

Reviews (Exhibitions)

All That Glitters: Life at the Renaissance Court [exhibition].

Curated by Larisa Grollemond. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California.
August 28, 2018, to December 2, 2018.

The realm of early European culture is a phenomenon. Knights in shining armor, mesmerizing craftsmanship, and courtly society conjure up visions of a time long ago. Life at the courts of lords and ladies in the late sixteenth century seems like a unique and strangely closed off world. While there are many artifacts from the Renaissance era, the culture of the courts itself is not easy to comprehend. Thankfully, the J. Paul Getty Museum's *All That Glitters: Life at the Renaissance Court* exhibition seeks to provide a more profound understanding of this for the public. Running daily from August 28, 2018, to December 2, 2018, *All That Glitters* illustrates the world of the nobility in early modern Europe with all its grand pageantry. It features original works from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, the earliest from around 1430 and the latest from 1679. The forty items on display include luxury arts, illuminated manuscripts, textiles/clothing, enamels, and stained glass. They reflect a world of courtly desires and rich artistic passion, and they address a wide array of themes from hunting, prayer, knighthood, religion, and lineage to the elements of the social circle.

While it is stimulating to see such objects of historical significance, similar items can be found in other exhibitions or even the Getty itself. What the exhibition does offer is an expansion on the subject, addressing its topics directly. This is not unlike other exhibitions in its narrow focus. Even the current *Knights in Armor* exhibition at Santa Ana's Bowers Museum tries to cover the topics of courtly distinction. It intends to represent a realm in which codes and pageantry governed European existence. The objects in question offer themselves as primary sources to the themes addressed in the exhibition. While not directly covering anything and everything that can be associated with the royal courts, what is available are samples under the chosen topics' headings. The items in question present an encompassing breadth rather than an all incorporating collection of the Renaissance court.

The Getty's *All That Glitters* exhibition also features three events that serve as extensions of the subject matter. The first is "An American Court: A Conversation with Former White House Curator William Allman," a dinner and lecture at which Mr. Allman and *All That Glitters* curator Larisa Grollemond discuss to what degree works of the White House communicate values that are similar to those of the Renaissance court. The second is "Knights in Shining Armor," led by Tony Swatton, namely, a series of blacksmith demonstrations pertaining to the medieval and Renaissance periods. The third is a performance by the "Capella Pratensis," showcasing fifteenth-century songs and sounds of the Renaissance court at the Getty's Harold M. Williams Auditorium.

For the duration of the exhibition, the artifacts and their attributes, as well as other special features, are presented on the Getty's website in downloadable PDF files of the "audio play list," "gallery text," and even an entire "object checklist" with information on the objects' historical origins. The Getty's website does a brilliant job of illustrating what one may expect to see on site, even offering a blog post from the exhibition's curator Larisa Grollemond. It is an excellently crafted avenue that provides insight into the exhibition. While *All That Glitters* is a timed experience that will only last for about three months, the exhibition will be archived online alongside other Getty exhibitions. Those who find themselves on the website are granted high-resolution versions of six of the forty pieces and given full citation information.

The curator of *All That Glitters*, Larisa Grollemond, is an assistant curator in the Getty's Manuscripts Department. She earned her Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Pennsylvania and focuses her research of prints, manuscripts, and the courtly life of early modern Europe. Previous blog posts also demonstrate her expertise on her subject of choice. Neither the website nor the exhibition itself detail the process of how this exhibition came into being. Instead, the conception of *All That Glitters*, how its items were selected, or the steps in the process to adapt the latter to the museum space remain unclear.

While visiting the Getty was stunning as always, navigating toward *All That Glitters* was difficult. While marked on a large standing map to the left of the main entrance with a direct pin point, the northern pavilion has one wander a series of corridors until one reaches the exhibition itself in its furthest corner. There, on a passageway-sized banner, Eitelfriedrich I Hohenzollern (from a manuscript page shown in the exhibition itself) welcomes one to *All That Glitters* [Getty Ms. Ludwig XIII 11, fol. 18]. Once inside, one is instantly met with dim lighting (to prevent damage to the works shown) and soft music from the fifteenth century (ten different tracks in total, including works by Alexander Agricola, William Byrd, and John Dowland). The room is surprisingly small for the number of works it contains. Red panels, adorned with light betwixt black cases, orient the room alongside two displays in the center of the room. To fully comprehend the subject of the exhibition, one has to follow the red panels that guide the thematically ordered arrangement.

