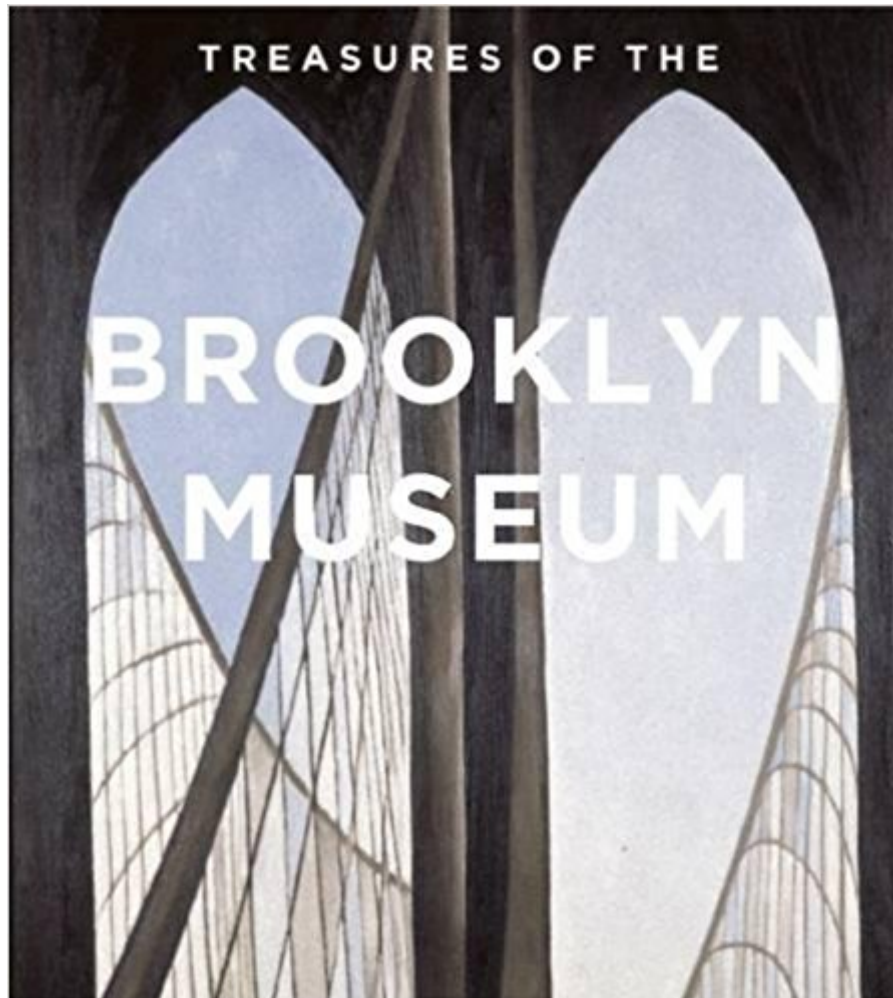




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# Treasures Of The Brooklyn Museum (Tiny Folio)



## Synopsis

Located in the heart of King's County, the Brooklyn Museum is an anchor of New York City and a world class institution. The museum's 560,000-square foot building is a Beaux Arts masterpiece, housing over one-and-a-half million works of art, from ancient Assyrian reliefs to striking period homes and Old Master paintings, as well as works by the top contemporary artists of today. This handsome little book illustrates a curated selection of these pieces, including highlights of the museum's renowned ancient Egyptian collection, its expansive holdings in American art, and its unrivaled selection of contemporary feminist art, including Judy Chicago's Dinner Party. The perfect souvenir from the museum's shop, or for any visitor to the borough, this Tiny Folio features spectacular photography throughout, as well as a special selection of images highlighting Brooklyn's rich artistic history. American Art; Arts of Africa; Arts of the Americas; Arts of the Islamic World; Arts of the Pacific Islands; Asian Art; Contemporary; Decorative; Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Near Eastern; Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist; European; Photography

## Book Information

Series: Tiny Folio

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Abbeville Press (March 14, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0789212781

ISBN-13: 978-0789212788

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 1.1 x 4.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item

Best Sellers Rank: #883,436 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > Travel > United States > New York > Brooklyn #1811 in Books > Arts & Photography > Collections, Catalogs & Exhibitions #7482 in Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History

## Customer Reviews

Kevin L. Staton is Curator Emeritus of the Brooklyn Museum. Anne Pasternak is the Shelby White and Leon Levy Director of the Brooklyn Museum

