

Emma Stebbins

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Photographer unknown

Emma Stebbins in Rome or Naples, ca. 1857–70

From the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

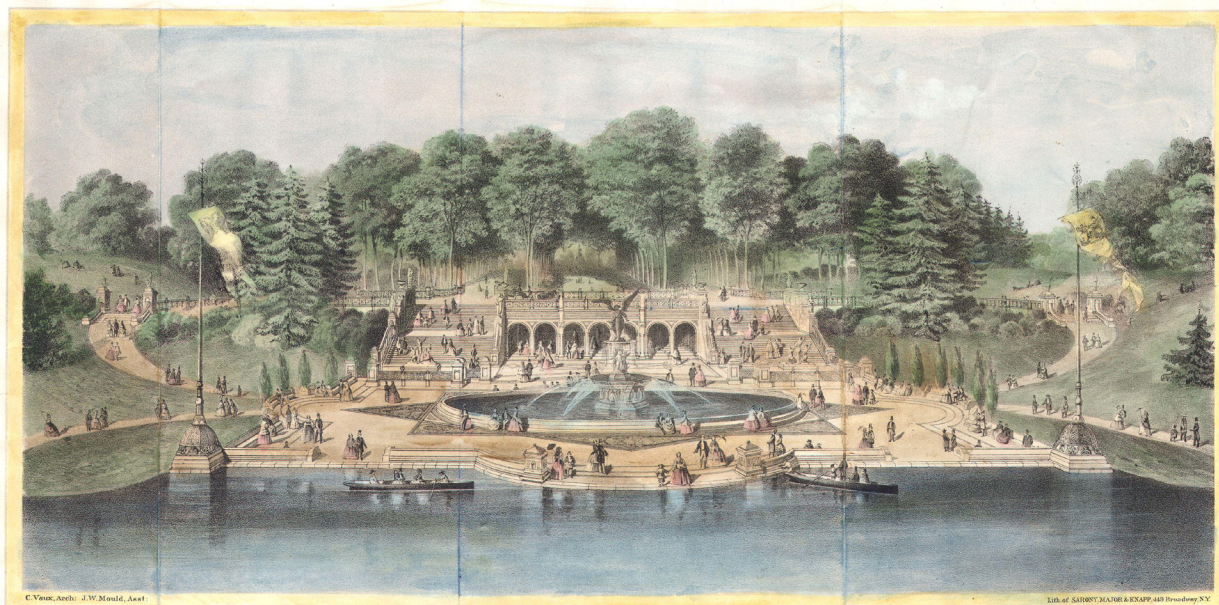
Carving Out History

Emma Stebbins (1815–1882) carved out a career on two continents, making history as one of the most significant American sculptors of the nineteenth century. In 1856, she embarked from New York City for Rome to further her artistic ambitions. Over the next fourteen years, she created innovative marble sculptures, including unprecedented allegories of labor and industry, as well as incisive interpretations of literary and biblical subjects. Stebbins also sculpted portraits of her chosen family, including her wife, actress Charlotte Cushman, who championed her work. In 1865, with a bronze statue of educator Horace Mann in Boston, she became the first woman to complete a public monument in the US. Stebbins was also the first woman to earn a public art commission for New York City, the iconic *Bethesda Fountain* in Central Park.

Stebbins's art speaks to some of the most compelling issues of her time (and ours), including gender and sexuality, ecology and industry, and political conflict and public art. This exhibition brings together most of her rare marble sculptures for the first time. It also examines the rich histories of her monuments, including the *Bethesda Fountain*, which continues to inspire a vast public with its message of peace and healing.

Curated by Karli Wurzelbacher, PhD, Chief Curator, The Heckscher Museum of Art.





THE TERRACE

Sarony, Major, and Knapp

The Terrace, 1869 (detail)

Reproduction of a lithograph

Photographer unknown

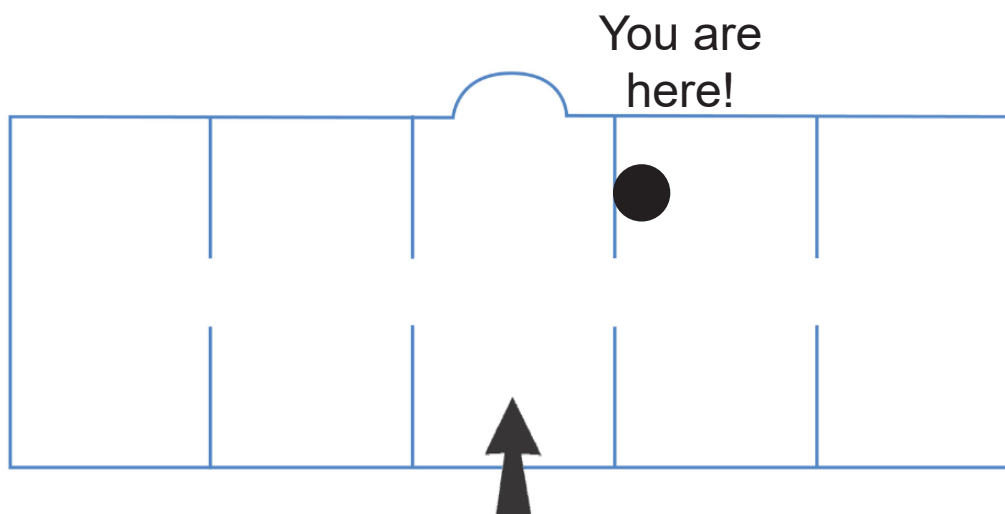
Emma Stebbins in Rome or Naples, ca. 1857–70

From the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Neoclassical Art in Rome

In 1856, at age forty, Stebbins left New York City with her mother and sister for a Grand Tour of Europe. In Rome, she visited museums, historic sites, and the studios of international contemporary artists. She also met the love of her life, American actress Charlotte Cushman. They decided to live together in Rome and Stebbins embarked on a career as a sculptor. Like her peers, she worked in the neoclassical style, creating idealized allegorical marble figures inspired by ancient Greek and Roman art. Stebbins, one of America's first female sculptors, expanded the conventions of neoclassical art by exploring new content and forms.





Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

The Lotus Eater, 1863

Marble

The Heckscher Museum of Art

Museum Purchase, Town of Huntington Art Acquisition
Fund, 2022.7.1

The conservation of this work in 2023 was supported through the NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant Program administered by Greater Hudson Heritage Network. This program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

This youthful figure references Homer's ancient epic, *The Odyssey*, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's popular 1832 poem, "The Lotos-Eater." In the texts, travelers who eat the narcotic lotus plant become apathetic and pleasure-seeking, abandoning their laborious quest to return home. The themes of travel and self-exile likely resonated with Stebbins and the expatriates and tourists who admired her work in Rome. When Stebbins exhibited *The Lotus Eater* in Boston, one writer contrasted her art with modern American life: "In the work-a-day world . . . it is well to linger awhile over this form of Lotus eating, and to dream awhile with poet and sculptor."



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Multisensory accessible experience:

Listen to a verbal description of this artwork.

Hear excerpts from the two literary works that inspired this sculpture.

Engage your sense of touch with a replica of this sculpture in the Central Gallery.

In Rome alone the old and the new exist together and can never be disunited.

—Emma Stebbins, 1878



Reproduction of a detail of
John Murray (American, 1808–1892), cartographer
J. & C. Walker, engraver
Plan of Rome, ca. 1850–56
Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Stebbins lived and worked at the heart of the cosmopolitan artistic community in Rome. From 1859 to 1870, she lived with Cushman at 38 Via Gregoriana (1). Perched near the top of the Spanish Steps (2), her home offered panoramic views of the city and the surrounding countryside. Her first studio was on Via Sistina (3). In 1864, she relocated to a studio near the Piazza Barberini (4).

Reproductions of albumen silver prints, from left to right:



Unidentified photographer

Spanish Steps, ca. 1860–70

Getty Museum, 84.XP.1148.10

Romualdo Moscioni (Italian, 1849–1925)

Via Sistina, Palazzo Zuccari, and Via Gregoriana, Rome,
ca. 1885–93

From the John Neal Tilton scrapbook

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

James Anderson (British, 1813–1877)

Panorama of Rome [from the Palazzo Zuccari], 1859

Getty Museum, 84.XO.251.1.9

James Anderson (British, 1813–1877)

St. Angelo and St. Peter's, ca. 1853

Getty Museum, 84.XA.619.61

Robert Macpherson (Scottish, 1811–1872)

Pines in the Borghese Garden, Rome, 1857

Getty Museum, 84.XP.458.29

These photographs evoke the atmosphere of Rome when Stebbins lived there. Moscioni's image captures the intersection of Via Sistina and Via Gregoriana at the top of the Spanish Steps. The building in the middle is the Palazzo Zuccari, from which Anderson took his panoramic photographs. He captured the same views that Stebbins enjoyed from her nearby home. Many of her sculptures relate to the art of Rome's churches, fountains, museums, and monuments, including the Castel Sant'Angelo and St. Peter's Square.