The exhibition room is divided into five themes: "Devotion and Display," "Codes of Conduct," "Socializing in Style," "Renaissance Remix," and "Dangerous Glamour." Walled displays provide summaries of these subject matters. In "Devotion and Display," one is shown how piety found expression in the form of delicate prayer books and their manuscript pages. This includes the Master of the Getty Epistles' impeccable "Saint Jerome" [Getty Ms. Ludwig I 15, fol. 1v]. "Codes of Conduct" details the social hierarchy of the nobility. Among its objects is the two-page manuscript illustration "A Tournament Contest" and the brilliant stained glass "Saint George with the Arms of Speth" [Getty Ms. Ludwig XV 14, fol. 27v; and Getty 2003.64]. Under "Socializing in Style," one is

educated on the etiquette of societal circles. Objects here include a mesmerizing 5'7" x 6'7" tapestry of family imagery known as the "Armorial Millefleurs Tapestry" [LACMA L2017.141]. Last, but not least, "Dangerous Glamor" seeks to wrap up the exhibition with one of its final periods under King Louis XIV of France. This section includes nine wall-hung leafs under "Emblem for Louis XIV," symbolizing the end of an era [Getty Ms. 11 and 11a]. The exhibition's soundscape is a "Renaissance Remix," featuring courtly musical works across three centuries. It is rather subdued compared to the noise of the visitors. Each object is accompanied by a small description against the casing, allowing an understanding of the work in the context of the exhibition itself.

All That Glitters is a delightful celebration of the Renaissance court. However, the organization of the exhibition is not always clear, which reduces its potential impact. Due to the manner of its presentation, *All That Glitters* does not quite keep what the exhibition's title promises. The showcased materials blend in with the dim atmosphere, except for the works that stand on their own such as the stained glass "Saint George with the Arms of Speth" or the "Armorial Millefleurs Tapestry." In terms of the information provided, the exhibition could pull from the wider social, political, and cultural context to enhance its visitors' understanding. That said, *All That Glitters* is a stunning exhibition. The objects themselves are gorgeous and presented with a clear sense of respect. It is because of this that the exhibition is a deeply meaningful learning experience. Those who have a passion for the Renaissance will thoroughly enjoy *All That Glitters*. And whether one is educated on the subject and attending for the objects on display, or simply wishing to learn in the first place, *All That Glitters* will be appreciated. Those who are attending have plenty of works from the period in the Getty, but only *All That Glitters: Life at the Renaissance Court* provides an enrapturing experience of brilliance and reverence.

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King Tut: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh [exhibition].

Curated by Tarek El Awady. California Science Center, Los Angeles, California. March 24, 2018, to January 13, 2019.

In 1922, British archaeologist Howard Carter (1874-1939) had to fight with his sponsor so that he could stay in Egypt and excavate the section in the Valley of the Kings he truly wanted to explore. It was as if he knew that the lost tomb of King Tutankhamun was just ahead of him, taunting him with the knowledge of its seemingly lost artifacts. Carter was specifically targeting the tomb of Tutankhamun, and every year and every dig that he came up empty just pushed him harder. He never gave up, and because of this, he was able to chip his way through the Valley of the Kings and stumble upon the entrance to the boy king's tomb. This tomb had evaded grave robbers because the fury of Mother Nature

had ensured that a flood had covered its entrance with rocks and debris until the days of Carter's tenacity.

The exhibition reviewed here is housed in the California Science Center (CSC) and open to the public from March 2018 to January 2019. The items on display are on loan from the Grand Egyptian Museum (Giza, Egypt). The CSC splits the exhibition into two sections. The first part, which consists of the tomb artifacts, is found on the third floor, while the second part, which tells the story of Howard Carter, how he got on the road to archaeology, and how he discovered the king's tomb, is found on the first floor.