Excerpt from IntroductionThe Brooklyn Museum is defined by its world-class collections, with

works ranging in date from ancient civilizations to the present, and covering cultures from around the world. Over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Brooklyn Museum has built up rich holdings in many fields, and it is now one of the world's great treasure houses. But it wasn't always that way. The Brooklyn Museum started its life nearly two hundred years ago, as a library, and its first collection was books. In 1823, notices placed in local newspapers encouraged the citizens of the village of Brooklyn to attend a meeting at Stephenson's Tavern on August 7 for the purpose of establishing an Apprentices' Library in this village, and the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library was born. Legend has it that Augustus Graham, the wealthy businessman who was the driving force behind this and other Brooklyn organizations, went door-to-door with a wheelbarrow collecting books for the fledgling Library, and by January of the next year, the total had grown to 724 books and 150 pamphlets. Quickly outgrowing its temporary quarters, the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library needed a permanent home, and soon a site was selected at the corner of Henry and Cranberry Streets (fig. 1). On July 4, 1825, less than two years after that first meeting at Stephenson's Tavern, the visiting Revolutionary War veteran and hero, the Marquis de Lafayette, laid the cornerstone for the new building. Years later, Walt Whitman, who was six years old in 1825, wrote his recollections of the event: The day was a remarkably beautiful one. The boys and girls of Brooklyn Village were marshalled at the old ferry in two lines facing inwards with a wide space between. Lafayette came over in a carriage and passed slowly through the lines. The whole thing was old-fashioned and quiet.... After Lafayette had passed through the lines the people, who had congregated in large numbers (women and girls as numerous as men) proceeded to the site of the new building. There was some delay in placing the children where they could see the performance and Lafayette himself helped. The writer well recalls the pride he felt in being one of those who happened to be taken into Lafayette's arms and passed down. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 3, 1858 Just as it was Augustus Graham who began the gathering of books, he was responsible as well for the first art to enter the collection. Upon his death in 1853, Graham bequeathed to the Brooklyn Institute as the Apprentices' Library had become by that time \$27,000, a small part of which was to be used as a fund to acquire work by living American artists. Two years later, *First Harvest in the Wilderness*, commissioned from Asher B. Durand using these funds, was delivered to the Institute's Washington Street building (fig. 2), which by then had replaced the earlier one. The collection grew slowly over the last half of the nineteenth century, and fires in 1881 and 1890 damaged both the building and the art works. The institution languished, and it was in danger of folding altogether. But in the face of adversity, new leadership had a vision of a new institution. Selecting a piece of rural

land between the villages of Brooklyn and Flatbush, the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (as it was known by then) decided not just to rebuild, but to build what they planned to be the largest museum in the world, on formerly empty fields, and hired the preeminent American architects of the moment—McKim, Mead & White—to design the palatial new structure (fig. 3). With an enormous new building under construction, an enthusiastic community, committed donors, and ample opportunity, collecting began in earnest. Soon Renaissance and other European paintings from local collectors joined Native American material acquired on expeditions by the Museum's curators; Egyptian art from a New York archeologist/collector formed the basis of one of the nation's most important Egyptological collections; American watercolors by John Singer Sargent were acquired by public subscription, and paintings and sculpture joined the small core developed from Graham's original bequest; and American period rooms and furnishings supplemented the story of American art. Art from Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, South America, and the Middle East coalesced into important components of a vast trove through which it should be possible to read the history of the world, as Franklin Hooper, Director, said at the laying of the cornerstone of the new building in 1895. These were no small plans and aspirations. And the plans included not only the gathering of great works of art. Making art an integral part of the community was a parallel goal. To that end the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences established the nation's first children's museum, in 1899. What would become a groundbreaking and world-famous education department was established in 1930, and an art school followed in 1941. In 1967, in response to a protest by artists from Bedford-Stuyvesant demanding a place for their art, the Brooklyn Museum established the Community Gallery, the first space of its kind in an American museum. Henry Ghent, the Gallery's first director, said: The Gallery should be used to attract people who would not otherwise be aware of the treasure hidden in this venerable institution. Unfortunately, there are too many people in Brooklyn who remain away from venerable institutions because of the coldness of the awe and majesty generated by the institution's very venerability. The Community Gallery should overcome this awe and say, 'Welcome' to all the peoples of Brooklyn. Only after that 'Welcome' has generated traffic into the Museum is that institution able to invite the Community Gallery visitors to partake in the rest of the Museum. At this point, the cultivation of the new visitor as a friend and supporter of the Museum becomes a job of the entire Museum staff, as a team. As important as the collections are to the Museum's core, the institution has always had service to the public as its reason for being. Since the days when Augustus Graham went door-to-door gathering books for an organization where young men could improve themselves instead of spending their evenings in the taverns, the Brooklyn

Museum has looked to the needs of the community to design its own vision. When Franklin Hooper said that it should be possible to read the history of the world in the Museum's collections, it was because Brooklyn should have an Institute . . . worthy of her wealth, her position, her culture, and her people, an institution in the service of the community. The art collected by the Museum was not for its own sake alone, but for the ways in which art helps people become more responsive to the world they live in. In 1896, as the first wing of the present building was nearing completion (fig. 4), Booker T. Washington was invited to speak at the Institute's annual meeting. In his remarks he said, "The study of art that does not result in making the strong less willing to oppress the weak means little." The Brooklyn Museum has continued over the decades to have great faith in the ability of art to make our lives and our society better. Today, our mission reflects nearly two centuries of commitment to the principle that art and the learning it inspires is an integral part of the human experience. Over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the collection of the Brooklyn Museum grew into one that rivals the European royal collections that were its model. And it is still growing. Reflecting the needs of changing times and new audiences, the Museum's vast holdings continue to serve the people of Brooklyn, the nation, and the world.

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