

## 2024 International Study Trip



In January, the first-year students spent an eventful three weeks in Berlin and Paris, with day trips to Dessau, Dresden, and Nantes, joined by the Clark Art Institute's curator of contemporary projects Robert Wiesenberger, director Olivier Meslay, and deputy director and chief curator Esther Bell, as well as the Graduate Program's director Marc Gotlieb. In Wiesenberger's words, in Germany the group "considered its important place in the history of art and architecture as well as the energy of its current culture. We saw museums and galleries, orchestra and opera, cabaret and film. A special focus of the trip was on memory culture, and different modes of commemoration, a timely and still contested topic today."

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## *Emancipation*

On Friday, February 23, 2024, an opening celebration for *Emancipation: The Unfinished Project of Liberation* at the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) ended with a dynamic, standing-room-only conversation among the show's curatorial team, all three of whom have close ties to Williams: **Margaret (Maggie) Adler** BA'99, MA'11, Curator of Paintings, Sculpture, and Works on

Paper at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, **Dr. Maurita N. Poole**, Director of the Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University and WCMA Mellon Curatorial Fellow '13–'15, and **Destinee Filmore** MA'23, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and WCMA Mellon Curatorial Fellow '21–'24.



**About the exhibition:** Conceived as a commemoration of the 160th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, *Emancipation* visualizes what freedom looks like for Black Americans today and the legacy of the Civil War today and beyond. Highlighting the perspectives of contemporary Black artists, *Emancipation* features commissioned and recent works by Sadie Barnette, Alfred Conteh, Maya Freelon, Hugh Hayden, Letitia Huckaby, Jeffrey Meris, and Sable Elyse Smith. The seven installations span sculpture, photography, and paper and textile fabrications.

The artists responded to John Quincy Adams Ward's bronze sculpture *The Freedman* (1863) from the Amon Carter Museum of American Art's collection. Initially sculpted by Ward before the end of the Civil War, the figure is depicted on the cusp of liberation, having ruptured his bonds, though they are still present as a reminder of his enslavement. It is one of the first American depictions of a Black figure cast in bronze, and this specific cast from 1863 is the only copy of its kind with a key that releases a shackle from the figure's wrist. Supplemented by loans of Civil War materials from national and local institutions and historically relevant objects from WCMA's collection that further enhance our understanding of past representations of Blackness, *Emancipation* demonstrates how historical art collections can serve as a resource and inspiration for contemporary artistic practices.

*Emancipation* is on view at WCMA through July 14, 2024, and will then travel to the Jepson Center, Telfair Museums in Savannah, GA, for an August 16 opening. The show began its tour at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, TX, in spring 2023, and then traveled to the Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA, in fall 2023.





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**Image captions:** First-year students in front of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin in January 2024, photo by Robert Wiesenberger; Maggie Adler, Destinee Filmore, and Maurita N. Poole speaking in Lawrence 231, Williams College, and visitors to WCMA, as part of the opening celebration for *Emancipation: The Unfinished Project of Liberation* at WCMA on February 23, 2024, photos by Bradley Wakoff.

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