At the entrance of the exhibition, there is a timeline of Ancient Egypt's history leading up to the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. From there, you are directed into a small room where they show a video about King Tutankhamun and how he died. After they have thus set the scene for the death and preparation of the body, they let you walk into the next room which features a tall calcite vase inlaid with faience, a calcite unguent vase with papyrus and lotus flower design, and a calcite vase on a stand with the cartouches of Tutankhamun and his sister-wife Ankhesenamun. Next to the vases is a bronze torch holder attached to an *Ankh* (an Egyptian symbol of life) with outstretched arms. The background in this room is covered with replica inscriptions from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

Once you make your way into the next part of the exhibition, the remaining rooms follow a map. The first section deals with the preparation for the afterlife, followed by the afterlife, the guardians, and the rebirth. Even though there are groups of visitors going through every fifteen minutes, the distribution of the artifacts gives viewers the space to navigate through the rooms without rubbing shoulders. When I went through, I was part of a group that included an entire elementary school class. Though there were easily twenty or more children, there was never any problem with crowding in the rooms. The exhibition gift shop is smaller than the previous rooms and more cluttered. There are many different trinkets from Egypt, such as wooden scarabs and papyri decorated with iconic hieroglyphic scenes. From books by Egyptologist Zahi Hawass to bookmarks, there is an abundance of gifts to satisfy anyone.

The cases used and the placement of the artifacts allows for viewing from all angles. Information cards appear in English on one side, in Spanish on the other side. The lighting is low due to the artifacts' sensitivity, and the strict adherence to the "no flash photography" rule allows for the ambiance to be undisturbed. No matter how many visitors are passing through, because of the way the cases are situated, you are transported to a different time and place. The artifacts on display are gorgeous and varied, with the types of treasures depending on the section you visit. The preparation section explains what bodies had to go through to begin their journey, as mummification and spells from the *Book of the Dead* prepared bodies for their way into the afterlife. The CSC here displays containers of food and other items that would have provided the king with the nourishment needed to complete his journey. One of the food holders is in the

shape of a chicken or small turkey, and it looks as if it, too, has been mummified. To further immerse you into the realm of King Tut, on top of every case there is either a spell from the *Book of the Dead* or a more in-depth look into why certain items were chosen for the journey ahead. These vases, statues, weapons, and so forth look as if they have been created recently, not as if they have been in a tomb for over three thousand years. They still appear to be in their original colors, and the jewelry looks as sophisticated as modern jewelry does today. The treasures are placed to help viewers understand the importance of the journey for the ancient Egyptians. For example, there are statues of different workers who served the deceased and fulfilled their desires. These are known as *shabtis*, and there was a hierarchy within the tomb so that the higher *shabtis* would supervise the lower ones. Another section on the third floor is dedicated to the journey through the afterlife, which features the guardians used to aid the dead on their journey. Here the curator supplies the necessary information on what the afterlife is through artifacts. While there are spells throughout the exhibition, these are explained so that there is an understanding of why the priests went to the trouble they did to try and protect their charges to the best of their abilities.

Before the exhibition moves you through the afterlife, there is a display of portions of the gold found in and around the king's sarcophagus. The gold bands that once encircled the mummy's wrappings are strategically placed on a backdrop of King Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, allowing for a closer viewing. The museum's ability to transmit the messages written on the bands and the *Ba* symbol (part of the soul) bring the treasures and inscriptions together, allowing viewers to complete the puzzle that is the religion of Ancient Egypt. Vertical outside bands, originally sewn onto the mummy's wrappings, are made of gold, carnelian, glass, and faience, creating a beautiful display of blues, browns, and gold. Horizontal gold bands circle the entire case and display the spells for King Tutankhamun's journey. These golden horizontal bands transect four sections of the sarcophagus (shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles) and connect under the golden arms, crossed over the chest and holding the golden crook and flail of kingship. Between the scepters rests a brown scarab (symbol of rebirth), nestled onto the golden bands that descend to the feet of the coffin and bisecting the ribbons that cross horizontally. Below the hands lies the golden *Ba* bird (representing the eternal journey of the Sun).

