

ART MUSEUMS *of Colonial Williamsburg*

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HIGHLIGHTS OF *WORLDS COLLIDE*: *ARCHAEOLOGY AND GLOBAL TRADE IN WILLIAMSBURG* TO BE ON VIEW AT THE ART MUSEUMS OF COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG IN SEPTEMBER 2024

Williamsburg, Va. (July 22, 2024)—When *Worlds Collide: Archaeology and Global Trade in Williamsburg* opens on Sept. 7, 2024, at the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, one of the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, approximately 225 artifacts from The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's renowned archaeology collection will go on view in a groundbreaking exhibition to be seen in the Museum's Margaret Moore Hall gallery. The exhibition will remain on view through January 2, 2027. Through a wide range of 18th-century objects representing the themes of material goods, food, ideas, landscapes and people, almost all of which were excavated in Williamsburg, visitors will learn what a global urban center the colonial city truly was.



Demonstrating how the streets of Williamsburg contained world travelers of all kinds, among the highlights to be seen in *Worlds Collide* are the remains of a green monkey and a baboon, found near the

Thomas Everard House and the James Geddy House, Kitchen, and Foundry. Both species are native to West Africa. In the British colonial empire of the 18th century, exotic animals became a part of daily life. Cities such as London became epicenters for the importation, sale and public display of animals from around the world. Displaying such animals, either at home or in public settings, served both to spread knowledge of the natural world and to express control over it. It might well have been practices such as this that brought these animals to sites surrounding the Palace Green in Williamsburg.

It may also surprise visitors to *Worlds Collide* to learn that coconuts, while uncommon, were available in 18th-century Williamsburg, as evidenced by these coconut shells found at Custis Square. Originating in the Indo-



Pacific region of the world, coconuts had been carried and cultivated throughout the Old and New Worlds across the 16th and 17th centuries. By the next century, coconuts were established and grown throughout the Caribbean. These objects may have dressed the dining tables of a select few of Williamsburg's households in a global cuisine or appeared as botanical specimens of interest obtained by colonial horticulturalists.



Another featured object in the exhibition is a commemorative medal found at Bassett Hall. The War of Austrian Succession, which among other combatants pitted the Spanish and British empires against one another, was a truly global conflict in the middle of the 18th

century. One of the first British victories in the war was the capture of the Spanish settlement and port of Porto Bello, Panama, by Admiral Edward Vernon in 1739. Vernon's forces, including American troops recruited to fight in South America, continued their campaigns in Panama and Colombia through 1741. Many medals depicting Vernon and his victories were struck during this period as expressions of the shared endeavor of Colonial and metropolitan British subjects in the course of creating an empire.



A truly colonial object is a locally produced ceramic that appears on nearly every 18th-century site in Williamsburg and is known as Colonoware. This type of ceramic was handmade using local clays and fired at low temperatures in open pits (as opposed to in a pottery kiln). These techniques were—and continue to be—used by the region's Native American people for thousands of years;

however, many of the forms, such as bowls, milk pans, chamber pots and porringers, are very similar to European vessel types. A skillet, or cooking pot, found at the Anthony Hay House and Cabinet Shop, is a highlight of *Worlds Collide*. With its tripod feet, deep sides and flat handle, it is remarkably similar to metal pans of the same period that were certainly imported from England. It is likely that this pot (and other forms of Colonoware) were produced by local potters as a cheaper version of imported goods, and it appears that they were very successful. Colonoware vessels have been found in Williamsburg at sites ranging from quarters for the enslaved to the kitchens of the Governor's Palace.



Found in the yard of the Wren Building at what was then known as the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, is a blue Persian urn, which is a spotlighted object in the exhibition. This impressive urn was the height of fashion and wealth in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and allowed for the decoration of interior and exterior spaces with ornamental specimen plantings. The urn is made of tin-glazed earthenware, a popular

ceramic throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, but it is a distinct decorative style in which white decoration appears on a deep blue field, an inversion of more common tin-glazed vessels of the period. While the urn was potted in an English workshop, it is also an example of the global influence of style in the colonial world, being an imitation of tin-glazed wares produced in the 17th century in the Nevers region of France, themselves, in turn, inspired by earlier white-on-blue-decorated Persan vessels of the preceding centuries.