Unlike the increasingly industrial and democratic US, Rome was agrarian and ruled by the Catholic Church. Sometimes overlooking the poverty and disenfranchisement of contemporary Romans, middle- and upper-class white Americans like Stebbins often experienced the city as an exotic arcadia alive with the classical past. In 1870, the same year she and Cushman returned to the US, nationalist troops took over the city and Rome became part of a new Italian nation state.



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Listen to Stebbins's description of Rome.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

***The Lotus Eater*, 1870**

Marble

Collection of Karen Bechtel and William Osborne

The Lotus Eater bust was one of Stebbins's most popular sculptures. She created at least five versions, including this one, carved during her final year in Rome. In addition to literary sources, Stebbins found inspiration for *The Lotus Eater* in ancient sculptures of Antinous. Antinous was the lover of Roman Emperor Hadrian. After he died at age nineteen, he was declared a god. Sculptures of him, such as those illustrated here, proliferated.



Robert Macpherson (Scottish, 1811–1872)
Antinous, bas relief, Villa Albani [Rome], 1860s
 Albumen silver print
 Getty Museum, 84.XM.502.32



James Anderson (British, 1813–1877)
L'Antinoüs du Belvédère. Vatican
 Albumen silver print
 Getty Museum, 84.XO.251.3.3



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

The Lotus Eater, ca. 1857–60

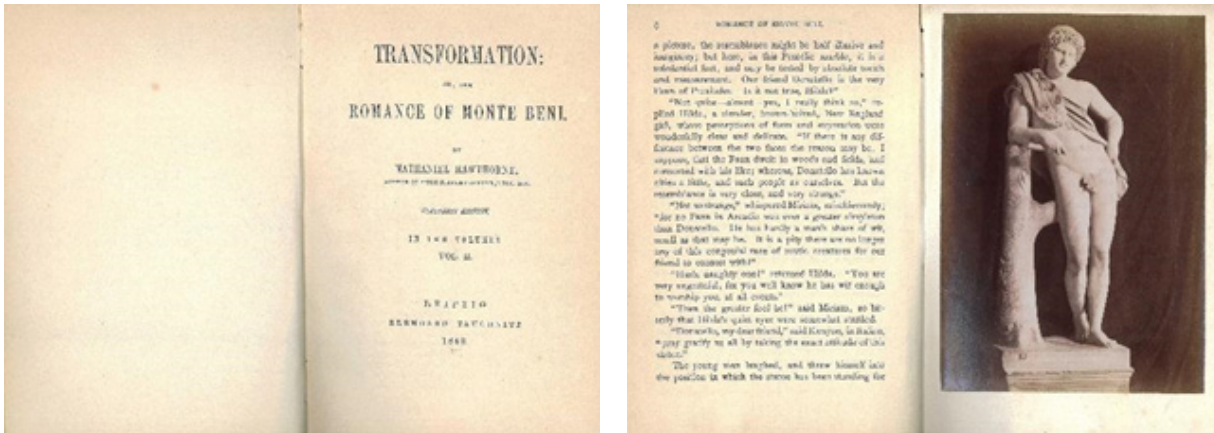
Albumen silver print

Reproduction of a photograph from the
Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian
Institution

The first sculpture that Stebbins created in Rome was this full-length version of *The Lotus Eater*. Likely about thirty inches tall, the artwork was the first male nude sculpted by a female American artist. Stebbins studied the nude male model in order to accurately represent the figure's anatomy. This would have been unthinkable in the US, where this foundational part of artistic training was considered inappropriate for women.

In the early 1860s, Stebbins exhibited *The Lotus Eater* in Boston and in New York City, where one newspaper reported that it was admired by “many a fair dame and all the critics of the City.” Today, we know the artwork only through this nineteenth-century photograph and historical descriptions. If the marble sculpture still exists, its whereabouts are unknown.



Nathaniel Hawthorne (American, 1804–1864)

Transformation: Or, The Romance of Monte Beni

Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860

Published in the US as *The Marble Faun: Or, the Romance of Monte Beni*

Volumes I and II

The Heckscher Museum of Art

When authoring this novel about American artists in Rome, Hawthorne was inspired in part by Stebbins and her fellow sculptors. The popular book, which romanticized the city, heightened Americans' interest in visiting Italy and learning about their compatriots working there. The “marble faun” of the book’s title refers to an ancient sculpture, also known as the “Leaning Satyr” or the “Resting Satyr,” housed in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. A faun, or satyr, is a mythological woodland creature, part human and part animal. This sculptural type became a cultural touchstone for many nineteenth-century artists and their audiences.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Autumn (also known as ***Bacchus***), ca. 1863–66

Marble

Collection of Tyler Elizabeth Burgess

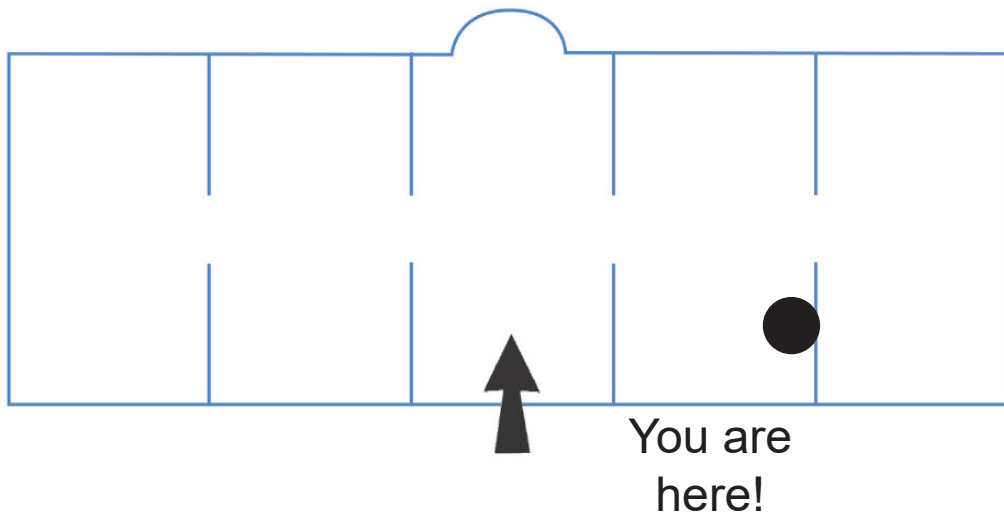
Slender, sensuous, and serene, this figure gracefully balances his weight on his left leg and the ball of his right foot while supporting a branch of grapes on his shoulder. The fruit, a product of the fall harvest, connects the work to Dionysus/Bacchus, god of wine and revelry. Stebbins also referred to some of the same classical sources that inspired *The Lotus Eater* when creating this personification of the season of autumn.

The current of [our] two lives ran, with rare exceptions, side by side.

—Emma Stebbins, 1878

Chosen Family

Stebbins grew up in New York as part of a prominent family involved in the city's business and cultural spheres. She made a name for herself as a portraitist before moving to Rome to become a sculptor in 1856. From 1859 to 1870, the home that Stebbins shared with her wife, actress Charlotte Cushman, was the heart of the expatriate community there. The two formed a chosen family of artists and writers, many of them lesbians, who supported one another personally and professionally. In 1870, following Cushman's breast cancer diagnosis, the couple returned to the US and Stebbins focused on caring for her. In 1878, she published a posthumous biography of Cushman, preserving their shared legacies.



Stebbins's Artistic Circle in Italy

From left to right, top to bottom.

Row One



Benjamin Paul Akers

Photograph of a drawing by Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882), *Paul Akers*, ca. 1857.

Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–1882, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Elizabeth Milroy, 1981



Benjamin Paul Akers (American, 1825–1861), *St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, 1860. Marble, 43 in. high. Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME, The Lunder Collection, 2013.003



Margaret F. Foley

Margaret F. Foley (American, 1827–1877), *Pascuccia*, 1866. Stone, 23 x 21 in.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, Gift of The Prince Company, Inc., 1987.472



Florence Freeman

Lorenzo Suscipj (Italian, 1802–1885), *Florence Freeman*, ca. 1860s. Carte de visite. Boston Athenaeum, MA, Mss. .S471, Gift, Caroline Freeman Lawrence Whiteside and Barbara Lawrence Schevill, 1993



Florence Freeman (American, 1836–1883), *Sandalphon*, 1864. Marble, 25 - 1/4 x 16 - 9/16 x 9 - 9/16 in. Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, National Park Service, Cambridge, MA



John Gibson

Engraved by Charles E. Wagstaff (British, 1808–1850), *John Gibson, Esqr. Sculptor, R. A., Member of the Academies of St. Luke at Rome, of Bologna, Ravenna, of the R. A. of Turin and that of New York*, 1846. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, Paul Mellon Collection, B1977.14.12327



John Gibson (British, b. Wales, 1790–1866), *Aurora*, ca. 1842. Marble, 68 in. high. Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, Purchase with assistance of the Art Fund, 1993, NMW A 2527

Row Two



Harriet Hosmer

Antonio Mariannecci (Italian, active Rome, 1860s), *Hosmer on ladder with sculpture of Thomas Hart Benton*, ca. 1860–1862. Carte de visite. Harriet Goodhue Hosmer Papers, A162-72-11, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA



Stebbins's Artist Circle in Italy

Likely Silsbee, Case & Co. Photograph Artists (Boston, MA), *Miss E. Stebbins*, ca. 1861. Carte de visite. Smithsonian American Art and Portrait Gallery Library, Washington, DC

Stebbins was part of a network of hundreds of Americans who congregated in Rome in the 1850s and 1860s. Akers, Gibson, Hosmer, and Powers mentored her when she first arrived in Italy. Stebbins, in turn, encouraged the careers of Foley, Freeman, Lewis, Ream, and Whitney, all of whom followed the path to Rome that she and Hosmer had blazed for women. Cushman patronized most of these artists, including Tilton, who was married to Stebbins's sister.



Edmonia Lewis

Henry Rocher (American, 1826–1887), *Edmonia Lewis*, ca. 1870. Carte de visite. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, NPG.94.95



Edmonia Lewis (American, 1844–1907), *Old Arrow Maker*, modeled 1866, carved 1872. Marble, 21- $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13- $\frac{5}{8}$ x 13- $\frac{3}{8}$ in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Joseph S. Sinclair, 1983.95.182

Row Three



Hiram Powers

Longworth Powers (American, 1835–1904), Hiram Powers with *Proserpine* bust, ca. 1861. Carte de visite. Hiram Powers papers, 1819–1953, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC



Hiram Powers (American, 1805–1873), *The Greek Slave*, modeled 1841–1843, carved 1846. Marble, 65 - 15/16 x 20 - 1/4 x 18 - 1/2 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Corcoran Collection (Gift of William Wilson Corcoran), 2014.79.37



Vinnie Ream

Vinnie Ream at work upon her Lincoln bust, which rests upon the stand she used in the White House while President Lincoln posed for her, ca. 1865–1870. Library of Congress, Washington, DC



Vinnie Ream (American, 1847–1914), *Abraham Lincoln*, 1870. Marble, 84 in. high. Capitol Rotunda, Washington, DC



John Rollin Tilton

John Rollin Tilton – Rome, 1865. John Neal Tilton scrapbook, ca. 1860–1880, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Elizabeth Milroy, 1981



Anne Whitney

Antoine Sonrel (American, d. 1879), *Anne Whitney*, 1874. Carte de visite. Oliver Ingraham Lay, Charles Downing Lay, and Lay Family papers, 1789–2000, bulk 1870–1996. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC



Anne Whitney (American, 1821–1915), *Charles Sumner Memorial*, modeled 1875, installed 1902. Bronze. Cambridge, MA



**Attributed to Silsbee, Case & Co. Photograph Artists
(Boston, MA)**

Charlotte Cushman and Emma Stebbins, ca. 1861

Cabinet card photograph

Houghton Library, Harvard University

“I am already married & wear the badge upon the 3d finger of my left hand.”

This is how Cushman described her union with Stebbins when writing to a friend in 1858. The two became lifelong romantic partners after meeting in Rome in 1856. Cushman once called Stebbins “my other, & much my better half,” and in a newspaper article she explained, “we love each other, respect each others lives and habits and opinions, and dwell together in perfect harmony.” This photograph, copies of which circulated among their family, friends, and acquaintances, documents their relationship.



Henry Inman (American, 1801–1846)

Emma Stebbins, ca. 1839–41

Oil on canvas

The Heckscher Museum of Art

Museum Purchase: Town of Huntington

Art Acquisition Fund, 2022.7.3

The conservation of this work in 2024 was supported through the NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant Program administered by Greater Hudson Heritage Network. This program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

In the late 1830s or early 1840s, Stebbins studied art with Henry Inman, who painted portraits of her parents and her brother. Here, he depicts her as an upper-class young woman attired for horseback riding.

When Stebbins lived in New York City, there were few formal opportunities for women to train as artists. In the early 1850s, before she moved to Italy, she helped to remedy this by serving as a “Lady Manager” of the newly-formed New-York School of Design for Women (which later became part of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art).



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)
Charlotte Cushman, 1870

Marble

The Heckscher Museum of Art

Museum Purchase from the Charlotte Cushman Foundation, Philadelphia, PA, 2024.9

Conserved in 2024 through the Adopt a Work of Art Program with funds from the Andrea B. and Peter D. Klein Conservation Fund

In 1860 and 1861, Stebbins included a version of this bust in the first exhibitions of her sculpture in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia. Some nineteenth-century viewers would have understood the work as a portrait of Stebbins's lover, and most would have appreciated it as an image of one of the most famous women of the day. One critic wrote: "The grander features of Miss Cushman's head are familiar to all who know the tragic artist; the womanly nature of the woman comes to us in this bust translated by a woman's intimate tenderness." Stebbins ultimately created five versions of the bust. In 1873, she exhibited one at the Women's Pavilion of the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, a landmark exhibition in the history of art.



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Listen to how Stebbins described Cushman and their first meeting in Rome and hear a verbal description of this sculpture.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Harriet Hosmer, ca. 1859

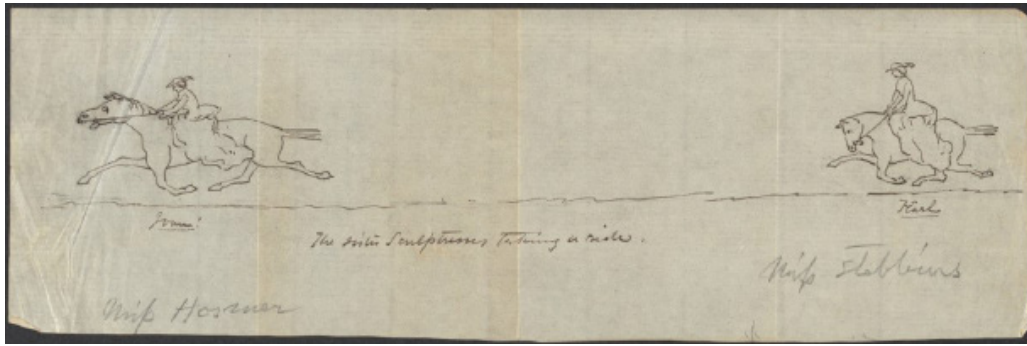
Mixed media including charcoal, white chalk, and graphite on paper

Watertown Free Public Library

Gift of Harriet Hosmer Carr, 1923

This is a rare surviving example of Stebbins's skill as a crayon portraitist. Before she moved to Rome to focus on sculpture, she was best known for works like these. The drawing depicts Harriet Hosmer, one of the leading American sculptors working in Rome in the 1850s and 1860s. Her sculpting tools are on view in the adjacent gallery.

Hosmer lived with Stebbins and Cushman at 38 Via Gregoriana for more than six years. Cushman often supported her career and collected her work. Stebbins and Hosmer were friendly and collegial, although they sometimes competed for patrons and commissions.