While the treasures are gorgeous and tell their story all by themselves, the information provided allows for a deeper understanding of who the deceased was, as well as Egyptian culture and religion. While the video at the beginning offers an introduction, it is not until you start reading the information at the top of the artifact cases and on the walls that you understand how important these deceased kings were and why they were afforded such care for their safe voyage through the afterlife. There are vignettes on the gods, how these kings were related to them, and their purpose, both on earth and in death. In order to provide a full picture of the king and the vastness of the treasures discovered,

there are objects in this exhibition that are shown outside of Egypt for the first time. These objects are scattered throughout the exhibition and not just concentrated in a specific section. Yet, the information provided throughout the exhibition and on the videos leaves you with a somewhat incomplete picture. There is mention of King Tutankhamun having to restore the deities at Thebes and about being erased from the kingship after his death, but there is no indication why this information is pertinent to the story of the king or how it affected his image and standing in Ancient Egypt. For someone who has knowledge in this area, this is somewhat problematic in that the exhibition leaves gaps in the story as it introduces information without further explaining its relevance or significance to King Tutankhamun. To the general onlooker, the exhibition offers a fresh perspective and tells the story of who King Tutankhamun was and how important he was to Egyptian society, not only as a king but as a living god on earth. He was given the utmost care and protection that allowed him to journey through the afterlife and claimed his spot among the gods in death. Though there are slight discrepancies in the information flow and story of the life and death of King Tutankhamun, the exhibition is a wonderful educational experience.

The ancient Egyptians believed that one attained immortality when one's name continued to grace the tongues of people. Though King Tutankhamun was a relatively insignificant ruler, especially compared to others of his dynasty, his name is the one still repeated today because Howard Carter was able to locate a tomb lost to time. Since 1922, the main name on everyone's tongue has been that of the boy king and his treasures buried deep in the Valley of the Kings. By allowing his treasures to come to this exhibition, the immortality of this king has been ensured for years to come.

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Knights in Armor [exhibition].

Curated by Ricardo Franci/Mark Bustamante. Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California. September 22, 2018, to January 13, 2019.

The goal of the Bowers Museum's *Knights in Armor* exhibition is to bring centuries of old armor to life. The collection is on display from September 22, 2018, until January 13, 2019. Frederick Stibbert, a wealthy Florentine entrepreneur who lived from 1838 to 1906, collected full-body armor, swords, daggers, helmets, chain mail, shields, and crossbows, as well as leg, arm, and throat protectors made between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. He also collected table tournament displays and paintings from the early modern era. After his death, Stibbert willed his elaborate collection of over fifty thousand pieces to the city of Florence. Over a hundred items from this collection,

originally from Italy, France, Germany, and Spain, are now on display at the Bowers Museum, showcasing many unique aspects of knightly armor. The Bowers Museum's historical researcher, Mark Bustamante, adds a modern flair to this well-planned knighthood exhibition, connecting Southern California locals with history by explaining the knights' existence. This review analyzes how Bustamante's purposefully designed display of armor brings knowledge of knighthood to a twenty-first-century public. The organization of *Knights in Armor* represents an innovative and fun approach to museum education. In addition to the actual display pieces, the live demonstrations of sword fighting serve to establish the physical aspects of military technology. These performances allow visitors to comprehend the art of knighthood. All these aspects of the Bowers Museum's exhibition encourage audiences to appreciate the knights' history.

Bustamante's goal in showcasing the Florentine armor collection in Santa Ana, California, is "bringing the world to you." In this, he has succeeded. The *Knights in Armor* collection is housed in both of the Special Exhibitions rooms which are located on the museum's west side. The two rooms are situated in an L shape. This design helps with the flow of the historical chronology, starting with helmets and then moving through swords and daggers. At its center, the exhibition includes a full armor display of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II (1527-1576). The other side of the L-shaped exhibition space features the crossbow section, as well as paintings. When I first entered the exhibition, I was greeted by a French close helmet from 1510. This particular item is made of steel and basic in its design. The helmet has two slits at the top for the eyes, a point to protect the nose, and additional holes for ventilation. As I walked toward the end of the helmet display, I saw a 1590 French steel-and-gold embossed close helmet. Clearly, the two designs represent their respective eras, as well as the technology available in those days. The 1510 helmet expresses a more simplistic and practical fighting design that would have been suitable for a soldier of lower status. However, the 1590 helmet was definitely made for a wealthy person, as the embossed steel includes angles inlaid into the metal.

