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**MAJOR MUSEUM NEWS IN PHILADELPHIA 2019-2020**  
*Philadelphia Museum Of Art, Penn Museum Herald Historic Change*

**PHILADELPHIA, September 18, 2019** – Philadelphia, known for its historic museums, is witnessing major transformations within its most hallowed public spaces for art and culture. The iconic **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, completed in 1928, has engaged Frank Gehry to reimagine many of its current and future interiors. And the **Penn Museum**, formerly known as the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, has implemented a three-phase, multiyear project to modernize the capabilities and accessibility of its landmark Arts and Crafts and Eclectic building. Accompanying these major changes are equally newsworthy exhibitions throughout Philadelphia.

**Major Transformations:**

In 2006, the **Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA)**—the anchor of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway—appointed Frank Gehry as the architect for the museum's master plan. The current, core phase of the project called for preserving the landmark building's exterior while capturing 90,000 square feet of existing space for public use—notably, by building to the structure's ground level.

On September 18, 2019, the historic North Entrance, closed for more than four decades, reopened as the museum's sole ground-floor entry. The entrance leads to the dramatic, also previously closed, North Vaulted Walkway, featuring a voluminous lobby, new espresso bar and new museum store. These spaces' designs reflect those of Stir and The Café, two of Gehry's first projects there. Overall, the internationally esteemed architect has imparted a light and undeniably elegant touch to the original architecture.

Next year, the museum will welcome 23,000 square feet of new gallery space. This phase will reclaim space beneath the East Terrace (site of the *Rocky* steps) for galleries of early American, modern and contemporary art, renovate the West Entrance and Lenfest Hall, create a major gathering space called the Forum (replacing Van Pelt Auditorium) and reopen the southern portion of the Vaulted Walkway. Expected completion: fall 2020.

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The **Penn Museum**, a pioneer in archaeology and anthropology since 1887, is undergoing a three-phase, multiyear building transformation. The University of Pennsylvania museum houses an esteemed international collection that represents worldwide study and exploration—and reveals thousands of years of human history.

On **November 16, 2019**, the museum unveils phase one: 10,000 square feet of newly restored space for the Mexico & Central American Gallery and Africa Galleries, its brand new Sphinx Gallery—featuring the famed, 12.5-ton red granite Sphinx of Ramses II, the largest sphinx in the Western Hemisphere—as well as a transformed Main Entrance Hall and a striking renovation of the 614-seat Harrison Auditorium that pays homage to its original days, circa 1915. In addition, the museum will reveal a logo and name change—to Penn Museum: America’s Museum of Ancient Worlds—and will emphasize its renewed mission focusing on accessibility for everyone.

In 2020, the museum will debut a new exhibit on its Lower Level that will encompass adornments throughout the ages. *The Stories We Wear*, will feature tattoos, jewelry, military regalia and other decorative fashionable elements that connect lives today with those of people in the ancient past.

Phase two, expected to be complete in 2023, features the museum’s renowned Ancient Egypt and Nubia Galleries. The galleries will feature massive columns and pylons from the 13<sup>th</sup>-century BCE displayed at their full height, offering visitors a chance to experience walking through a pharaoh’s palace in Egypt. Permanent exhibits on Ancient Egypt include *Royalty and Religion* and *Life and the Afterlife*.

The third phase will focus on renovating the museum’s towering Rotunda, an architectural marvel that stands 90 feet tall and 90 feet in diameter, the showcase for Chinese monuments and 15<sup>th</sup>-century Buddhist murals in the Asian Galleries. By 2025, the renovations are expected to come to a close.

