



# Smithsonian Institution

## **OUR SHARED FUTURE: COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS OCTOBER 2024**

The following feature highlights a One Smithsonian approach to collections acquisition and stewardship. These highlights show how the Smithsonian is focused on diverse representation within the collections that reflect the full story of the American experience.

## MAKING HOME—SMITHSONIAN DESIGN TRIENNIAL



“Making Home—Smithsonian Design Triennial,” opens November 2 at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

“Making Home—Smithsonian Design Triennial,” at **Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum** (CHSDM), features 25 debut commissions that illustrate the ways design is embedded in contemporary life. Ranging from domestic objects to built environments to social systems, the exhibition considers home as an expansive framework with varying cultural and environmental contexts, and “making home” as a universal design practice. Organized in collaboration with **Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture** (NMAAHC), the seventh iteration of Cooper Hewitt’s Triennial series will be on view through August 10, 2025.

Installed throughout the Andrew and Louise Carnegie Mansion, the exhibition explores design’s role in shaping the physical and emotional experiences of home across the U.S., U.S. territories, and tribal nations. The museum floors are organized by familiar interactions—“Going Home” (ground and first floor), “Seeking Home” (second floor) and “Building Home” (third floor)—interpreted in 25 installations by designers, architects, artists, and their collaborators from across the nation.

“Making Home” engages directly with the domestic history of Cooper Hewitt’s own home in the Carnegie Mansion. The exhibition design by architects Johnston Marklee draws inspiration from the building’s early 20th-century interiors, anchoring each floor with a central gathering space. Aspects of the Carnegie-era interior—from area rugs to drapery, upholstered furnishings and brocades—are reintroduced through techniques of scaling, patterning, color saturation, and trompe l’oeil in contemporary industrial materials. The visual identity for “Making Home,” developed by Office Ben Ganz, contrasts bold designs with intricate details that reflect the mansion’s craftsmanship and decorative motifs. Reconnecting the building to its history as a home, exhibition texts and signage are deployed on reimagined home furnishings in the shape of folded screens and playful plinths.

## NZCBI REPATRIATES KIWI FEATHERS TO NEW ZEALAND



Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute bird keeper Wesley Bailey (center) presented molted kiwi feathers to New Zealand Ambassador to the United States Rosemary Banks (left) for repatriation. Credit: New Zealand Embassy.

Kiwi feathers collected from across the U.S. and Europe will soon be winging their way home in a repatriation effort between the U.S. and New

Zealand.

**Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NZCBI)** bird keeper Wesley Bailey presented New Zealand Ambassador to the United States Rosemary Banks with feathers molted by North Island brown kiwi to be repatriated to New Zealand at a small ceremony September 20 at the ambassador's residence in Washington, D.C. The feathers were collected from nearly a dozen zoological facilities that have North Island brown kiwi on exhibit, filling two shoebox-sized boxes over several years. Banks said the gifting of kiwi feathers back to Aotearoa—the Māori-language name for New Zealand—is significant for both te ao Māori, or the Māori world view, and international relations between the two countries.

"Kiwi are incredibly unique birds, and we understand how important they are to New Zealand and New Zealanders," said Bailey, who also serves as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' North Island brown kiwi studbook keeper and manages all breeding of North Island brown kiwi outside New Zealand. "It is a privilege to not only care for New Zealand's national bird but to support the species' survival on an international level."

"This repatriation of kiwi feathers really does symbolize the way that we work with each other; with respect to our indigenous people and with respect for our taonga (treasured items)," Banks said.

There are 18 zoological and aquarium facilities outside of New Zealand that house a small population of international kiwi, including NZCBI. Eleven of those facilities sent shed feathers to NZCBI, which houses 12 birds, the largest population of North Island brown kiwi in North America.

Michelle Impey, the CEO of conservation nonprofit Save the Kiwi, opened the repatriation event with a presentation on New Zealand's conservation efforts. "It was a surprisingly emotional moment to see those kiwi feathers so far from New Zealand," Impey said. "But it was equally emotional knowing they'll be flying—with a little help—back to their whenua (land). We are so appreciative of the efforts these international facilities have gone to respect tikanga Māori, or traditional Māori customs, and give this special manu (bird) the respect it deserves. We hope our story of kiwi and the work that goes into bringing them back resonates with Americans and their love and respect for the bald eagle."