Attributed to Harriet Hosmer (American, 1830–1908)

The Sister Sculptresses Taking a Ride, undated

Pen and ink on paper

Harriet Goodhue Hosmer Papers

Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

This sketch is part of an archive of letters that Hosmer sent to family friends. Showing Hosmer and Stebbins (labeled “the sister sculptresses”) riding horses, it conveys a sense of the personal, professional, and social freedoms that expatriate women enjoyed in Rome. Far from their families, they were able to stretch the conventions of female propriety that constrained them in the US. Like Stebbins and Cushman, Hosmer’s romantic partners were women. This was true for others in their circle as well, including sculptors Margaret F. Foley, Florence Freeman, and Anne Whitney. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was relatively easier (though still rare) for women to pursue careers as sculptors if they were free from the demands of motherhood and from the legal and financial control of a husband.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Portrait of Henry Waterbury, ca. 1849

Mixed media including charcoal, white chalk, and graphite on paper

Collection of the Family of Henry Austin Clark Sr and Caroline Welling Van Deusen

Prior to dedicating her career to sculpture, Stebbins was known for her portrait drawings. One critic noted their “masterly correctness and grace.” This portrait of her cousin and the nearby portrait of Hosmer are rare surviving examples of her works on paper.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

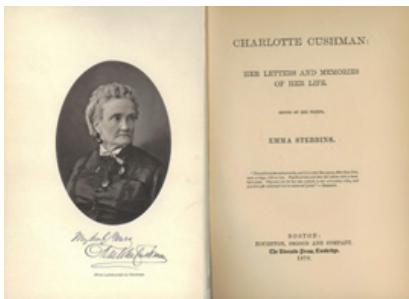
John Gibson, undated

Pen and ink on paper

Reproduction of a photograph from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

English sculptor John Gibson was one of the most respected artists working in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century. He mentored Harriet Hosmer and also encouraged Stebbins in her work. It is unclear when Stebbins created this portrait of Gibson, which she probably never translated into marble.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Two copies of *Charlotte Cushman: Her Letters and Memories of Her Life*

Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1878 (first edition)
The Heckscher Museum of Art

Stebbins compiled this biography to help ensure Cushman’s place in history. She largely effaced her own story from the narrative and avoided detailing their romantic life, calling herself Cushman’s “friend” on the title page. Nevertheless, the book is the most extensive surviving text by Stebbins.

Publishing this book was one of Stebbins’s final creative acts. In 1870, after Cushman learned that she had breast cancer, she and Stebbins decided to return to the US. For the next six years, they lived together in New York City and in Newport, Rhode Island. Despite her illness, Cushman resumed her acting career. Stebbins, who was contending with her own failing health, focused on caring for her elderly mother and for Cushman. In 1876, Cushman died in Boston at age fifty-nine. Stebbins spent the next two years writing and editing her biography. In 1882, Stebbins died in New York City at age sixty-seven.



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Listen to an excerpt from this book, in which Stebbins describes how the home she shared with Cushman served as a key social hub.



Enlarged reproduction of a carte de visite by Wenderoth and Taylor (Philadelphia, PA)

Sallie Mercer, ca. 1860–70

Harriet Goodhue Hosmer Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

Sallie Mercer, a Black woman from Philadelphia, began working as Cushman's maid when she was fourteen years old. She became Cushman's assistant, and for more than thirty years she cared for her costumes, made her travel arrangements, and ran her households, including 38 Via Gregoriana in Rome. Mercer's labor was the foundation of Cushman's and Stebbins's reputations as hostesses. She helped them to maintain their place at the center of expatriate artistic and social life in Rome.



Reproduction of the cover of *The Daily Graphic*

March 4, 1876

The New York Historical, 102199d

Cushman was a critically acclaimed and financially successful actress. Published soon after her death, this newspaper cover celebrates some of the roles for which she was most famous and also includes an image of Stebbins's bust of her. However, it fails to memorialize her performances in male roles such as Hamlet and Romeo.



Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park, for the Year Ending with December 31, 1864

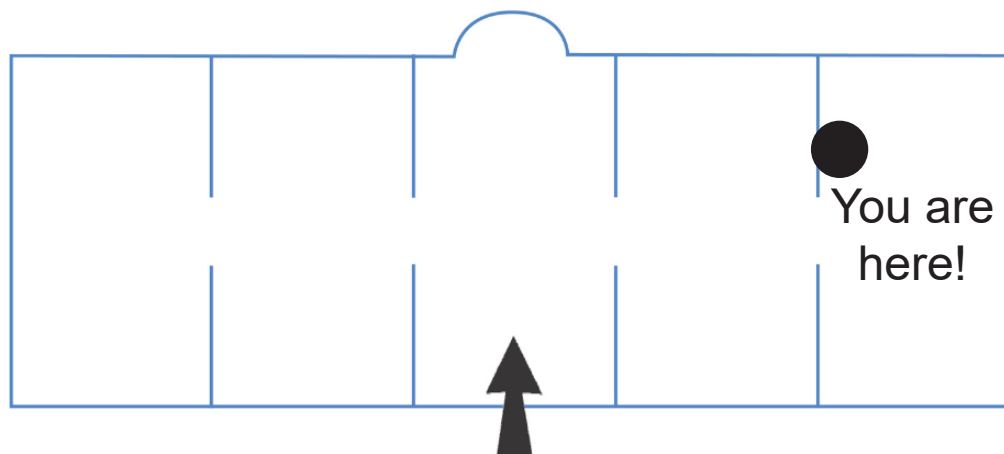
New York: WM. C. Bryant & Co., 1865

The Heckscher Museum of Art

This report documents the decision of the Central Park Board of Commissioners to hire Stebbins to create a fountain, making her the first woman to earn a public sculpture commission for New York City. To fulfill the commission, Stebbins designed and created the *Bethesda Fountain*, which is explored elsewhere in this exhibition. Stebbins's brother Henry G. Stebbins, a stockbroker and city leader, was an important member of the Board of Commissioners. As highly respected cultural figures, the two siblings mutually advanced each other's ambitions.

Industry and Art Making

Stebbins created some of the first sculptures of industrial American laborers in the history of art. Breaking with the conventions of neoclassicism, she depicted the figures in realistic clothing rather than nude or in classical drapery. Her coal miner, gold miner, and sailor symbolize industries that were reshaping the country's economy and its natural environment. Her statues of a machinist and his apprentice emphasize human skill and ingenuity during a time of rapid technological change. The themes of these artworks also relate to the process of producing marble sculpture, which involved quarrying stone, working with skilled assistants, making objects in multiple, and shipping art overseas.





Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Commerce (also known as *Sailor*), 1860

Industry (also known as *Miner*), 1860

Marble

The Heckscher Museum of Art

Gift of Philip M. Lydig III, 1959.355, 1959.354

Conserved in 2023 through the Adopt a Work of Art Program with funds from the Andrea B. and Peter D. Klein Conservation Fund

Charles August Heckscher, an uncle of this museum's founder, was a German immigrant who became a captain of industry. He hired Stebbins to create this sculptural pair celebrating the sources of his wealth: coal mining and oceanic shipping. The figures' poses, clothing, and accessories are modern takes on ancient Roman statues (themselves copies of Greek bronzes). Stebbins's pristine white marbles heroicize working-class laborers while glossing over the realities of their difficult, dangerous jobs.



James Anderson (British, 1813–1877)
Doryphoros [Spear-Bearer] of Polykleitos, Vatican Museum, ca. 1880.
Albumen print on paper
University of Michigan Museum of Art,
1980/1.199



Statue of a resting satyr, Roman copy of
an original by Praxiteles dating to the last
third of the 4th century BC, ca. 70–100 CE
Marble with traces of polychromy,
72 ¼ in. tall
Vatican Museums

[She] learned that form was the most satisfying medium of expression, and was to supersede all others with her. The sculptor's passion awoke, and she saw that she had the sculptor's thumb, and the inner vision, which enables the artist in Form, to project before the mind's eye a perfect image of the object to be rendered.

—Mary Stebbins Garland, 1888



Harriet Hosmer's sculpting tools
Wood and metal
Watertown Free Public Library
Gift of Harriet Hosmer Carr, 1923

Stebbins would have used tools like these to shape her clay models. Hers no longer exist, but her friend Harriet Hosmer's do. Stebbins and Hosmer rented shared lodgings in 1857–58, and then Hosmer lived with Stebbins and Cushman at 38 Via Gregoriana from 1859 to 1865.