When one views the knightly armor, it is obvious that Bustamante has done a great job in organizing the pieces. As mentioned above, the center of the exhibition presents a fully armored sixteenth-century Emperor Maximilian II, along with two other military officers, on horseback. The scene is dramatic and inspires patrons to envision the reality of the time period's armor. The statue of Maximilian II highlights the intricately detailed steel-and-gold embossed armor. In fact, the statue's armor makes an overwhelming statement of wealth. The exhibition's historical plaques describe how the ruler developed jousting tournaments into European social gatherings for the wealthy elite of the early modern period, as firearms technology caused knightly armor to transition from military gear to more of a fashion statement.

The live demonstrations of sword fighting are important for educating visitors with regard to the physical aspects of military technology and the artistry

of knighthood. Reenactments are held near the museum's south entrance, on the lawn of the Margaret and Cleo Key Courtyard. The physical aspect of this exhibition conveys a tangible sense of the life of a fighting knight. The clanging of the swords and the banging of the metal armor make history come alive. This particular interactive feature helps modern visitors connect with a sport of the past. During my visit, I observed that the only weakness of the physical sword fighting display is that it is affected by the weather. Because they were fighting in direct sunlight on a hot day, the reenactors had to take several breaks to avoid overheating in their armor. However, an announcer on site was ready to explain every aspect of the sword fighting and answered the patrons' questions. Moreover, the knowledge and expertise demonstrated by the reenactors was well received by the crowd. Spectators were enthusiastic to learn about how knights fought, and the rapport between the announcer and the crowd created a great learning environment for people of all ages.

The *Knights in Armor* exhibition at the Bowers Museum does an excellent job in teaching about an important element of early modern European military history, and Bustamante successfully completes his mission to educate the local public on the history of knights and their armor. The exhibition effectively establishes how armor changed over time. For example, the fourteenth-century helmet is heavy, big, and round. Meanwhile, the seventeenth-century helmet is smaller, lighter, and more formfitting. This latter design enabled the knight to have more flexibility when fighting and reflects the time in which it was made. Fourteenth-century steel-plated armor became obsolete during the sixteenth century, as armor changed to a fluted design embossed in steel and gold. Pointing out this transition incorporates an economic element into knightly military history. Additionally, the development of firearms reduced armored knights from soldiers to tournament participants displaying their wealth.

Bustamante's organization of the *Knights in Armor* exhibition encourages visitors to understand the political, social, and economic aspects of various forms of the equipment. The armor is strategically arranged so that viewers can easily identify the knights' social conditions. For example, Maximilian II was responsible for enhancing the popularity of tournament and parade armor during the middle of the sixteenth century. He is still known for his contribution to knightly tournaments which were lavish displays of wealth and richly embossed armor. Parade armor reflects the rise of firearms technology. Another well-organized area is the one that discusses how knights achieved their status. The exhibition's historian highlights the fact that second-born sons from wealthy families often pursued knighthood because such younger sons were not likely to inherit any land. This once again demonstrates how early modern economic factors tied into the history of knights.

During my visit to the Bowers Museum's *Knights in Armor* exhibition, I learned a lot about early modern history. The displays are innovative and well organized. Bustamante's historical approach showcases the exciting aspects of

knightly armor and provides a fun learning experience. The brilliant didactic approach appeals to all ages but is still challenging and scholarly. I recommend this exhibition to people of all ages and, during my visit, saw many families, students, and seniors who were enjoying the history of European knightly armor.

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Leo Fender: Life and Legacy [exhibition].

Curated/Designed by Richard Smith. Fullerton Museum Center, Fullerton, California. November 12, 2016-present.

Every global phenomenon, be it a music genre, sports team, or celebrity, has to start somewhere, and Fender, the world-renowned brand of electric guitars, is no exception. Musician or not, Fender, which has its roots in American rock culture, is a term that most Americans hear at least once in their lifetime. The Fender name can be found all over the place, whether on an instrument played by a big-name artist at a concert or while dining at a *Hard Rock Café*. Perhaps you even owned a Fender when you were aspiring to learn how to play the guitar. However, while the name and the brand are familiar, the man behind the enterprise is not nearly as well known. Not only did the trademark have its beginnings, so did the man behind it.