In a wonderful example of connections between the 18th century and modern life, a bottle excavated from the Hubbard Site highlights the fact that branded mineral water was not an invention of the late 20th century. Mineral waters were seen as tonic helping to ensure one's own wellbeing. The bottle exhibited in *Worlds Collide* bears the impressed mark or seal that advertised the contents as from the spring at Pymont, located in modern Germany, which King George I visited in 1725. Following the royal visit, these waters became popular with British consumers and, as such, were imported in large quantities to cities such as London and Bristol, having first journeyed by wagon from the spring to the ports of Hamburg, Bremen or Rotterdam. Some of these bottles made the further trip across the Atlantic, where merchants' newspaper advertisements proclaimed the health benefits to colonial residents.



Another truly global commodity during the 18th century was tea, which was exported primarily from China in the period. Not only the tea itself, but also the porcelain vessels used to drink it were imported from Chinese potteries which supplied these vessels to a global network of trade that extended beyond just European consumers. Found in the Wren Building yard of William & Mary and also on display in the exhibition is a tea bowl with Taoist symbols, the meaning of which likely would have been unknown to its purchasers and users in Williamsburg. It is possible that this vessel was originally produced for local Asian markets rather than explicitly for the European trade. The bowl helps to illustrate not only the emergence of tea drinking as a global practice, but also how global styles and decorations came to sit upon colonial tables on the opposite side of the world from their place of production.



The last, but certainly not least, of the highlights to be seen in the exhibition is a small gold child's ring, inscribed on the inner surface with the phrase "Fear God Mary Brodnax." Made in Williamsburg and found at the site of Shield's Tavern, the ring bears the production mark of John Brodnax, an early local goldsmith. It most likely belonged to John's daughter, Mary, who may have been playmates with the daughter of Jean

Marot, an early owner of the tavern where this ring was discovered. This object is one of the few that Colonial Williamsburg's archaeologists can definitely tie to a young woman.

These objects are but a sampling of those that will be on display in *Worlds Collide: Archaeology and Global Trade in Williamsburg* and a fraction of the more than 60 million artifacts in Colonial Williamsburg's renowned archaeological collection. The exhibition is generously funded by Jacomien Mars.

Additional information about the Art Museums and Colonial Williamsburg as well as tickets are available online at colonialwilliamsburg.org, by calling (855) 296-6627 and by following Colonial Williamsburg on [Facebook](#) and [@colonialwmsburg](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg

The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg include the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum and the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, both of which are housed in their newly expanded building that offers an additional 65,000-square-feet of space, 25-percent more gallery space and numerous enhancements to the visitor experience. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum is home to the nation's premier collection of American folk art, with more than 7,000 folk art objects made up to the present day. The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum exhibits the best in British and American fine and decorative arts from 1670–1840. The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg are located at 301 South Nassau Street in Williamsburg, Va. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

About The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia's 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers and 18th-century inspired culinary options from historic taverns situated along historic Duke of Gloucester Street. Colonial Williamsburg Resorts complement the experience, offering guests five unique hotel properties including the iconic Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star, AAA Five Diamond Williamsburg Inn, newly renovated Williamsburg Lodge-Autograph Collection, Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel and Suites, the Griffin Hotel, and authentic 18th-century Colonial Houses. The resort offers a range of events and amenities including four historic taverns, 15 food and beverage outlets providing exquisite culinary experiences from casual to elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 36 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a world-class full-service spa and fitness center, pools, meeting and flexible event spaces, and scenic gardens providing the perfect venue for weddings and special events. Merchants Square, built alongside the Historic Area in 1935 as one of the first planned shopping districts in the United States, features more than 40 specialty boutiques with products ranging from apparel to fine jewelry, art, specialty foods and gifts. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg's educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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*Images: West African Baboon Remains (ca. 1760-1780), bone, James Geddy House and Foundry, T007-2023,104, OBJ-19BB-03200; Green Monkey Jaw (ca. 1720), bone, Everard House, T007-2023,10, OBJ-29FB-00650; Coconut (ca.1740-1780), Custis Square, T007-2023,8, OBJ-04BA-1350; Medal (ca.1739), white metal, Bassett Hall, T007-2023,7, OBJ-01AB-00027; Skillet (ca. 1760-1780), Anthony Hay House and Cabinet Shop, earthenware (Colonoware), T007-2023,50; OBJ-28DB-01576; Urn (ca. 1690-1720), earthenware (tin-glazed), Wren Building William & Mary; T007-2023,121, OBJ-16JA-00008; Mineral water bottle. (ca. 1760-1790), glass, Hubbard House site, T007-2023,182, OBJ-02PB-01075; Tea Bowl (ca.1690-1720), porcelain, Wren Building William & Mary, T007-2023,228, OBJ-16JA-00343; Ring (ca. 1715), gold, Shields Tavern, T007-2023,146, OBJ-09LB-05249.