preservation practices. **Secretary Skorton**, Scott Miller (**Deputy Under Secretary for Collections and Interdisciplinary Support**), Ellen Stofan (**Director of the National Air and Space Museum**), and Stephanie Stebich (**Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum**) opened the conference with a panel discussion.

## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

### DEAR EVAN HANSEN MEMORABILIA ADDED TO BROADWAY COLLECTION

In a special ceremony on November 27, the Smithsonian’s **National Museum of American History** received a donation of objects from the Tony and Grammy Award-winning Broadway musical *Dear Evan Hansen*. The musical tells the story of Evan Hansen, played by Taylor Trensch, a high school senior with social anxiety. The donation was presented on-stage following the production’s curtain call to help celebrate the show’s two-year anniversary on Broadway.



The museum received Evan Hansen’s signature blue-striped polo and the iconic arm cast with the “Connor” signature. Also included in the donation is a button from The Connor Project—a fictional organization dedicated to the memory of Connor Murphy—one of the principals in the show, a printed copy of the titular Dear Evan Hansen letter, and an original piece of sheet music for “Waving Through a Window,” signed by Oscar, Grammy and Tony Award-winning composers Benj Pasek and Justin Paul and Tony- and Grammy-winning orchestrator Alex Lacamoire.

“*Dear Evan Hansen* is a testament to the continued vitality of the Broadway musical,” said Ryan Lintelman, entertainment curator at the National Museum of American History. “This show explores poignant contemporary issues such as mental health, social media, suicide, and the travails of being a teenager in the 21st century through innovative staging, memorable pop-rock music and compelling performances.”

*Dear Evan Hansen* opened on Broadway at the Music Box Theatre on December 4, 2016, after its world premiere at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., in July 2015. The musical has broken all box office records and has resonated with critics and audiences alike. *Dear Evan Hansen* is a winner of six 2017 Tony Awards and a 2018 Grammy Award. The museum already has a lengthy collection of Broadway memorabilia, with gifts as recent as the green silk suit Lin-Manuel Miranda made famous in *Hamilton: An American Musical*, to sheet music that dates back to what’s considered the first American stage musical, *The Black Crook*.

## HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN MARCEL DUCHAMP COLLECTION



The **Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden** received what may be the single most significant gift to the museum since the two gifts made by the museum's founder Joseph H. Hirshhorn. To mark the 50th anniversary of the death of the French artist Marcel Duchamp on October 2, Washington, D.C., collectors Barbara and Aaron Levine announced a promised gift of 50 Duchamp works and a library of more than 150 volumes, along with other archival ephemera.

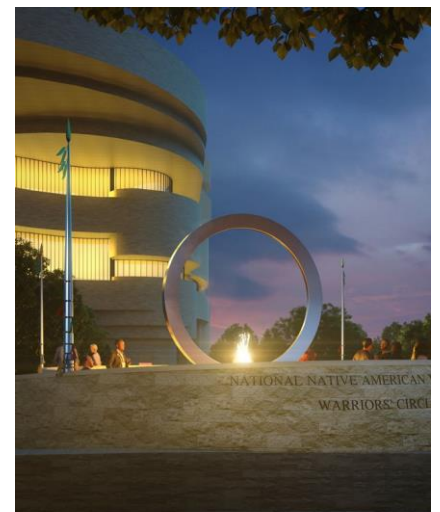
The gift establishes the Hirshhorn as among the nation's best Duchamp resources, alongside the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Works from the promised gift will go on display in October 2019 for one year, accompanied by a major publication.

*Marcel Duchamp (above, ca. 1960). Miscellaneous photographs collection. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.*

## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN \$1M GIFT SUPPORTS NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

In November, the Smithsonian’s **National Museum of the American Indian** received a \$1 million gift from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for the National Native American Veterans Memorial. The memorial, which will be built on the grounds of the museum, was commissioned by Congress to give “all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States.”