“Time Lapse Art: Antonio Canova,” 2023

6 minutes, 27 seconds

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

This video demonstrates the process for producing a neoclassical marble sculpture. First, the artist made a rough clay sketch and then a larger more polished model. Next, they worked with assistants to create a durable plaster cast of the clay model. Using this cast as a template, the artist, or the master stone carvers they supervised, could replicate the composition in marble whenever they received a new order from a patron. Some artists sold dozens of marble copies of the same subject. The plaster could also be sent to a foundry for casting in bronze.

Most American sculptors in Italy worked with others to achieve their vision. Yet Stebbins, Hosmer, and other female artists were unfairly suspected of having their studio assistants create their artwork. To preempt this gendered criticism, Stebbins sometimes used fewer assistants, meaning she was not able to produce and sell art as quickly as her successful male peers. Hosmer responded differently: she had herself photographed (standing at far right) with the workmen she employed, defiantly showcasing her thriving studio.



Unidentified photographer

Hosmer and Her Men, ca. 1864–67

Albumen print

Harriet Goodhue Hosmer Papers, A162–74–2

Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University



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Watch this video at your own pace in the Museum's digital guide.



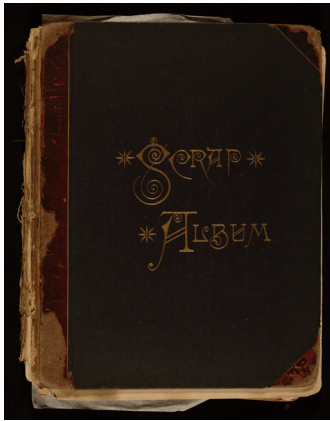
Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

California Gold Miner, ca. 1857–60

Reproduction of a photograph from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

This sculpture relates to the Gold Rush of the 1840s and 1850s, when about 300,000 people moved to California seeking their fortune. Following the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), California became the thirty-first state in 1850. Stebbins likely never completed this artwork in marble, perhaps because collectors were not interested in the novel subject matter.



Unidentified photographers

Photographs of sculptures by Emma Stebbins, ca. 1857–1870

Albumen silver prints

From the Emma Stebbins scrapbook (on view in this gallery)

These fourteen photographs demonstrate the extent of Stebbins's body of work. Twelve depict sculptures that she likely never translated from clay or plaster models into marble or bronze. Two—those of *The Lotus Eater* and *Treaty of Hendrick Hudson with the Indians*—show sculptures Stebbins completed in marble that are lost today.

Different explanations account for why these sculptures were never completed, or completed but then lost. For example, Stebbins sculpted *The Four Seasons* for the Bethesda Terrace, but Central Park never formalized the order for the completed bronzes. Private collectors purchased Stebbins's artwork in the 1860s and 1870s, yet museums (excepting The Heckscher Museum of Art) did not begin to collect her work until the 1980s. For much of the twentieth-century, neoclassical art was considered outmoded and few art institutions valued art by women.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Machinist's Apprentice, ca. 1859

Machinist, ca. 1859

Marble

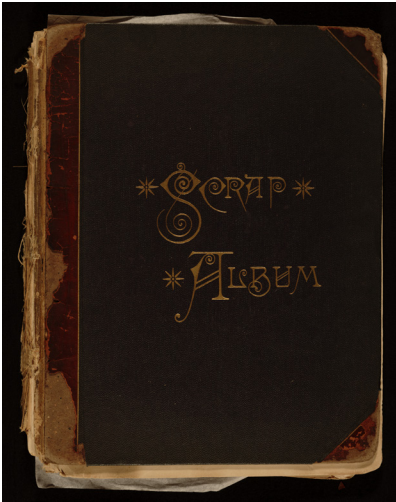
The Art Institute of Chicago

Gift of the Antiquarian Society, 2000.13.2, 2000.13.1

Stebbins and her fellow sculptors often debated the relation between intellectual creativity and manual skill as well as tradition versus innovation. These ideas animate *Machinist* and *Machinist's Apprentice*, in which two figures with matching furrowed brows work together to make metal gears for machines. Shielding his eyes with a visor, the earnest younger figure concentrates on manipulating his drafting tools. The older man looks like a modern version of Hephaestus/Vulcan, the ancient god of fire, blacksmiths, and craftsmen. With his hat and facial hair, he also calls to mind Stebbins's portraits of the artists she herself learned from, including John Gibson and Paul Akers. While acknowledging the rise of machines, the pair emphasizes the continuity of human skill and ingenuity in the face of rapid industrialization and technological change.

[The] first and instinctive creation was always [the] best. . . . Human effort must be more or less imperfect. In a bright, creative moment comes a flash, as it were, of influence from some God- given source; the hand, the pen, the tool, works with power, something far beyond our ordinary efforts—it may be crude, incomplete; the common eye cannot see its value; we ourselves hope from it still unutterable things; but there is in it something not to be improved upon; all the care and work and study in the world will not add to that intangible something; labor only weakens it, what is called finish only disguises it, it is lost in the handling, it is spiritual and immortal.

—Emma Stebbins, 1878



Mary Stebbins Garland (American, 1813–1906)

Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–1882

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

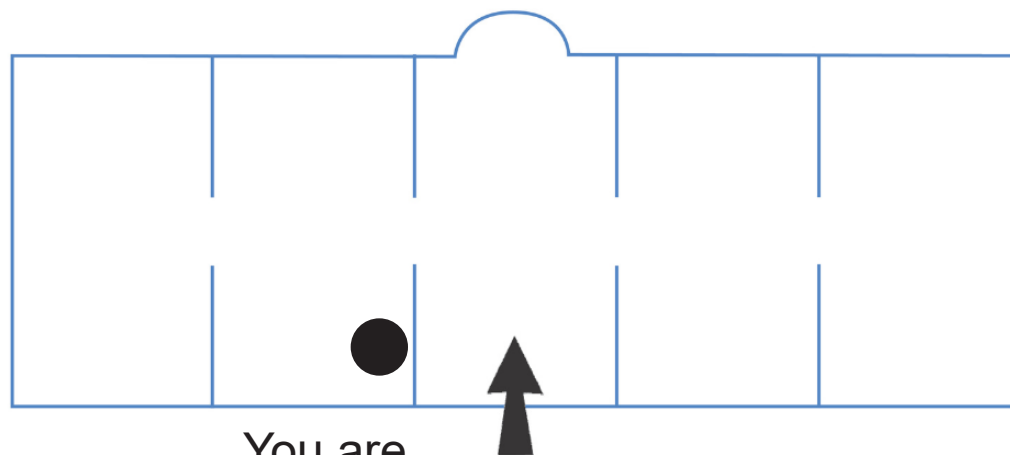
Donated by Elizabeth Milroy, 1981

Compiled by Stebbins's sister, this important volume preserves nineteenth-century images of many of her sculptures, including those that are now lost and those that she never completed in marble or bronze. Beyond their documentary value for audiences today, photographs like these were critical to the circulation of Stebbins's work during her lifetime. While based in Rome, she sent them to friends and patrons in the US. When traveling, she showed the photographs to journalists and potential buyers. The scrapbook also contains photographs of Stebbins, Cushman, their friend and employee Sallie Mercer, their pets, and Stebbins's brother Henry.

See the nearby screen to view this scrapbook in its entirety.

Central Park's Bethesda Fountain

In 1873, Stebbins became the first woman to complete a public sculpture commission for New York City when Central Park unveiled her *Bethesda Fountain*. Informed by her personal experiences with illness, this allegorical artwork celebrates the aqueduct that brought clean water to the city following a cholera epidemic. The monumental sculpture consists of the *Angel of the Waters* and four cherubs representing temperance, purity, health, and peace. For more than 150 years, the *Bethesda Fountain* has been a New York City icon and a community gathering place. Generations of artists have renewed and expanded its connections to peace, healing, nature, and love.



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Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Angel of the Waters, ca. 1864–67

Reproduction of a photograph from the Emma Stebbins
scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

John Neal Tilton, ca. 1865

Marble

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Gift of Elizabeth Milroy, 2024, 2024.203a–c

This bust depicts John Neal Tilton, Stebbins's nephew, when he was about five years old. He was also the model for the nearby *Samuel* sculptures, as well as the related figures *Temperance*, *Purity*, *Heath* and *Peace* that are part of the *Bethesda Fountain*. John's mother was Stebbins's sister Caroline, who was a noted salon hostess and translator. John's father was John Rollin Tilton, a successful landscape painter. The Tilton family lived near Stebbins in Rome.