The *Leo Fender: Life and Legacy* exhibition at the Fullerton Museum Center in Fullerton, California, showcases the history behind Fender's internationally known business. It demonstrates the connection between the Fender name and a local town, and brings to life a historical treasure to the people of Southern California where many people are not aware that they share their hometown with the "number one" brand of guitars. The exhibition itself is also not very well known, but it is a hidden gem and an overall enjoyable experience. The Fender exhibition provides the viewer with a very "hometown" feel, which is refreshing to see in relation to an internationally known and commercialized enterprise. Despite the nostalgic feeling it induces, some may argue that an exhibition dealing with such a famous brand should have a display of glamour and pomp, but that is neither applicable nor appropriate in this case.

In the exhibition's design, Richard Smith, the curator and rare guitar collector responsible for the display, clearly intends to localize this internationally known brand. This is not only seen in the content and information shown, but in the presentation as well. The exhibition only uses two rooms, and the design is generally simple. Depending on the audience, it can at first seem a little unorganized or unchronological. Upon entering, there is no clear instruction as to where to begin and how to move through the displays. This might be a little off-putting, since there is no clear sense of direction, but as some of the displays explain, this was simply Leo Fender's style: there was not much order, but

somehow it just worked. If you like to experience exhibitions chronologically, as I do, it would be wise to start on the left side of the entrance where you can learn about Leo Fender's upbringing in the small town of Fullerton in Orange County, California. The exhibition begins by explaining that, at the time, Fullerton was a rural community where homes used kerosene lanterns, a community not known for its riches. The man behind the name, Leo Fender (1909-1991), was in fact born in a barn, because his parents could not afford to build a house until the following year. Leo first started out as a musician, playing the piano and saxophone. Ultimately, though, he was more interested in the devices with which music could be played. His uncle introduced him to the world of radio electronics, which quickly became his hobby and passion. A display case holds some of Leo's school portraits and a radio that he built in 1943. The exhibition then goes on to explain Leo's involvement in the Fender Radio Service, a repair shop. Leo's work with public address systems for musical events ultimately sparked his interest in tinkering with instruments. He thought he could make instruments and equipment more practical than they already were. From this point forward, Leo's involvement with music and specifically his guitar designs are the exhibition's primary highlights. Along with a couple of steel lap guitars in glass cases, the next display discusses Leo's interaction and partnership with Doc Kauffman, pioneer of the world's first patent guitar vibrola, and how Doc helped Leo start his own company. On the west wall of the gallery are two large rectangular glass cases that hold hallmark guitars from Fender's career. Some guitars featured are the Kauffman and Fender Radio Shop Guitar, the Telecaster, the Precision Bass, the Stratocaster, the Jaguar, the George & Leo ASAT (anti-satellite), and the G&L six-string bass. Located above these glass displays are Leo's original hand-drawn sketches that he made during the early process of designing his guitars.

With this set of eight guitars as the primary highlight and showcase of the room, the rest of the information covers the remainder of Leo's life. The exhibition goes on to talk about Leo's new company for musical products that he formed with George Fullerton, called George & Leo or G&L, and how he focused his efforts on this company until his passing in 1991 from complications of Parkinson's disease. Leo was working at his G&L work bench until the day before he died. There are two more glass cases on the north wall that contain guitars that Leo always had in his workshop, namely, the G&L Pickup Testing Guitar and the Sting Ray Bass. The last three points highlighted in the main gallery concern "Music Man," one of Leo's other instrumental companies; his involvement in the music culture of the 1960s when he "armed" the main players of the "British invasion" and rock legends with his guitars; and just how he changed guitar designs, especially during the 1940s and 1950s. The main gallery ends with how his guitars changed the industry during World War II. While this is a jump back in time, it certainly makes an impact. In the center of the main gallery are also a few of Leo's personal belongings, such as his record collection,

design journal, business cards, magazines he was featured in, and his French curve set which he used to draw lines to shape the body of guitars such as the Telecaster. These are found parallel to a TV screen that shows homemade videos from Leo's personal life. The TV display unfortunately does not come with a placard that explains either the footage or its provenance. One final notable item in the main gallery is the golden-colored Fender-Rhodes Electric Piano.