#### **Major Art Exhibitions:**

- ***David Hartt: The Histories (Le Mancenillier)*** – Beth Sholom Synagogue, the National Historical Landmark designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, hosts its first-ever artist commission: David Hartt’s multimedia installation contends with ideas about culture, migration and the environment. Highlights include music by 19<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish-Creole composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk, video and tapestry that evoke the landscape of Haiti and New Orleans and live musical activations by Haitian Philadelphia baritone Jean Bernard Cerin and others. **Through December 19, 2019.** 8231 Old York Road, Elkins Park, (215) 887-1342, [bethsholompreservation.org](http://bethsholompreservation.org)

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- **30 Americans** – Striking works by 30 of the country’s most influential contemporary African American artists, including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Mark Bradford, Nick Cave, Barkley L. Hendricks, Kerry James Marshall, Wangechi Mutu, Lorna Simpson, Mickalene Thomas and Kehinde Wiley, take to the Barnes Foundation’s Roberts Gallery. The exhibit offers powerful expressions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class against a backdrop of prejudice. **October 27, 2019-January 12, 2020.** 2025 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, (215) 278-7000, [barnesfoundation.org](http://barnesfoundation.org)
- **Off the Wall: American Art to Wear** – At the Philadelphia Museum of Art, more than 100 works of wearable art by more than 50 artists, most collected by New York gallerist Julie Schafner Dale, tell of the uniquely American Art to Wear movement in the 1960s and ’70s. **November 10, 2019-May 17, 2020.** 2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, (215) 763-8100, [philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org)
- **Jasper Johns** – The Philadelphia Museum of Art has partnered with the Whitney Museum of American Art on simultaneous exhibitions of the work of Johns, considered the country’s most significant living artist. The unprecedented collaboration chronologically shows paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, books and costumes that mirror the other’s display, creating an immersive exhibition that itself, is a study in Johns’ fascination with reflections. **October 2020-February 2021.** 2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, (215) 763-8100, [philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org)

#### **Standout Cultural & Historical Exhibitions:**

- **Cost of Revolution: The Life and Death of an Irish Soldier** – Old City’s Museum of the American Revolution organizes a world-premiere exhibit that traces the story of artist and soldier Richard St. George, an Irish officer in the British Army wounded in the Battle of Germantown, who returned home to fight against Irish independence, experienced PTSD, died young—and documented his travails in self-portraits, cartoons and sketches. More than 100 artifacts include objects making their U.S. debut. **September 28, 2019-February 17, 2020.** 101 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, (215) 253-6731, [amrevmuseum.org](http://amrevmuseum.org)
- **American Voyager: Herman Melville at 200** – To mark what would be Herman Melville’s 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, an exhibition at the historic Rosenbach library presents first editions and rare manuscripts through the lenses of LGBTQ identity, social justice, environmentalism and globalization to piece together the life of a once-unsung writer whose posthumously beloved *Moby-Dick* transformed an under-read American novelist into a literary icon. **October 3, 2019-April 5, 2020.** 2008-2010 Delancey Place, (215) 732-1600, [rosenbach.org](http://rosenbach.org)
- **Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg** – The National Museum of American Jewish History hosts the first East Coast stop for an exhibition about the second woman and first Jewish woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. The visual memoir traces Justice Ginsburg’s transformation from camp rabbi to law student to women’s rights advocate to all-around icon. It also features her Supreme Court robe and signature jabot. **October 4, 2019-January 12, 2020.** 101 S. Independence Mall East, (215) 923-3811, [nmajh.org](http://nmajh.org)
- **Spit Spreads Death: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 in Philadelphia** – The Mütter Museum of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia opens its most ambitious exhibition to date, a multi-disciplinary, five-year recounting of a 100-year-old global pandemic. The “Spanish flu” took 50 to 100 million lives worldwide; 20,000 of those lives belonged to Philadelphians, who saw the most deaths of any major city. **October 17, 2019-August 5, 2024.** 19 S. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, (215) 560-8564, [muttermuseum.org](http://muttermuseum.org)

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*Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos and high-definition B-roll of Greater Philadelphia, visit the Photos & Video section of [visitphilly.com/mediacenter](http://visitphilly.com/mediacenter).*