Program for the unveiling of the *Bethesda Fountain*, 1873
Reproduction from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook,
1858–82
Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

This text accompanied the unveiling of the *Bethesda Fountain* on May 31, 1873. In it, Stebbins describes the biblical inspiration for her sculpture and alludes to the Croton Aqueduct, which brought “pure and wholesome water” to New York City. The program summarizes how the commission unfolded. Stebbins began designing the fountain in 1861, was officially hired to create it in 1863, and sculpted it in Rome from 1864 to 1867. Following delays caused by the US Civil War (1861–65) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), the fountain was cast in Munich in 1870 and shipped to the US in 1871.



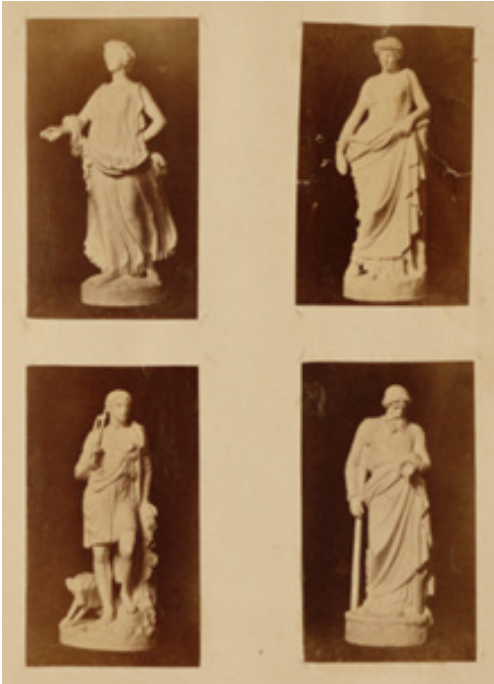
Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Temperance, Purity, Health and Peace, ca. 1864–67

Reproduction of a photograph from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Stebbins intended the four cherubs on the *Bethesda Fountain* to represent the links between pure water, health, temperance, and peace. Temperance, meaning moderation, is generally considered a virtue. In the nineteenth-century, the word was also associated with social reform. The temperance movement sought to improve the physical and moral health of society by encouraging abstinence from alcohol. In the 1870s, following the US Civil War (1861–65), the *Bethesda Fountain's* associations with healing and peace would have been especially powerful.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

The Four Seasons

Reproduction of photographs from the Emma Stebbins
scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Stebbins modeled these allegories of the four seasons for the steps of the Bethesda Terrace in Central Park. The park's Board of Commissioners, of which her brother Henry G. Stebbins was a member, intended to have them cast in bronze. For unknown reasons, they never carried out this plan. Regardless, conceiving of and modeling public sculptures consumed Stebbins's time, impacting her ability to produce works in marble.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Dispensing Gate of the Reservoir, undated

Receiving Gate of the Reservoir, undated

Reproductions of photographs from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

These sculptures were likely intended for Central Park's Upper Reservoir (now known as the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir). Built in the 1860s, it was part of the Croton Aqueduct, which brought clean water to New York City's growing population. After visiting Stebbins's studio, a journalist reported that the dispensing sculpture depicted: "the Nymph of the River, with her attendant spirits of wood and water, putting aside the rushes in order to give the water freely to the city." The receiving sculpture represented: "the city crowned . . . seated between her two rivers the North and East." It is unclear why Stebbins never completed these studies in marble or bronze.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

John Wilson Stebbins, 1865

Marble

The Center for Fiction/The Mercantile Library Association of the City of NY

Gift of Mary Stebbins Garland and Family, 1884

Created at the same time that Stebbins was modeling the *Bethesda Fountain*, this sculpture speaks to her personal experience of the connection between health and clean water. The bust is a posthumous portrait of her brother John Wilson Stebbins, who died of cholera in the 1830s, as did their father. Cholera is caused by polluted drinking water.

Stebbins was also familiar with the “water cure,” or hydropathy. She and Cushman regularly visited health spas in England, where they took cold baths and received other water treatments in search of relief from their various illnesses, including Cushman’s breast cancer.



William Merritt Chase (American, 1849–1916)

***An Early Stroll in the Park*, 1890**

Oil on canvas

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, Alabama

The Blount Collection, 1989.2.4

This painting attests to the *Bethesda Fountain's* status as a Central Park landmark and underscores its meaning in relation to the restorative powers of nature. Inspired by New York City's parks, Chase painted en plein air, or outdoors. His lush colors and impressionistic style capture the effects of flickering light, evoking a leisurely summer morning at the Bethesda Terrace.



Postcards of the *Bethesda Fountain*, Central Park
Commercial photomechanical prints
The Heckscher Museum of Art

Left to right, top to bottom:

Published by J. Koehler, postmarked 1901
Mailed to Hoorn, Holland (The Netherlands)

Publisher unknown, postmarked 1907
Mailed to Hoosick Falls, New York

Published by Illustrated Postal Card Co., postmarked 1903
Mailed to Bournemouth, England

Facsimile of the verso of
Illustrated Postal Card Co., postmarked 1903
Mailed to Bournemouth, England



Martha Edelheit (American, b. 1931)

Bethesda Fountain, 1973

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of Eric Firestone Gallery

In this painting, the *Bethesda Fountain* merges, almost like a tattoo, with a nude figure lounging at the Bethesda Terrace in summertime. Unlike the more realistic version in the upper right corner, Edelheit's reimagined angel is nearly nude and boasts multicolored wings. Cherubs with different skin colors support her. Looking back on the 1970s, Edelheit remembered the *Bethesda Fountain* as a gathering place for all: "It was New York, and it was quintessential New York." Her painting is one example of the many ways in which the *Bethesda Fountain* has inspired artists over the last 150 years.



Ricky Flores (American, b. 1961)
***Puerto Rican Day Parade - 1983 -
Bethesda Fountain, Central Park,
New York City***, 1983

Silver gelatin print

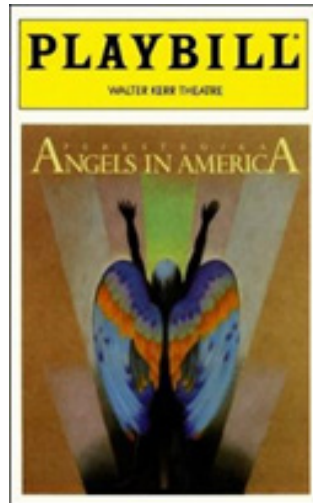
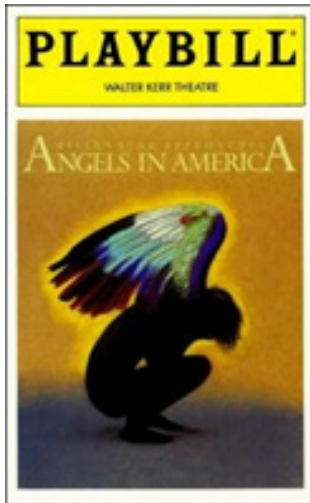
The Heckscher Museum of Art
Museum Purchase, 2025.6

In 1983, when working as a photojournalist, Flores captured participants of the Puerto Rican Day Parade placing a Puerto Rican flag into the hands of the *Angel of the Waters*. Flores interprets this act as one of protest against Puerto Rico's colonial status as a United States territory, and also as a sign of empowerment and visibility for his community in New York City. He describes Stebbins's angel as a symbol of faith, "a familiar figure in a foreign land."



B 143

Listen to the artist speak about this work and hear a verbal description.



Playbills for

Tony Kushner (American, b. 1956)

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches, 1993

Angels in America: Perestroika, 1994

Cover art by Milton Glaser (American, 1929–2020)

The Heckscher Museum of Art

Playwright Tony Kushner has described the *Bethesda Fountain* and its surrounding terrace as: “the Center of the Universe, at any rate the Center of my Universe.” He used the terrace as the setting for the epilogue of *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. The renowned play, which consists of two parts, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*, debuted on Broadway in 1993. It explores a group of interconnected characters living in New York City during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. *Millennium Approaches* won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and both parts of *Angels in America* won a Tony Award for Best Play.

See the nearby screen to view different stagings of the play, which was also made into an HBO miniseries.

Epilogue scene from three versions of
Tony Kushner (American, b. 1956)
Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes

This screen features three performances of the epilogue from Kushner's two-part drama *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, which opened on Broadway in 1993. The play explores a group of interconnected characters living in New York City during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. At the end of the play, Kushner references Stebbins's *Angel of the Waters* as a symbol of hope, healing, and commemoration. Although written over three decades ago, the play's themes—including love, identity, progress, public health, and chosen family—are timeless.

