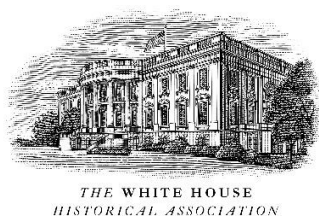


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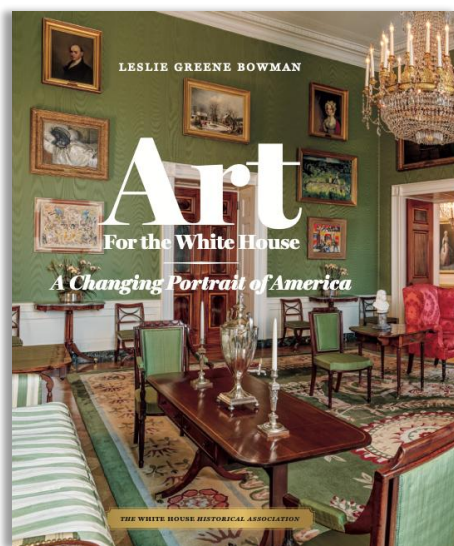
ART FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

A Changing Portrait of America
By Leslie Greene Bowman

On-sale October 21, 2026

October 21, 2026 (Washington, D.C.) – As we celebrate the 250th birthday of our nation, a new book reflects on the role art has played in the creation of our uniquely American civilization: [ART FOR THE WHITE HOUSE: A Changing Portrait of America](#) by author and historian Leslie Greene Bowman (White House Historical Association; October 21, 2026).

With **ART FOR THE WHITE HOUSE**, Leslie Greene Bowman presents a wholly new perspective on the White House fine arts collection, revealing how all two-hundred and fifty years of America’s history can be told through the collection. Bowman explains, “One measure of a civilization is its arts and culture, and the fine arts collection at the White House is an especially interesting and compelling example. While tantamount to a museum collection, it is more personal to the presidency, more political, and more attuned to the national and global audience it serves as an ambassador for the United States and its art and history.”



ART FOR THE WHITE HOUSE begins with the story of how the collection was created—slowly and cautiously—as our young nation was eager to distinguish itself from artwork that could be

associated with the patronage and luxuries of European monarchs. The very first work of art authorized by Congress was a painting that remains one of the greatest works of art in any collection of American art, *George Washington* by leading American portrait artist, Gilbert Stuart. This is the painting Dolley Madison saved in 1814 when the British set the White House afire and this painting has presided on the walls of the State Rooms longer than any other work of art. Bowman explains, “It is a touchstone to America’s violent and aspirational birth and a tribute to the success of its fragile experiment in the face of globally dominant, centuries-old monarchies.”

Despite the symbolism of the first acquisition, the collection that was created and ultimately grew to more than 500 paintings, illustrations, and sculptures, was slow to develop both because the nation was young and trying to define itself and also because of the government's lack of resources. American art had matured in the 19th century, establishing strengths in landscape, still-life, and genre scenes, but the White House’s collection remained limited. After 145 years, with few exceptions, the White House fine arts collection remained an assemblage of presidential portraits; it did not showcase the maturity and diverse subjects matter mastered in American art. Bowman attributes much of the credit for the growth of the collection to First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy who “made the nation’s history a priority for her expansion of art holdings.” In less than three years, Mrs. Kennedy had transformed the house and art collection. Not only had it doubled in size, it represented the nation’s finest artists and included a variety of subject matter including still lifes, landscapes, history, and genre scenes. In thirty-four months, Jacqueline Kennedy masterminded how to create, structure, and sustain a museum collection within a living house. Mrs. Kennedy is responsible for acquiring more than a third of the American art collection. Her influence continues with every work purchased by the White House Historical Association, the non-profit she founded as a way to raise funds to sustain the continued development, preservation, and publication of the collection.

Bowman continues her narrative thematically through more than two centuries of American history with chapters focused on “Independence Declared,” “The Way West,” “America the Beautiful,” “The Innovators,” and more. The richly illustrated chapters highlight examples from the collection by the greatest masters of American Art including Gilbert Stuart, Charles Bird King, Winslow Homer, Albert Bierstadt, Mary Cassatt, Georgia O’Keeffe, Jacob Lawrence, John Singer Sargent, Roy Lichtenstein and others.

“Through these pages, readers will discover how art records our nation’s history and expresses our nation’s ideals,” explains Stewart D. McLaurin, President of the White House Historical Association. “They will see how art has humanized the White House, connected it to the broader American story, and helped each generation of occupants—and visitors—find meaning in its historic rooms.”

With **ART FOR THE WHITE HOUSE**, Leslie Greene Bowman has made an important contribution to the White House Historical Association’s mission of supporting scholarship that deepens public understanding of and appreciation for the Executive Mansion. It is also a celebration of art, the stories it tells, and the role it played in shaping our nation’s identity.

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About Leslie Greene Bowman

Leslie Greene Bowman is an author, historian, and president emerita of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. She has devoted her career to art and history museums. After serving as curator of decorative arts and assistant director of exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, she was named director of Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library in Delaware in 1999. From 2008 to 2023 she was president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which owns and operates Monticello. In addition to numerous articles, Bowman is author of *American Arts and Crafts: Virtue in Design*, and, with Morrison H. Heckscher, *American Rococo, 1750–1775: Elegance in Ornament*. She conceived and co-edited the examination of Jefferson's impact on the arts in *Thomas Jefferson at Monticello: Architecture, Landscape, Collections, Books, Food, Wine*. Bowman earned her bachelor of philosophy degree at Miami University of Ohio and her master of arts degree in early American culture as a Winterthur Fellow at the University of Delaware. She is a trustee emerita of both the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Association of Art Museum Directors. By presidential appointment, she served on the Committee for the Preservation of the White House under Presidents Biden, Trump, Obama, George W. Bush, and Clinton. Bowman lives in Keswick, Virginia, with her dogs and horses. She travels frequently, especially to Europe. Besides riding, she is fond of biking, hiking, cooking and new adventures.

About the White House Historical Association

Founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, the White House Historical Association is the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization entrusted with preserving and sharing the history of the White House. Supported entirely by private philanthropy and the sale of educational books and products, the Association reaches millions of students, teachers, and lifelong learners through research and scholarship initiatives, public programming, and the authoritative titles published by its independent press. Throughout each presidency, the Association works with the Offices of the First Lady and the White House Curator to acquire and preserve historic objects for the White House Fine and Decorative Arts Collection. The Association also operates The People's House: A White House Experience, a free, immersive, educational museum in Washington, D.C., which welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit WhiteHouseHistory.org.