When the feathers are returned to Aotearoa, they will be entrusted to Te Papa Tongarewa, the national museum of New Zealand. Where possible, the feathers will be returned to the iwi, or tribe, the birds originally came from. The remaining feathers will be used in the maintenance and care of the national collection.

## NASA'S EARTH INFORMATION CENTER AT NMNH VISUALIZES CHANGES ON THE PLANET



A large Hyperwall—a giant video screen used to display NASA's Earth Information Center data. James Di Loreto, Smithsonian.

The **National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)** opened “NASA’s Earth Information Center at the National Museum of Natural History”—a 2,000-square-foot exhibition showcasing the dynamic forces and processes that are constantly shaping the planet—on Tuesday, October 8. The immersive exhibition will feature graphics, interactives and an enormous, state-of-the-art 32-foot-long, 12-foot-high curved video wall presenting awe-inspiring visualizations of Earth. These dramatic displays are created with data captured by satellites and sensors monitoring Earth and reveal how natural forces, climate change, and human activities continuously alter the planet. The exhibition will remain on view through 2028.

“In addition to exploring the cosmos, Smithsonian and NASA researchers analyze how our own planet is changing in real time,” said Kirk Johnson, the Sant Director of the National Museum of Natural History. “It is a tremendous honor to partner with NASA to bring this dynamic view of Earth to museumgoers and connect people more deeply with their home planet.”

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said, “NASA is a climate agency. With our fleet of over two dozen Earth-observing satellites and instruments, NASA leverages our unique vantage point in space to observe our planet and help those on the ground take action. The Earth Information Center provides easily accessible, readily usable, and scalable information on Earth’s environment and climate, and this new Earth Information Center at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History will bring NASA's data to even more people.”

Researchers at both the Smithsonian and NASA strive to understand how the Earth works. But they often look at the planet from different vantage points. Smithsonian researchers usually take a boots-on-the-ground approach, studying ecosystems and geological processes up close in the field or through museum collections. NASA scientists often zoom out for a view of the entire planet, using satellites and other sensors to create a detailed snapshot of the Earth from space.

NASA’s space-based perspective launched the [Earth Information Center](#) (EIC). Building on data collected by NASA and other federal agencies, the EIC provides a live look at Earth’s conditions by tracking factors like global temperature, precipitation, sea level rise, and the atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. This information helps policy makers, researchers, and communities understand and respond to the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural disasters.

## SAAM OPENS EXHIBITION ON INTERTWINED HISTORY OF AMERICAN SCULPTURE AND RACE



Roberto Lugo, *DNA Study Revisited*, 2022, urethane resin life cast, foam, wire, and acrylic paint, 66 × 27 × 17 in. (167.6 × 68.6 × 43.2 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Catherine Walden Myer Fund, 2024.19

“The Shape of Power: Stories of Race and American Sculpture” at the **Smithsonian American Art Museum** (SAAM) examines for the first time the role of sculpture in understanding and constructing the concept of race in the United States over nearly three centuries. Featuring 70 artists whose work crosses time, scale, and media, the exhibition brings together American sculpture in its many forms to explore the ways in which it has shaped and reflected attitudes and understandings about race, and has served as an expression of resistance, liberation, and a vital means for reclaiming identity. The exhibition includes 82 sculptures created between 1792 and 2023 ranging in size from palm-sized coins to monumental statues created from diverse media such as bronze, marble, shoes, paper, and hair.

Judith Baca, Rina Banerjee, Ed Bereal, Huma Bhabha, Sanford Biggers, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Sonya Clark, Jennifer Ling Datchuk, Nicholas Galanin, Raven Halfmoon, Luis Jiménez, Simone Leigh, Yolanda López, Roberto Lugo, Pepón Osorio, Betye Saar, Alison Saar, and Nari Ward, among other contemporary artists, have work displayed alongside works by artists who were active in the 19th and early 20th centuries, including Daniel Chester French, Sargent Johnson, Edmonia Lewis, Isamu Noguchi, Hiram Powers, Frederic Remington, and Augusta Savage.

“The Shape of Power” will be on view from November 8 through September 14, 2025. The Smithsonian American Art Museum is the sole venue for this groundbreaking exhibition.

“As stewards of the largest collection of American sculpture in the world, SAAM has a vital responsibility to foster conversations about the role sculpture has played in shaping our ideas of race in the United States, from its historical roots to contemporary perspectives by leading artists of the times in which these works were created,” said Jane Carpenter-Rock, acting director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “The presentation of the artworks in ‘The Shape of Power’ exhibition are an invitation to think deeply and openly to engage with ideas that are crucial to our understanding of the past and our present.”

