



Exhibition Highlights Civil War Supporters on the Home Front Through Paintings, Costumes, and Decorative Arts

Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War

Hartford, CT, November 30, 2011 – To commemorate the sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary of the Civil War, the Wadsworth Atheneum has organized *Colts & Quilts: The Civil War Remembered*, a thematic exhibition composed of costumes, textiles, decorative arts, sculpture and paintings. On view from November 16, 2011 – May 6, 2012, this multi-media exhibit focuses on the contributions made by supporters on the northern home front, namely women volunteers and industrialists, who provided the Union troops with essential weapons, uniforms, medical care, and food throughout the war.

On view in conjunction with *Colts & Quilts* are two exhibitions that also explore the effects of war—an exhibition of photographs of military training sites by contemporary artist Claire Beckett and *War Prizes* at The Amistad Center for Art & Culture, an exhibition that examines the cultural legacy of the Civil War on African-American artists and thinkers.

“*Colts and Quilts* brings together a range of objects from the Wadsworth’s collections to create an immersive vision of life and culture during the Civil War, making this period more accessible to museum visitors,” said Susan L. Talbott, Director of the Wadsworth Atheneum. “The exhibition provides a unique opportunity to showcase the depth of the museum’s collection and to explore an essential period in American culture while highlighting Connecticut’s important place in Civil War history.”

A stand-out in the *Colts & Quilts* exhibition is the controversial three-page letter written by President Lincoln to Horace Greeley, the Editor of the *New York Tribune*, in which he states, “[m]y paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery...” The letter, dated August 22, 1862, remains an iconic document of Lincoln’s struggle to balance moral and political agendas. Only months later, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which abolished slavery in the nation.

American paintings, sculpture, costume and decorative arts selected for this exhibit capture the spirit and emotion of the period such as the sorrowful expression on the maiden in Winslow Homer’s *The Red Feather* (1864) and a mannequin dressed in the traditional black gown, bonnet and lace worn by many

mourning wives and daughters in the period. Amidst the Civil War gloom, the unique shell and photograph ornamented monument by Eliza Trask (1834-1919) stands as a living celebration of her soldier-husband's safe return home. For the firearms aficionado, there are Samuel Colt's *New Model* 1861 pistols which were one of the most widely used firearms during the Civil War and attest to the Hartford manufacturer's importance during the conflict. The exhibition also showcases a rare Sanitary Commission quilt (c.1863), only one of six known surviving quilts, which female volunteers stitched for soldiers on the battlefields and for display in fundraising fairs.

In conjunction with *Colts and Quilts*, the Wadsworth Atheneum has scheduled a variety of programs for adults and children including curator-led gallery talks, a lecture discussing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by UPenn Professor Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, MLK Day community programs including a quilting demonstration by the world-renowned fabric artist, Ed Johnetta Miller, family activities, and film screenings of *Gone with the Wind* and *The Conspirator*. For a complete listing, please visit <http://www.thewadsworth.org/events/category/colts-and-quilts/upcoming/>

Two simultaneous exhibitions at the Wadsworth Atheneum provide additional context for *Colts & Quilts*. An exhibition of photographer Claire Beckett's images of military training sites for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is currently on view as part of the museum's MATRIX contemporary art series. The juxtaposition of these exhibitions will bring contemporary relevance to the historical exhibition and enable visitors to think critically about the cultural impact of our present wars in the Middle East. The Amistad Center is also presenting an exhibition titled *War Prizes: The Cultural Legacy of Slavery and the Civil War*, which recognizes the impact of the war and slavery on musicians, performers, artists, and activists from the Civil War era through Reconstruction and into the 20th century.

About The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is located at 600 Main St. in Hartford, Connecticut. The Museum is open Wednesdays to Fridays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please visit www.wadsworthatheneum.org for more information.

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