Native Americans serve at a higher rate per capita than any other population group. This will be the first national landmark in Washington, D.C., to focus on the contributions of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians who have served in the military.



*National Native American Veterans Memorial. Design by Harvey Pratt, illustration by Skyline Ink, courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian.*

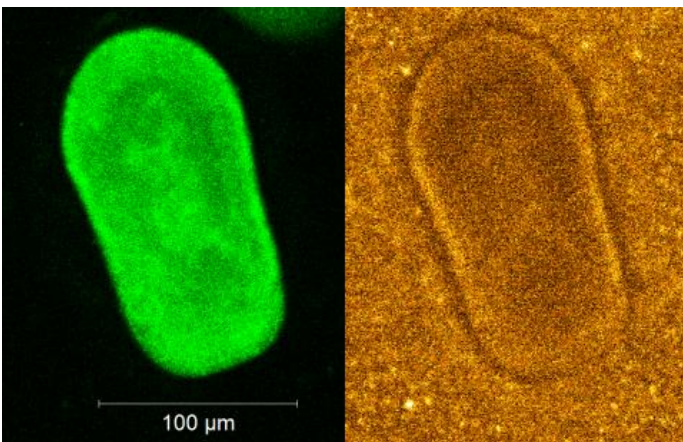
“We are very grateful to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for their generous support of the National Native American Veterans Memorial,” said Kevin Gover (Pawnee), director of the museum. “Their gift will enable the creation of a memorial that honors the service and patriotism of Native veterans, soldiers, and their families.”

“From the Revolutionary War through today, Native Americans have participated in every major U.S. military conflict,” said Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Chairman Charles R. Vig. “Their heroism has saved countless lives, and our tribe is pleased to help recognize them in such a prominent place on the National Mall.”

The memorial design is by Harvey Pratt (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma), a multimedia artist and retired forensic artist, and a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran. The design features an elevated stainless steel circle resting on an intricately carved stone drum. It also incorporates water for sacred ceremonies, benches for gatherings, and four lances where veterans, family members, tribal leaders, and others can tie cloths for prayers and healing.

The groundbreaking for the memorial is slated for September 21, 2019, and the dedication for November 11, 2020.

## SMITHSONIAN CONSERVATION BIOLOGY INSTITUTE BREAKTHROUGH COULD HELP SAVE CORAL REEFS FROM EXTINCTION



*Confocal images of a Day 3 larvae showing fluorescence from GFP (left) and distribution of DyLight-coated gold nanorod particles surrounding the larva in cryoprotectant (right).*

For the first time, scientists at the **Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute** (“SCBI”) have successfully cryopreserved (or frozen) and thawed coral larvae from the mushroom coral (*Fungia scutaria*). They published their findings October 24 in *Scientific Reports*. This breakthrough will allow scientists to biobank coral in its early developmental stages. In addition, these larvae can be thawed and settled at any time of the year, rather than only during the once-yearly spawning period. By banking coral larvae, conservationists can safeguard at-risk species and their genetic diversity and prevent extinctions, thus making it possible to bolster the genetic pool and health of wild populations years—or even centuries—later. This is a major step forward in the ability to conserve the biodiversity of the world’s coral reefs.

“If we combine biobanking with other conservation efforts to help corals recover from bleaching, we might be able to give them a real fighting chance at survival—and potentially even help them adapt to changing oceans,” said Jonathan Daly, lead author on the paper and post-doctoral fellow at SCBI and the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology. “Innovative technology like this is going to be crucial to saving the biodiversity of corals worldwide.”

For several decades, Smithsonian scientists have been collecting, managing, and storing at ultra-low temperatures frozen biomaterials, including samples of DNA, somatic cells, blood products, germ-plasm, embryos, and other animal, plant, and soil products. When properly managed, these frozen collections help advance scholarly knowledge, preserve biodiversity, and improve our understanding of biodiversity genomics, taxonomy, breeding, genetic management, and public health.