“American sculpture remains an understudied area of art history with the last major publication to survey the medium’s development in the United States dating back more than 50 years ago,” said Karen Lemmey, the Lucy S. Rhame Curator of Sculpture at the museum. “‘The Shape of Power’ and its accompanying publication offers new scholarship that provides a fuller picture of American art history and a more nuanced understanding of our nation’s past and present.”

The exhibition is organized to allow for juxtapositions of historical and contemporary works that invite dialogue and reflection on notions of power and identity. This includes works ranging from Edmonia Lewis’ “Hagar in the Wilderness” (1875) that depicts the biblical story of an enslaved woman, to Roberto Lugo’s life-size self-portrait “DNA Study Revisited” (2022) painted head to toe in patterns representative of his ancestors and proportional to the percentage in his family’s heritage. Taken together, the works on view express the special capacity of sculpture to give palpable physical form to how concepts of race have been reflected, defined, and redefined in the United States.

“The Shape of Power” draws extensively on works from the museum’s collection, which is the largest collection of American sculpture in the world. The exhibition includes key loans from private and public collections, including the American Numismatic Society; Chrysler Museum of Art; El Museo del Barrio; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.



## NMAH WELCOMES PAPERS OF THE LATE JEROME H. LEMELSON



Lemelson believed that education was key to helping the U.S. regain its place at the top of innovation and creativity in the world. In 1993, he and his wife Dorothy started the Lemelson Foundation to support educational initiatives to attract young people to science and invention. © Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian's **National Museum of American History** (NMAH) has accepted the donation of the papers of the late inventor Jerome H. Lemelson, a gift from the Dorothy Lemelson Trust. The Jerome H. Lemelson Papers, spanning 1943–2003, consist of 363 cubic feet of papers documenting Lemelson's inventions, his creative process, the patent process, and the legal process by which he secured his rights. Lemelson's patents cover a wide range of topics—toys, medicine, and technology. In addition to documenting Lemelson's inventions, the papers also document his work defending the rights of independent inventors by working to reform patent law and the legal system. The collection includes invention notebooks, patents, patent applications, correspondence, subject reference files, licensing agreements, patent litigation files, newspaper clippings, sketches, ephemera, and audio-visual materials.

The invention notebooks form the core of the collection, providing detailed descriptions of possible new inventions and ideas spanning 46 years. Lemelson's notebooks contain notes about meetings with colleagues, variations on patent ideas, outlines of patent specifications, and related sketches. Notebook entries are often dated and signed by Lemelson and witnesses to whom he disclosed his ideas. The notebooks present a comprehensive overview of his ideas and are significant to understanding his creative process and how his ideas changed or did not change over time.

“We are deeply honored to receive the Jerome H. Lemelson Papers, a collection that encapsulates the boundless creativity and ingenuity of one of America's most prolific inventors,” said Anthea M. Hartig, the museum’s Elizabeth MacMillian Director. “This archive not only documents the vast range of Lemelson's inventions but also provides invaluable insights into the innovative spirit that has driven technological progress over the decades. By preserving and sharing these materials, we continue our mission to inspire future generations of inventors and innovators.”

Lemelson was one of the most prolific American inventors of all time, and in the sheer range of his ideas—from cutting-edge medical and industrial technologies to novelties, gadgets and toys—undoubtedly one of the most versatile. Lemelson holds 606 patents documenting a wide range of inventions, from toys to “machine visioning.” The portfolio of products covered by his patents is voluminous, including, for example, components in the Walkman, the VCR, the fax machine, and the camcorder. His background in aeronautical and industrial engineering served him well, allowing him to understand increasingly complex technologies, to see their potential, and to exploit them. For example, Lemelson’s machine visioning involved a camera to inspect items on an assembly line, compare them with a digital image stored in its memory, and determine whether they are defective. He designed computer-controlled machine tools used in automated, flexible manufacturing systems that let an assembly line produce different products at the same time. The audio-cassette mechanism he developed and licensed to Sony became a standard part of cassette players.

The Jerome H. Lemelson Papers join a significant body of archival collections that document independent inventors that include the Earl S. Tupper Papers, Charlotte Cramer Sachs Papers, the Brannock Device Company Records, the Marion O’Brien Donovan Papers, the Patricia Bath Papers, and the Robert W. Kearns Papers, to name a few. The collection is available for research in the Archives Center.