



[Home](#) > Transformations exhibition brings more than 30 contemporary artists to Winterthur

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WINTERTHUR, DE – A hat made of wood veneer. A boldly colored quilt from rural Alabama. A meticulously researched project to rediscover and recreate the lost methods of producing Indian chintz, resulting in a modern take on the textile that originated in the 1500s.

These are just a few of the remarkable pieces featured in the new exhibition at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, created by more than 30 nationally recognized contemporary artists. Their works draw inspiration from Winterthur’s historic collections, seamlessly blending the past with the present.

On display June 8, 2024–January 5, 2025, *Transformations: Contemporary Artists at Winterthur* invites visitors to explore how historical influences shape contemporary art. This exhibition highlights the connections between different communities, offering fresh perspectives on history and its relevance to our lives today.

“These artistic expressions reflect each artist’s connection to the fine craftsmanship and design in Winterthur’s collection of decorative arts and archival materials as well as its naturalistic garden and landscape,” said exhibition curator Catharine Dann Roeber. Roeber, Winterthur’s director of Academic Affairs, the Brock W. Jobe Associate Professor of Decorative Arts and Material Culture, director of Winterthur’s Research Fellowship Program, and executive editor of *Winterthur Portfolio*, emphasizes the deep ties between the artists and Winterthur’s heritage.

Daily guided gallery walks of the *Transformations* exhibition will be free with admission. No reservations are required. Walks begin in the Galleries Reception Area daily at 2 pm.

Visitors can learn more about the diverse group of artists, ranging from furniture makers and painters to composers and an embroiderer whose work glows in the dark, at Winterthur’s *Transformations* page: <https://www.winterthur.org/transformations-contemporary-artists-at-winterthur/>.

Most of the artists in *Transformations* participated in Winterthur’s Maker-Creator Research Fellowship program, which invites artists, writers, filmmakers, horticulturists, craftspeople, and other creative professionals to immerse themselves in the Winterthur collection.

One of these artists, **Elaine K. Ng** of Hope, Maine, described her fellowship experience:

“Through a serendipitous encounter at Winterthur with economic historian Alka Raman (also a Winterthur Fellow), a 1966 translation of 18th-century French manuscripts from the library, and an 18th-century Indian palampore on exhibit from the museum collection, my fellowship evolved into a collaborative exploration of traditional chintz techniques and the links between material knowledge, culture, and place,” Elaine explains.

Winterthur museum founder Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969) had a particular fondness for chintz, which he prominently featured as palampores in his bedroom at Winterthur.

“He loved these Indian textiles because they were part of this whole world of goods that were flowing into the Colonies,” said Alexandra Deutsch, Winterthur’s John L. and Marjorie P. McGraw Director of Collections.



Chintz made with centuries-old techniques by artist Elaine Ng.

“This is the English translation of a Frenchman’s observation of a process, so some of these steps don’t make much sense until you do them,” Ng said, citing an obscure step involving buffalo milk to prevent dye bleeding.

“A lot of knowledge has been lost, but it’s possible to recover tactile knowledge by doing the processes described,” Ng said. “This is about how artists learn and have knowledge in their hands.”

Sharon and Jemica Williams are artists who use their hands to make prized quilts in Gee’s Bend (also known as Boykin), Alabama. Sharon learned to quilt from her mother and grandmother and passed on the tradition to her daughter, Jemica.

The quilters from Gee’s Bend used sacks, clothing, and whatever textiles they had on hand to create quilts that offered comfort to their families. The Gee’s Bend community of quilters trace their roots to enslaved ancestors forcibly relocated from a plantation in Halifax County, North Carolina. The Montmorenci plantation in a neighboring county was once the home of the staircase and architecture that can now be found in Montmorenci Stair Hall at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library.

Enslaved and free individuals at Montmorenci played an active role in the design, construction, and everyday use of this staircase.

And the Gee’s Bend quilt made by Sharon and Jemica Williams, and recently acquired by Winterthur, is juxtaposed with the staircase, cementing a connection between these three separate regions. The quilt is part of the *Transformations* exhibition.