Beyond the main gallery, there is a small gallery to conclude the exhibition. Half of the room, behind glass, shows Leo's work bench along with his tools, notes, eye goggles, and wooden rendered guitar bodies. This is especially captivating because it brings Leo's work to life and looks like it has been left just the way it was when Leo worked at it. The text about the workbench, which is stuck to the wall by stickers, is located on the adjacent wall. Perhaps this display, which is one of the exhibition's main features, could receive more attention with a more permanent textual design. Moving on from the workshop display, located directly across the room, is a long glass case that holds some of Leo Fender's most notable awards from the National Association of Music Merchants, the Academy of Country Music, the Guitar Center, and the Recording Academy (otherwise known as the Grammys). This is the main spectacle where Leo's achievements are rightfully and spectacularly "shown off." Finally, the teal-colored room includes a painted portrait of Leo Fender on the wall of the entrance into the main gallery, ending the exhibition with a nice touch of humanity to the well-known Fender name.

The *Leo Fender: Life and Legacy* exhibition successfully achieves its goal of bringing the origins and story of the Fender brand to life, while at the same time pairing the experience with an overall "hometown" feel. Fender is not painted as an internationally known celebrity, but as an ordinary small-town man who happened to have an incredible impact on the music industry. Of course, adjustments could be made regarding the chronological flow, and perhaps more permanent materials could be used to ensure the exhibition's longevity, but the necessary history and artifacts are provided to understand the man behind the name, which is precisely the goal of this local history exhibition. Though the Fender name has certainly earned the right to have a more illustrious and grander display, that simply does not fit with the theme of this small local history museum and even with the character of Leo Fender himself. Whether you are a musician, historian, or just a member of the local community, a visit to this exhibition about the world-renowned brand of Fender and the man behind the legacy is definitely worth your time.

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National Women's History Museum [online exhibits].

Founded by Karen Staser. Online (exhibits)/Alexandria, Virginia (administrative offices). June 2017-present.

What is an online museum, and can it give the visitor the same sense of historical narrative as a brick-and-mortar museum? These are questions that this review of the *National Women's History Museum (NWHM)* sets out to answer. The reality is complicated: an online museum is often the first step to bringing a certain historical narrative into focus, with the eventual goal of housing the collection in a traditional brick-and-mortar museum.

The *NWHM* was created in 2013, with the goal "to build a world class museum at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.," In 2017, bills were introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate with the goal to establish the museum, identify locations, and approve federal funds for planning, design, and museum operations. The building itself would need to be constructed through private donations. Since its introduction in 2017, no further legislative action has taken place to move the project forward.

So, for now, visitors can only access these narratives online. This format has a lot of advantages over a physical location. Increased accessibility to the general public is one of the greatest assets to the online museum. Many people never get to visit a museum due to location or other obstacles. Schools benefit as well: with current school budgets being slashed, an online museum provides access from the classroom. There is also no cost to visitors, exhibitions are cheaper to build and maintain, there is no limit to the size of an exhibition, and the staff needed to build and maintain the website is significantly smaller. Finally, it allows potential donors to get a sense of what the future brick-and-mortar museum might be like.

This is especially important for historical accounts that are outside of the established narrative. No one is going to deny funds for a military museum or a museum of American history, but the stories of people outside the traditional national narrative are often excluded. A good example is the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It, too, started online, and it was a seventeen-year journey from the online museum to the new, permanent facility in Washington, D.C. If that timeline holds true for the proposed *NWHM*, it could be another decade before these stories have a home outside of the internet.

There are drawbacks to the online format. It is very different to experience history via a computer screen rather than in the hallowed halls of a museum. To state the obvious, there is no real entrance to separate the real world from the historical treasures that lie within, only a website's landing page. It is also harder to connect with the narrative online, perhaps because the stories do not convey the same sense of history one would find when one is physically in a museum and standing in the presence of original documents and artifacts.

Women's history is also often seen as a sidebar to the traditionally accepted male-driven narrative about the United States. The term "women's history" implies that it is something separate, and altogether different from national

history. According to its mission statement, the *NWHM* “educates, inspires, empowers and shapes the future by integrating women’s distinctive history into the culture and history of the United States.” This is an important distinction, since it brings women into the narrative instead of being a secondary story.

To achieve this, it is imperative to highlight women’s contributions outside of traditionally female-oriented subjects. Much of the historical narrative surrounding women covers Betsy Ross sewing the American flag, women’s rights, feminism, suffragettes, social causes, and nursing. While all of these are well within the sphere of women’s work, the *NWHM* goes beyond the established narrative to include women who have made contributions in the sciences, law, sports, scientific discoveries, the war effort in World War I, and achievements in computer programming, thus effectively intertwining women’s accomplishments and how these accomplishments benefited the United States.

