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DAYTON ART INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES ITS 2026 EXHIBITION LINEUP

The Dayton Art Institute's 2026 exhibition season brings together powerful stories of time, justice, creativity and human expression, featuring major traveling exhibitions alongside thought-provoking original presentations drawn from the DAI's collection and recent acquisitions.

(DAYTON, OHIO) – January 12, 2025 – The [Dayton Art Institute](https://www.daytonart.org/) (DAI) is pleased to announce its 2026 exhibition lineup, led by three nationally traveling Special Exhibitions—***Tony Foster: Exploring Time, A Painter's Perspective; Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice; and Wall Power! Spectacular Quilts from the American Folk Art Museum***—alongside a

compelling series of Focus Exhibitions exploring feminism, photography, performance, faith and global artistic exchange.

“The 2026 season reflects the breadth of what art can do, from documenting history, to sparking dialogue and helping us see our world, and ourselves, more clearly,” said Interim DAI Director & President Mark Shaker. “These exhibitions connect Dayton audiences with important work from across the country and around the globe while meaningfully engaging with the questions, experiences and communities shaping our world today.”

The dynamic exhibition season spans centuries, continents and creative disciplines. From landmark traveling exhibitions to timely, collection-driven projects, the year’s lineup explores how artists respond to place, justice, belief, identity and innovation. Together, these exhibitions invite visitors to encounter art as a powerful lens on the world that reflects where we have been, interrogates where we are and imagines what comes next.

The 2026 Special Exhibitions:

Tony Foster: Exploring Time, A Painter’s Perspective

February 21–May 17, 2026

The 2026 exhibition season starts with a remarkable series of watercolor paintings that capture nature in motion. In ***Exploring Time***, artist Tony Foster examines how time shapes the natural world, from fleeting changes in light and weather to geological and biological transformations unfolding over millennia. Between 2007 and 2025, Tony Foster embarked on his 19th Journey, a sustained artistic exploration of change unfolding across overlapping natural and human contexts. Through an extraordinary series of watercolor diaries, Foster records landscapes marked by both resilience and vulnerability, revealing the often-unseen forces that create place. Organized into four themes: geological, biological and human time, as well as fleeting moments, this exhibition invites viewers to engage with time at every scale while reflecting on the enduring impact of human presence.

Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice

June 27–September 13, 2026

A centerpiece of the 2026 season, ***Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice***, reunites, for the first time since 1946, all 34 paintings from William H. Johnson’s *Fighters for Freedom* series, drawn from the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Created in the mid-1940s, the works honor African American activists, scientists, teachers and performers as well as international leaders working to bring peace to the world. Some of his *Fighters*—Marian Anderson, George Washington Carver, Mohandas Gandhi and Harriet Tubman—are familiar figures; others—Nannie Helen Burroughs and William Grant Still, among them—are less well-known individuals whose achievements have been eclipsed over time. Johnson celebrates their accomplishments even as he acknowledges the realities of racism, oppression and sometimes violence they faced and overcame. Through bold color and symbolic detail, Johnson creates

evocative scenes and crafts important narratives that demonstrate both the triumphs and struggles of those depicted, presenting freedom as an ongoing, interconnected pursuit.

Wall Power! Spectacular Quilts from the American Folk Art Museum

October 17, 2026–January 10, 2027

Closing out the 2026 exhibition season is ***Wall Power! Spectacular Quilts from the American Folk Art Museum***, an exhibition that showcases America’s great art experiment, quilts, as monumental works of art. Traditionally created mostly by women, quilts often feature bold compositions of color, geometry and design that command space and defy expectations. Organized by the American Folk Art Museum, the exhibition spans the mid-nineteenth to late twentieth centuries. It features striking examples by Amish communities, African American makers and others whose work laid the foundation for generations of quiltmakers to come. The American Folk Art Museum has been at the forefront of the movement to bring recognition to quilts as a major art form with deep roots in American life and experience. In addition, a selection of American quilts from the DAI’s extensive textile collection will be presented to complement *Wall Power!*

The 2026 Focus Exhibitions:

In addition to the Special Exhibitions, the museum will present several Focus Exhibitions based around various themes:

Exploring Feminism

February 7, 2026–January 31, 2027

Presenting feminist artwork from the newly acquired Sara M. and Michelle Vance Waddell Collection, this three-part, rotating exhibition will demystify the origins, history and commitments of the feminist movement. Often discussed in terms of waves, feminism has signified struggles for a range of causes at varying moments in time. Through ***Exploring Feminism***, guests may become better acquainted with the cycles of protest, self-expression and community-building that have defined a movement that continues to change and adapt to include more and different constituents within its umbrella of “feminists.”

Rotation 1: February 7–June 7, 2026

Rotation 2: June 20–September 20, 2026

Rotation 3: October 3, 2026–January 31, 2027

Symbols of Hope: Eunshin Khang

March 14–June 7, 2026

The paintings of Eunshin Khang explore dialogue between cultures, materials, faith and memory. Her work reflects a lifetime of artistic practice shaped by both Korean and American traditions and engages contrasts of material and composition: hard and soft edges; two- and three-dimensional surfaces; figuration and abstraction; light and dark. Through layered compositions and symbolic imagery, Khang offers a deeply personal vision of hope, peace and cross-cultural connection.

