

THE DAILY GAZETTE

WHEN CREDIBILITY MATTERS

On Exhibit: More collections and exhibits going digital

By Indiana Nash | [February 3, 2021](#)



Left: A landscape by artist Fritz G. Vogt titled “Residence of Mr. George Getman, Stone Arabia, N.Y.,” is one of many Vogt paintings that can be viewed on the Fenimore Art Museum’s website. Right: Union’s Mandeville Gallery has made its newest exhibit, “Chitra Ganesh: Sultana’s Dream,” available online. Pictured is Ganesh’s “Oracle in the Baoli.” (photos provided)

Digitization was once a goal for some museums and art galleries. During the pandemic, it’s become more of a necessity.

Last week, the Fenimore Art Museum launched an online collections site, giving the internet-using public free access to more than 2,000 objects of folk and fine art. It also includes the Thaw Collection of American Indian Art.

“It has always been a high priority to get our collections online and made accessible to the public—especially our acclaimed folk art,” said Paul S. D’Ambrosio, Fenimore Art Museum president and CEO. “The folk art collection, highly regarded as one of the most comprehensive and significant in the United States,

was assembled by Stephen C. Clark in the 1950s and has never been rightfully represented online for the world to see.”

That includes works that are on view at the museum and those that are not.

There are charming landscapes from Fritz G. Vogt, a portrait of Elizabeth Phillips Storm by the prolific painter Ammi Phillips, Seneca pipes dating back to the early 1600s and a Lakota feather headdress from 1900.

The works are divided into several different collections on the website and most images are paired with the cultural and historical background of the object or work of art. While it doesn’t mimic the experience of going to the museum, it does provide a platform for educators, researchers and those yearning to simply learn more.

The concept of creating a collections website was proposed in 2018 and after an initial donation from Robert and Patricia Hanft, a total of \$25,000 was raised to fund the project. Museum staff members began work on the site in 2019 and hope to add content from the museum’s photography and text collections in the future.

“Fenimore’s folk art and American Indian art collections represent the ‘gold standard’ among comparable collections in the United States,” D’Ambrosio said. “These collections are in the same class with assemblages in the very best museums in the country, such as the folk art collection at The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the American Indian art collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. We hope everyone takes a close look.”

For more information and to see the new collections site, visit FenimoreArt.org.

Beyond Fenimore, some regional college museums and galleries have also made it a point to digitize their collections.

Union’s Mandeville Gallery, which is open to students and staff but not to people outside the campus, has made its newest exhibit available online. “Chitra Ganesh: Sultana’s Dream,” is slated to open on Sunday, though the artwork is currently available to view online.

It includes 27 linocuts by Chitra Ganesh, which explore timely political and social issues. The exhibit is inspired by an early feminist science fiction story by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, in which the narrator is taken on a journey through a utopian matriarchy called Ladyland, where women have harnessed the power of the sun.

Ganesh interprets scenes from the story literally in some of the linocuts, as is the case in “Sultana’s Dream: The Condition of Womanhood,” which features a woman leaning back in a chair dreaming of mythological beings. Others are looser interpretations.

In “Cooking with Light,” two figures are seen in a kitchen framed by plants. Two hands above them seem to be drawing in light and redirecting it to a pot below. In the intricate “Oracle in the Baoli,”

two hands in the foreground pull the viewer into an aerial view of an octagon-shaped mezzanine, with a figure’s head at the very bottom.

“This series of prints draws on Hossain’s vibrant imagery, translating a narrative written in verse into a visual grammar that connects with problems shaping twenty-first-century life: apocalyptic environmental disaster, the disturbing persistence of gender-based inequality, the power of the wealthy few against the economic struggles of the majority, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts that cause widespread death and suffering,” Ganesh wrote after finishing the series in 2018. “Created in print—a medium that is historically foundational to the idea of public discourse—these works comment through form and content on this fraught moment in the world, demonstrating the enduring relevance of feminist utopian imaginaries in offering an invaluable means of envisioning a more just future.”

“Sultana’s Dream” is slated to be up through June 20. The series can be viewed as a collection, or viewers can see the pieces individually, magnifying each image. There is also a link to Hossain’s story, which was first published in 1905 in *The Indian Ladies’ Magazine*.

To view, visit <https://digitalcollections.union.edu/>

Other institutions have also made exhibitions available online:

- Skidmore’s Tang Teaching Museum opened “We’ve Only Just Begun: 100 Years of Skidmore Women in Politics” online last fall. It works in conjunction with “Never Done,” an exhibit on view at the museum, and it explores the history of Skidmore women in politics, drawing on materials from the Scribner Library Archives and Special Collections. To view, visit tang.skidmore.edu.
- University at Albany’s art museum has been giving viewers a look back at works from previous exhibiting artists whose work focused on issues of race, subjectivity, community and social unrest. The series, titled “Artists Out Loud!,” includes “Dave McKenzie: An Intermission,” “Shane Aslan Selzer: Social Action Archive: University Libraries, University at Albany, SUNY” and “Blue Plastic Bubbles: Paintings by Lamar Peterson.” To view those and others, visit albany.edu/university-art-museum/exhibitions