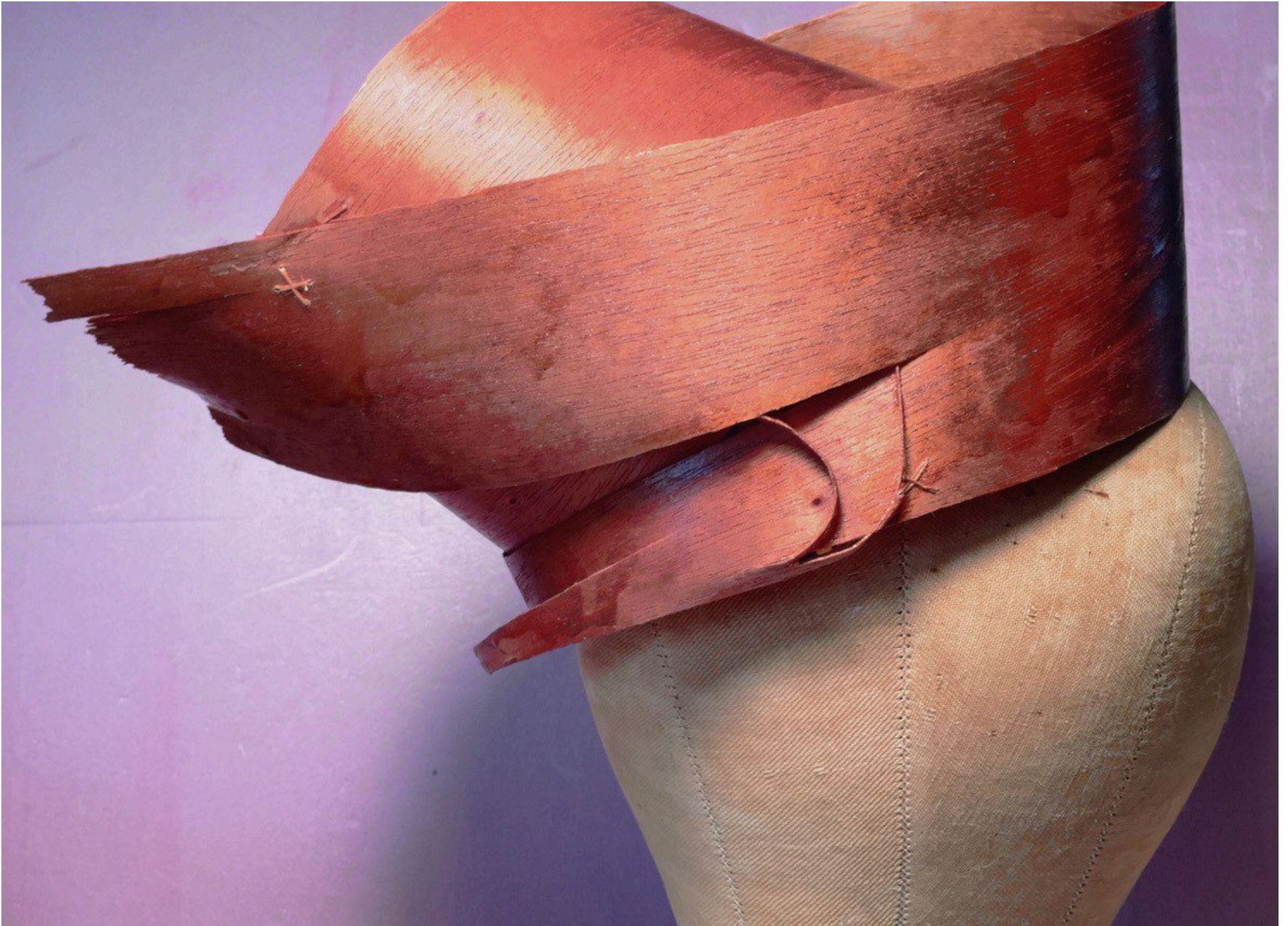


A Gee’s Bend quilt on display in Montmorenci Stair Hall at Winterthur.

Artist Judith Solodkin contributed handmade hats as part of the Hatbox/Bandbox Collective in the exhibition.

While Solodkin does not sell her hats, she crafts them to wear to art exhibition openings. She teaches lithography, digital embroidery, and soft sculpture at the School of Visual Arts and Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY.

“I make the hats for myself, and it takes about two weeks per hat,” she shared.



A wood veneer hat by artist Judith Solodkin will be displayed as part of Transformations.

Artist Andrew Raftery, professor of printmaking at Rhode Island School of Design, conceived this project after drawing inspiration from Winterthur’s bandbox collection.

Bandboxes were used, primarily by women, to store and transport hats, clothing, and other personal items in the 1700s and 1800s. Fashioned out of pasteboard or thin wooden boards, they were typically decorated on the outside with block-printed papers and often lined on the interior with contemporary newspapers and journals, creating three-dimensional scrapbooks that merged pattern design and current events.

Raftery invited other artists, including former students and colleagues, to create prints that cover the bandboxes.

“Then he thought, we should also get Judith to lend some hats, both because they are cool and also because they help show visitors one of the uses for bandboxes,” said Roeber, the exhibition curator.

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Bandboxes by artist Andrew Raftery.

For a high-res graphic of artists involved in Transformations, and for other images from the exhibition, visit:
<https://www.winterthur.org/transformationsphotos>

ABOUT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM, GARDEN & LIBRARY

Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic garden, and research library for the study of American art and material culture— offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year.

Winterthur is located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1. Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883 or visit winterthur.org.

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