All the World's a Stage

May 16–August 9, 2026

Across cultures, the performing arts—drama, dance, music—have entertained and educated, bringing people together in communal spaces to celebrate and question what it means to be human. ***All the World's a Stage*** examines how visual art has captured performers and performance across cultures and history, from ancient rituals to modern performance. Drawing from the DAI collection, the exhibition explores how theatrical roles extend beyond the stage into everyday life, impacting identity and social interaction. Together, these works shine a spotlight on performers across the ages and how they, in turn, may shape the ways we act.

Getting Technical: Alternative Photographic Processes

July 18–October 25, 2026

2026 FotoFocus Biennial Exhibition

This exhibition highlights photography's experimental side, showcasing artists who push the medium through non-traditional and historical processes. From wet-plate collodion and chemigrams to solarization, ***Getting Technical*** reveals photography as a practice defined by innovation, trial and discovery. Support for this 2026 FotoFocus Biennial exhibition was provided in part by FotoFocus.

Looking for Japan: Early Japanese Photography

September 5–November 29, 2026

2026 FotoFocus Biennial Exhibition

Focusing on photography from Japan's Meiji period (1868–1912), this exhibition explores a moment of profound cultural and social change. Featuring albums, postcards and hand-colored prints, the works reveal traditions and practices within Japan as well as the ways in which they may have been packaged for, and influenced by, Western audiences. Spotlighting hand-colored prints depicting scenes of landscapes, cities and portraits, including historical Japanese architecture, hairstyles, clothing, weapons and even tattoos, the images offer timely reflections on identity, globalization and representation. Support for this 2026 FotoFocus Biennial exhibition was provided in part by FotoFocus.

Good Book: Bible Stories from the Collection

November 14, 2026–February 14, 2027

For centuries, the Bible has been the most-printed and best-selling book in the world, serving as a continual inspiration for visual art, from stories of creation and the ancient history of Israel to the life of Jesus and his teachings. Drawing from the DAI collection, ***Good Book: Bible Stories from the Collection*** examines how artists have interpreted these narratives to express devotion, commentary and creativity. Through paintings, prints, photographs and sculpture, the exhibition invites visitors to see “the old, old story” anew.

“The scope of the 2026 season is intentionally expansive,” said Head Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs Jerry N. Smith. “It underscores DAI’s commitment to connecting Dayton

audiences with international and nationally significant exhibitions while also elevating the strength and relevance of our own collection, and reinforces our commitment to presenting art that is both visually compelling and intellectually engaging. We encourage guests to return often, as each exhibition adds another chapter to a larger story.”

For more information and updates about both Special and Focus Exhibitions at the DAI, go to www.daytonartinstitute.org/exhibitions.

Admission to the DAI includes access to all [Special and Focus Exhibitions](#) currently on view, as well as the museum collection galleries. General admission is \$15 adults; \$10 seniors (60+), active military and groups (10 or more); \$5 students (18+ w/ID) and youth (ages 7–17); and free for children (ages 6 & younger). Admission is free for museum members. Membership information can be found online at www.daytonartinstitute.org/membership.

“The best way to experience the full breadth of this year’s exhibition season is through DAI membership,” said Shaker. “Members can follow the season from start to finish and make art a recurring part of their lives.”

For more information about planning a visit, including current museum hours and updates, go to www.daytonartinstitute.org/visit or call 937-223-4ART (4278). Connect with the Dayton Art Institute on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Pinterest](#) for additional information, behind-the-scenes photos and videos and exclusive offers.

ABOUT DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

MISSION: *Through art, we create transformative and diverse experiences, strengthen community connections and inspire imagination.*

VISION: *Through art, we will be a community leader recognized as a welcoming, thought-provoking and collaborative place that nurtures inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.*

The Dayton Art Institute (DAI) is one of the Miami Valley’s premier fine art museums, offering a full range of programming in addition to exhibiting its collection. The museum is currently open Wednesdays, 11 AM–5 PM; Thursdays, 11 AM–8 PM; Fridays & Saturdays, 11 AM–5 PM; and Sundays, noon–5 PM. Go to www.daytonartinstitute.org/visit for the latest museum information and updates. Museum admission is \$15 adults, \$10 seniors (60+), active military and groups (10 or more), \$5 students (18+ w/ID) and youth (ages 7–17), free for children (ages 6 & younger) and free for museum members. Admission includes access to all Special Exhibitions, Focus Exhibitions, The Lange Family Experientcenter and the museum’s collection galleries. Some events and programs may carry an additional charge and include museum admission as part of that price. Free parking is available at the museum, and the facility is fully accessible. The DAI’s Museum Store and Leo are open during regular museum hours, offering unique shopping, as well as drinks and tasty treats. The Museum Store also offers online shopping at www.daimuseumstore.org. For more information about the DAI, visit daytonartinstitute.org or call 937-223-4ART (4278). The Ohio Arts Council helps fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage

economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The DAI also receives support from Culture Works and the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District.

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