The versions featured here are from:
the HBO miniseries adaption of the play (2003),
a staging filmed by the National Theatre at Home, UK (2017),
and an online presentation produced by amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research) to raise funds in response to Covid-19 (2020).

Excerpts from television and film featuring
Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)
Bethesda Fountain, modeled 1864–1867, cast 1870, installed
1873
Bronze and stone
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation
Central Park, New York

This compilation includes a fraction of the dozens of movies and television shows that have featured the *Bethesda Fountain* over more than a century. On screen, the fountain often serves to establish New York City or Central Park as the setting for a narrative. Stebbins's sculpture has been integral to scenes of daily life, celebration, and serendipity. It has also contributed to moments charged with romance, drama, and the otherworldly. Through film and TV, the *Bethesda Fountain* has become a global pop culture icon.



Published by American Scenery
Bethesda Fountain, Central Park, c. 1870s
Stereograph (albumen silver prints mounted on paper)
The Heckscher Museum of Art

In the nineteenth century, stereograph cards like this one allowed people to see the *Bethesda Fountain* in three dimensions. Two slightly different photographs of the fountain are side-by-side on the card. Viewing them through a stereoscope, like the one on view, would create the illusion of depth and volume.



B 150

Today, as part of this exhibition, you can experience the *Bethesda Fountain* in Heckscher Park via augmented reality. Scan the QR code to get started.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Samuel, 1868

Marble

Brooklyn Museum

Gift of James Ricau, 80.191a–b



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Sandalphon (also known as ***Angel of Prayer***), 1866

Marble

The Heckscher Museum of Art
Museum Purchase, Town of
Huntington Art Acquisition Fund,
2022.7.2

The conservation of this work in 2023 was supported through the NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant Program administered by Greater Hudson Heritage Network. This program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

Stebbins created this work at the same time that she was designing the *Angel of the Waters* for the *Bethesda Fountain*. It directly relates to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1858 poem entitled "Sandalphon." As described in the text, the angel "gathers the prayers as he stands / And they change into flowers in his hands."



B 141

Hear the poem that inspired this work and listen to a verbal description.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Samuel, 1870

Marble

The Chrysler Museum of Art

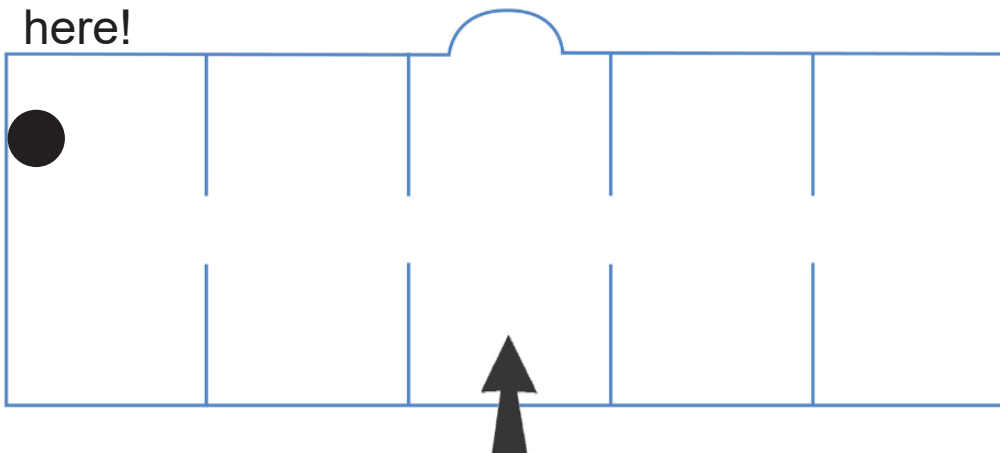
Gift of James H. Ricau and museum purchase, 86.521

There are two versions of Samuel because Stebbins likely received orders for the sculpture from two different collectors. The artworks are similar to the allegorical figures of temperance, purity, health, and peace that are part of the *Bethesda Fountain*. Stebbins's nephew John Neal Tilton was probably the model for all of them. As relayed in the Bible, Samuel heard God calling to him when he was a young boy. He went on to become an important Hebrew prophet, priest, and leader. Stebbins may have intended *Samuel* to convey ideas such as faith, renewal, and justice.

Civil War and Public Art

Stebbins's career coincided with the US Civil War (1861–65) and its aftermath. Several of her marble sculptures, including *Joseph the Dreamer*, allude to the conflict between the Union and the Confederacy. Two of her public art commissions—*Horace Mann* and *Christopher Columbus*—also date to this period, when Americans began installing monuments to assert their values and their views of the past. Exploring the histories of these two artworks illuminates who had the power to commission public statues and what merited commemoration in the 1860s. Since their creation, generations of viewers have reinterpreted and reshaped the meanings of Stebbins's monuments.

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Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Satan, ca. 1862

Reproduction of a photograph from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Stebbins modeled *Satan*, which she never completed in marble or bronze, at the same time that she modeled the archangel *Sandalphon* (on view in the previous gallery). She created these embodiments of evil and goodness after the start of the US Civil War. In Judeo and Christian traditions, Satan is a fallen angel who rebelled against God. Stebbins and Cushman supported the North, and they referred to *Satan* as the “original Rebel,” likening him to the South’s secessionists. Like many of Stebbins’s artworks, *Satan* also references literature: John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667), an epic poem about the fall of the archangel.

Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

***Sandalphon* (also known as *Angel of Prayer*)**, 1866

On view in the previous gallery.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Angel of the Resurrection, undated

Monument, undated

Reproductions of photographs from the Emma Stebbins
scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Although never completed in marble or bronze, these two sculptures featuring angels and urns were probably intended for memorial contexts. Stebbins's career coincided with the US Civil War, which claimed the lives of at least 620,000 people. The scale of this loss led to new forms of commemoration, including through sculptural monuments and grave markers.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Gravestone of Katharine E. Appleton, 1863

Reproduction of a photograph from the Emma Stebbins scrapbook, 1858–82

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Stebbins created this headstone for Katharine E. Appleton, an American who died in Rome in 1863. Appleton was an acquaintance of Stebbins and Cushman. Her grave is in Rome's Non-Catholic Cemetery, also known as the Protestant Cemetery. Stebbins's fellow sculptors John Gibson, Harriet Hosmer, and William Wetmore Story also created funerary sculptures for graves there.

Miss Stebbins is a sculptor whose labors her countrymen will one day be proud of. . . . It is gratifying to see an earnest, persevering, faithful study of art, which . . . works quietly on, and, foreseeing the rich reward to come, is willing “to scorn delights and live laborious days.”

—Howard Payson Arnold, 1864



Screen presenting information about
Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)
Horace Mann, cast 1864

Bronze

Massachusetts State House Art Collection

Given by the School Children and Teachers of Massachusetts
under Res. 1859, ch. 113

This screen explores Stebbins's monument to Horace Mann, which still stands in its original location on the grounds of the Massachusetts State House. Mann was a legislator and abolitionist who worked to create a universal secular public school system. When Bostonians dedicated the statue on July 4, 1865, Stebbins became the first woman in the country to complete an outdoor bronze monument. The screen also traces the reception of this sculpture over the last 160 years. In today's commemorative landscape, *Horace Mann* is a rare tribute to an educator.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Christopher Columbus, 1867

Marble

New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

Gift of Marshall O. Roberts, 1869

This screen explores Stebbins's monument to Christopher Columbus, which now stands outside of the New York State Supreme Court in Brooklyn. When art collector and businessman Marshall O. Roberts donated Christopher Columbus to Central Park in 1869, it became New York City's first statue of the fifteenth-century Genoese navigator. The Parks Department has since moved Christopher Columbus in and out of storage and displayed it in at least five locations. The screen traces the reception of this sculpture over the last 160 years. Its history demonstrates how monuments, and their meanings, can change over time.



Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882)

Joseph the Dreamer (also known as Agriculture), 1864

Marble

Belfast Central Library, Libraries NI, Northern Ireland

Gift of R. G. Dunville, 1888

Stebbins based this artwork on the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. When he was a young shepherd in Israel, his older brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. He became an important leader by interpreting the pharaoh's visions, including those that directed him to stockpile enough grain during seven years of plenty to sustain the world's population through seven years of famine. Created during the US Civil War, the sculpture may allude to the North's use of the science of agriculture to increase productivity, and to the fact that cotton from Egypt was supplanting the South's crop.

