

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Architectural Digest

From the Last Supper to Damaged D.C. Art Works, Five Recent Art Stories to Consider Now

Madeleine Luckel

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While the holiday season and the start to 2021 already feel like a blur, it's been a relatively newsy streak as far as the arts are concerned. To help you catch up, we're sharing five notable stories below that you might have missed. From the latest on how the Capitol's art collection fared during last Wednesday's riot to an exciting new discovery, here's the news you need to know.

Significant Damage to Capitol Artworks Seems to Have Not Taken Place

As the United States continues to reel from the attack on the Capitol last week, news has emerged as to how the building's historic art collection has fared. Luckily, despite broken windows and abused furniture, its principal pieces—including the monumental paintings hung in the rotunda—seem to have emerged relatively unscathed. One image of the sculptural bust of President Zachary Taylor, which has been covered with plastic wrap to obscure what appears to be blood, evidences a notable exception. "All the art in the Capitol is basically on view," Barbara Wolanin, the former curator for the architect of the Capitol told the New York Times, highlighting the considerable danger that was seemingly avoided. "There aren't a lot of things hidden away."



Image: The bust of President Zachary Taylor. Photo: Getty Images

Archeologists May Have Found the Site of the Last Supper

We would forgive you for not having heard about the Church of the Agony—also referred to as the Church of All Nations—in East Jerusalem. But it holds a special place in both world and art history. Now, an ancient church built on the site has been discovered. While the archeological find, and that of a nearby Jewish ritual bathhouse, are significant in their own rights, what's most notable is that the structure is believed to have been where the Last Supper took place. If only Leonardo da Vinci were alive and up to paint a new rendition of his famed mural to mark the news.

Congress Approves New Smithsonian Museums for American Latinos and Women's History

While Congress has now begun the second impeachment process of President Trump, legislators recently made a much smaller yet still important step in the right direction as far as our nation's museums are concerned. Included in the year-end spending bill was language calling for the construction of a National Museum of the American Latino and American Women's History Museum. The legislation means that the planning—such as staff hiring and location scouting—can now begin for both institutions. The most recent museum to be constructed on the National Mall was the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in 2016.

"We have overcome tremendous obstacles and unbelievable hurdles to get to this historic moment, but, as I've said before, Latinos are used to overcoming obstacles," bill cosponsor Senator Bob Menendez said in a statement. "Passage of the National Museum of the American Latino is the culmination of decades of hard work, advocacy, successes and set-backs in the movement to recognize Latino contributions to America's history, economy and culture."

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Representative Carolyn B. Maloney, another cosponsor, added thoughts of her own as well: “For too long, women’s stories have been left out of the telling of our nation’s history, but with this vote, we begin to rectify that. Americans of all ages deserve to see and be inspired by the remarkable women who helped shape this nation—seeing role models doing the thing to which we aspire, can change the course of someone’s life.”



Image: The new Kehinde Wiley work, which depicts break dancing figures. Photo: Bloomberg via Getty Images

Works by Kehinde Wiley and Others Go on View in Moynihan Train Hall

While most coverage of the new Moynihan Train Hall has centered on its light-suffused structure by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, its other details are as show-stopping as its gleaming, glassy ceiling. For starters, there’s an Art Deco clock designed by Peter Pennoyer Architects. But more notably still, acclaimed artist Kehinde Wiley has created a large-scale tripartite work titled *Go* (2020). Hand-painted on glass, the piece makes reference in its compositional details to the Sistine Chapel while nodding toward the rich, longstanding tradition of stained glass. “So much of what goes on in ceiling frescoes are people expressing a type of levity and religious devotion and ascendancy,” Wiley commented to the *New York Times*. “For me the movement and space made so much more sense thinking about ways bodies twirl in break dancing.”

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Also of note, artistic duo Elmgreen & Dragset have created a sculptural installation titled *The Hive*. Featuring numerous skyscrapers illuminated with 72,000 LED lights, the piece speaks as much to the building’s surroundings as Stan Douglas’s contribution does to its history. In a series of panels, the photographer has aimed to recreate moments from Penn Station’s past. A clear feast for the eyes, as much as for the brain.

The Met Aims to Shed New Light on the Full History Behind Its European Paintings

Penn Station isn’t the only New York icon that’s focused on new light during a dark chapter in the city’s history. Recently, The Met debuted one half of its four-year project to replace its skylights. While the effort may sound like a hum-drum, if costly, maintenance effort, the closure helped catalyze an important rehang. Led by Keith Christiansen, chair of European paintings, that effort aims to draw increased attention to the fact that the art included was made within the context of colonialism and slavery, as well as the circumscribed role of women in society. The sweeping effort, titled “A New Look at Old Masters,” is, however, just a precursor to the eventual complete reinstallation.



Image: Patrons inside “A New Look at Old Masters.” Photo: Getty Images