The *NWHM*’s website is organized by topics, and each topic includes specific exhibits. The format varies for each exhibit, but all exhibits feature pictures and a lot of text. Some include a self-paced slide presentation with standard museum labels on each slide, photographs, ephemera, artifacts, political cartoons, newspapers, and other primary sources. Obviously, the biggest difference here is that, instead of being displayed in a case, they exist only on the screen. The number of exhibits is astonishing; there are many more than would fit in a regular museum building. While the intent is to establish women as part of the national narrative, the *NWHM* does not neglect women’s traditional roles as caregivers and homemakers, but instead expands the viewers’ understanding of what it means to be a woman, what can and has been accomplished, and gives voice to the role models for a new generation of girls. The exhibit “Creating Female Political Culture” highlights the subject of women in the home and how they broke free. It is about the domestic sphere versus the public sphere, mainstream suffrage based on motherhood and service as opposed to militant suffrage (which was more about equality and individual rights).

In “New Beginnings: Immigrant Women and the American Experience” the focus is on Ellis Island, home, community, and culture, and a woman’s role in making things work in a new country, while keeping the culture and traditions of the old country alive. The exhibit here also talks about Jamestown and the involuntary immigration of African American women, women’s labor, factories, sewing shops, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and Fire (1911), who was welcome and who was not, migrant workers, and laws affecting immigrants.

In the exhibit “Inventive Women: American Women in Innovation and Invention,” we learn about those who invented and patented new products, ranging from a modern dishwasher to a smoke-and-cinder chimney for railroad locomotives. It is noteworthy that between 1865 and 1900, during the American Golden Age of Invention, women filed more than 5,500 patents. Unfortunately for most of the women during this time period, husbands and fathers still controlled much of their financial lives. In many states, women were still not

allowed to own property or control their own earnings, so along with making innovations, women were also striving for economic independence.

The *NWHM* has so many exhibits that it is not feasible to address them all in this review. But the visitor can look forward to exhibits on “Breaking in: Women in S.T.E.M.,” highlighting women’s contributions to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math; “Getting with the Program,” featuring women in computer sciences; and “From Ideas to Independence: A Century of Entrepreneurial Women,” which tells the stories of women who owned and operated their own businesses. One of the best exhibits is called “Timeline: World War I,” in which we learn about women who worked alongside men during the war, such as Mary Roberts Rinehart, who went to the front lines as a war correspondent, and Loreta Perfectus Walsh, Chief Yeoman, the first woman to be enlisted in the armed forces as something other than a nurse; following her example more women served in the Marines, the U.S. Signal Corps, and as pilots.

There is also an excellent section dedicated to educational resources. Here visitors will find further materials on the exhibits they have already viewed that can be used in the classroom. The *NWHM* has developed lesson plans, work sheets, and research help, as well as primary sources, biographies, and topic finders for National History Day. These resources can be browsed as individual topics, such as Harriet Tubman or Hedy Lamar, or, on another page each section is sorted into an appropriate category, for example activism, World War I, or Equal Rights.

The *NWHM* museum fills the void in the telling of women’s historical narrative. The online format is well done and extremely informative; it affords the ability to tell a deeper story; and it offers much more than just text to the great benefit of students and researchers. The only thing I felt was missing was a searchable database of any digitized material that may be available with a focus on women in history, perhaps linked to the National Archives or the Library of Congress. This would give visitors easier access to additional sources and information.

The online format may be a little more difficult to get acclimated to for museum visitor who are used to traveling to a destination to see the exhibits, and there is still a sense of separation from the story that is being presented. It just does not convey the same sense of being in the presence of history that a brick-and-mortar museum has. However, this does not take away from the information provided. A lot can be learned by reading and interacting with an online exhibit, but it is a very different feeling and process for the visitor.

The stories of our female pioneers need to be told. Whether these stories are in the arts or the sciences, at home or in the public sphere, it is time for women’s narratives to be added and to include women in the nation’s historical conversation. Perhaps, in time, the full museum will be approved by Congress, and the *National Women’s History Museum* will have a home not just online but on

the Capitol Mall in Washington, D.C. For now, one can visit them online at <http://www.womenshistory.org/>.

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