



NEWS

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DAR Museum Quilt Exhibition Emphasizes the Maker

WASHINGTON, DC – They are quilts that evoke their maker’s taste, position, and status. They are masterpieces stitched by many hands. These Virginia and Maryland quilts show how their makers’ designs moved with them and continued to show their origins. A new exhibition at the DAR Museum, featuring more than 30 early-American quilts, highlights not only the beauty of the textiles, but also the women who made the quilts.

“Eye on Elegance: Early Quilts of Maryland and Virginia,” on display October 3, 2014, through September 5, 2015, at the DAR Museum, focuses on regional quilts made from the finest imported fabric of the time, 1790 to 1850, and their creators. The quilts featured indicate the women’s taste for refinement and their place in the community.

This quilt exhibition is unique in its expanded research specifically on the lives of the women quiltmakers. Curator of Textile and Costumes Alden O’Brien says, “What sets this exhibition apart from other quilt exhibitions is the emphasis on social history. We know a great deal about the makers. We have used land and census records as well as other primary sources to learn more about these women. Tracing family history is at the foundation of the DAR organization and we used the expansive DAR genealogical resources as part of our research for the exhibition.”

The exhibition also analyzes the collaborative efforts of women artists and digs deeper to see who may have contributed to each quilt. Quilts were invariably made with the assistance of family, friends, and often servants, even when only one quiltmaker's name is associated with the final product. Knowing the provenance for each quilt allowed for advanced research into the others in the household who were possibly assisting in the quilting.

“Eye on Elegance” is divided into sections with regional quilts in each. Quilts are organized by their specific technique: pieced, applique, reverse applique, and albums. There is also a section about migration of designs. Panels describing the quilts are categorized by maker, region, and production. In each section of the exhibition, visitors can peruse information based on their interest.

The DAR Museum is working with the Washington, D.C.-based exhibition design firm Assemble for both the in-gallery and online “Eye on Elegance: Early Quilts of Maryland and Virginia” exhibitions. This is their first collaboration.

Exhibition and program information is available at dar.org/museum.

Exhibition Curator

Alden O'Brien is the curator for "Eye on Elegance: Early Quilts of Maryland Virginia," opening October 3, 2014. She has been curator of costume and toys at the DAR Museum since 1990. In 2003, Ms. O'Brien took over care of the textile collection. She has curated numerous costume and quilt exhibits, most recently "Fashioning the New Woman: American Women and Fashion, 1890-1925." Alden O'Brien holds a Master of Arts in museum studies in costume and textiles from the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York, and a Bachelors of Arts in art history from Barnard College.

Exhibition Designer

The DAR Museum has contracted with Assemble for exhibition design for "Eye on Elegance: Early Quilts of Maryland and Virginia." Assemble is a nonprofit design and media studio that works with institutions to create immersive narrative experiences onsite, online and in classrooms. Assemble has produced a variety of narrative experiences, including major exhibitions at Maryland Science Center, Longwood Gardens, and the National Building Museum. The organization is currently engaged in partnerships with scientists to present models of sustainability on the Chesapeake Bay and archaeologists researching the lives of enslaved African Americans in Maryland.

Patrick Rogan directs the Assemble interpretive design team. Trained at the Smithsonian Institution, Mr. Rogan has over 25 years of experience as a designer, educator and project manager. He received his MFA from Catholic University and teaches exhibition design at the Corcoran College of Art and Design.

DAR Museum

The award-winning DAR Museum, founded in 1890, is part of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Museum supports the NSDAR mission of historic preservation, education and patriotism through collection, preservation and interpretation of American decorative arts and material culture.

The Museum's collection of more than 30,000 objects highlight American life from 1700 to 1850. Visitors view craftsmanship of American and imported artifacts, including furniture, silver, ceramics, paintings, costumes, textiles, and glass.

The DAR Museum recently received TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence 2014. TripAdvisor lists the DAR Museum as one of the top 55 places to visit in Washington, DC.

The DAR Museum's collections are exhibited in thirty-one period rooms, providing scenarios of American commercial and home life from the 18th century through the mid-20th century, and two spacious galleries. The Yochim Gallery gives visitors an intimate experience with furniture, portraits, maps, and other works. The Main Gallery features objects from the permanent collections, as well as rotating exhibitions.

The DAR Museum provides year-round public programming. School and family programs are free, thanks to the generosity of DAR members. The Museum also has adult workshops and lectures.

The Museum, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, offers free admission to all visitors. It is open six days a week, Monday through Friday, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, and Saturday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. The Museum is closed Sunday and federal holidays.

For more information, visit dar.org/museum, or phone 202-879-3241.