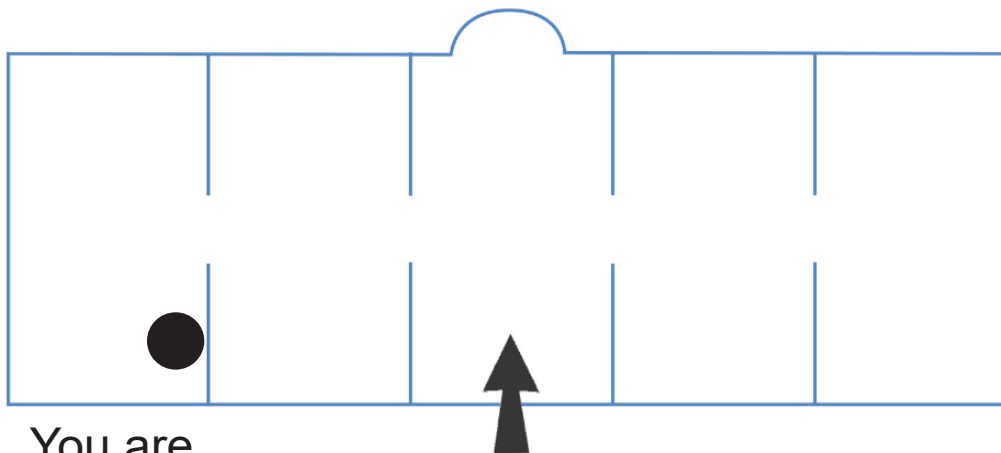
Imagine New Public Monuments

Public statues express our values, embodying the people and events we want to celebrate and remember. In the 1860s, Stebbins created three artworks that remain part of our public landscape today. A civic group hired her to create *Horace Mann*, a wealthy individual commissioned her to sculpt *Christopher Columbus*, and Central Park's board asked her to make the *Bethesda Fountain*. On the wall to the right, contemporary artists, community groups, and museum visitors propose new sculptures for the public sphere. **What new public monuments can you imagine?**



B 144

View and learn more about these proposed monuments at your own pace in the Museum's digital guide.



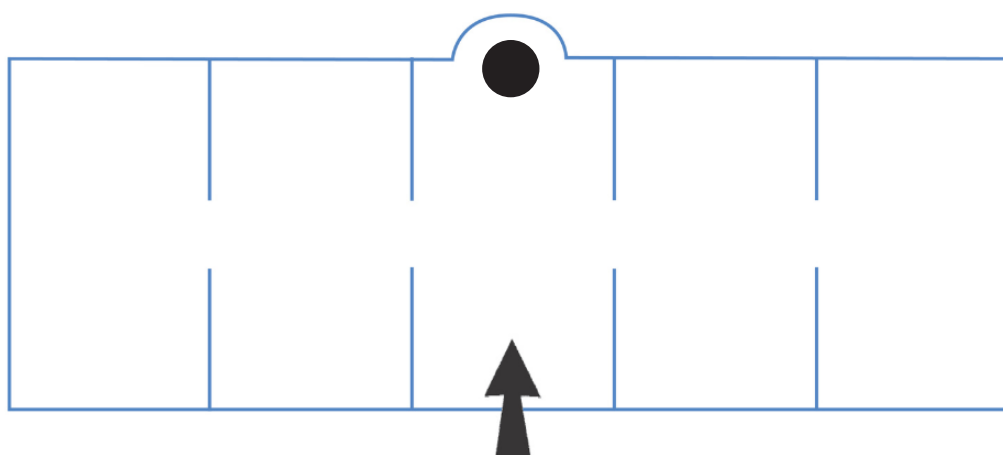
You are
here!

Touch Stations

Large print and braille available at the welcome desk.



You are here!



Following in Stebbins's footsteps, the three women who created the sculptures in this alcove are also known for their contributions to public art.



Mary Callery (American, 1903–1977)

Tree, n.d.

Brass

The Heckscher Museum of Art

Gift of the Estate of Mary Callery, 1981.12

Conserved in 2019 through the Adopt a Work of Art Program with funds from the Andrea B. and Peter D. Klein Conservation Fund

Mary Callery's lyrical, attenuated sculptures belie the industrial nature of their creation. In the open-work *Tree*, metal strips and the spaces they define create the structure of an organic form. From 1930 to 1940, Callery lived and worked in Paris, where she befriended many avant-garde artists, including Fernand Léger, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso. After the outbreak of World War II, Callery returned to the US and lived and worked in the West Hills section of Huntington.

Like Stebbins, Callery sometimes found inspiration for her work in literature. For example, *Fables of La Fontaine* (1954) skillfully depicts three stories by the seventeenth-century French poet Jean de La Fontaine: “The Fox and the Crow,” “The Frog and the Bull,” and “The Three Thieves and the Donkey.” This whimsical artwork is one of three outdoor sculptures that Callery made for New York City’s public schools. Initially created for children to climb on, the sculpture embraces play while highlighting moral lessons.



Listen to a quote by the artist and hear a verbal description of this sculpture.



Mary Callery (American, 1903–1977)

***Fables of La Fontaine*, 1954**

Painted steel

9 ½ x 20 x 2 feet

Collection of the NYC Department of Education, Public Art for Public Schools at PS 34, Lower East Side, Manhattan

Commissioned by the architectural firm Harrison and Abramovitz

Following in Stebbins's footsteps, the three women who created the sculptures in this alcove are also known for their contributions to public art.



Evelyn Beatrice Longman (American, 1874–1954)

Youth Eternal, 1920

Marble, with bronze water spout

The Heckscher Museum of Art

August Heckscher Collection

Bronze frog and plaque conserved in 2021 in memory of artist and friend Norine E. Lyons from Bob, Karolyn, Andrea and Emily Harwood.

1959.352

In the early twentieth century, when public monuments were mostly created by men, Evelyn Beatrice Longman established herself as a prolific sculptor of public art. August and Anna Heckscher commissioned her to create this fountain as a focal point of The Heckscher Museum of Art. Longman based the three figures on the couple's grandchildren, reflecting the Heckscher family's intersecting philanthropic interests in art, nature, and the well-being of children.

Longman began training as a sculptor about forty years after Stebbins moved to Rome. Unlike her predecessor, she was able to attend art school in the US in the 1890s and to train with leading sculptors in America. The only woman taken on as a studio assistant to Daniel Chester French, Longman helped him to create the statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. She later established her own studio, and in 1919, she became the first female sculptor to achieve full membership in the National Academy of Design. Longman's *Spirit of Victory* is one of the many monuments she created. Like Stebbins's bronze *Bethesda Fountain*, the Spanish-American War memorial features an allegorical winged female figure.



Watch an “Art in a Minute” video about this work of art and listen to a verbal description.



Evelyn Beatrice Longman (American, 1874–1954)

Spirit of Victory, 1926

Bronze figure, granite base

Spanish–American War Memorial in Bushnell Park, Hartford, Connecticut

Commissioned by the Hartford City Commission

Following in Stebbins's footsteps, the three women who created the sculptures in this alcove are also known for their contributions to public art.



vanessa german (American, b. 1976)

Oh when you're low, I'll be there to hold you tight to me,

c. 2005–2009

Mixed media

Gift of Heather Arnet and David Shumway 2024.8

vanessa german is a self-taught sculptor, painter, writer, activist, performer, and poet whose work is deeply rooted in themes of identity, empowerment, and social justice. While Stebbins often referenced ancient Greek and Roman sculpture, german finds inspiration in the history of African sculpture. The artwork on view here acknowledges the spiritual and historical lineage of Central African guardian statues (nkisi nkondi) imbued with protective and ritual power. With its embedded symbolic objects, german's sculpture is a vessel for healing, protest, and ancestral connection.

german's public monument *Of Thee We Sing* is a tribute to opera singer Marian Anderson, who held a powerful concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, in 1939. Because she was Black, Anderson was denied the opportunity to perform at the nearby Constitution Hall. Instead, she performed outdoors on the National Mall for a crowd of over 75,000. german's monument marks this important moment in the history of the Civil Rights struggle, challenging oppression while celebrating Black identity, history, and collective resilience.



vanessa german (American, b. 1976)

***Of Thee We Sing*, 2023**

Steel, plywood, dibond and resin

12 x 8 x 8 feet

On view August–September, 2023, Lincoln Memorial Plaza, Washington, DC

Commissioned by Monument Lab and the Trust for the National Mall



B 149

Watch a video of the artist speaking about her work.