Wendy Bellion Awarded the 26th Annual Eldredge Prize for
Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America


Citizen Spectator is recognized by the jurors as “an engrossing study, both for what it tells us about the history of American picturing and for its capacity to fascinate and delight its readers, who plunge along with Bellion into an image-obsessed world uncannily similar to our own.”

“The Smithsonian American Art Museum has always supported new scholarship, and thanks to the generosity of the museum’s collectors group, innovative thinkers such as Wendy Bellion can be recognized and rewarded for expanding our understanding of America’s visual culture,” said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The three jurors who awarded the $3,000 prize were Julia Bryan-Wilson, associate professor of modern and contemporary art at the University of California, Berkeley; Rachael DeLue, associate professor of American art at Princeton University; and Erica Hirshler, Croll Senior Curator of American Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The jurors wrote “A truly interdisciplinary study, drawing on history, art history, the history of science, media studies, philosophy, popular taste and political science, among other fields of inquiry, Bellion’s book serves as a model of writing about American art and visual culture that takes equally seriously problems of representation and problems of citizenship and the body politic. It thus reveals an important and prevalent aspect of Early National culture and formulates a model methodology for understanding entanglements of high and low, art and popular entertainment, for this (or any) period.”

Bellion is an associate professor of American art and material culture at the University of Delaware. She has been awarded grants and fellowships from the American Antiquarian Society, the
Henry Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, and the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art, among others. In 2015 she will be the Terra Foundation for American Art Visiting Professor at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art in Paris. Bellion currently serves on editorial boards for the University of Delaware Press and the scholarly journals *American Art, Winterthur Portfolio* and *J19*. She holds a bachelor’s degree in art history from Wesleyan University, and earned a master’s degree and doctorate from Northwestern University. Her new book project, titled *What Statues Remember: Art and Iconoclasm in New York City*, explores the presence, destruction and historical memory of political monuments in lower Manhattan from the late 18th century to the Occupy Wall Street movement. Bellion will present the annual Eldredge Prize lecture at the museum this fall; details will be available online once the date is confirmed.

The Eldredge Prize, named in honor of the former director of the museum (1982-1988), is sponsored by the American Art Forum, a patrons’ support organization. This annual award, initiated in 1989, recognizes originality and thoroughness of research, excellence of writing and clarity of method. Single-author, book-length publications in the field of American art history appearing within the three previous calendar years are eligible. Dec. 1 is the deadline for next year’s nominations.

Recent Eldredge Prize recipients include Leo Mazow (2013) for his book *Thomas Hart Benton and the American Sound* and Maurie D. McInnis (2012) for her book *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade*. A complete list of past winners is available online at [americanart.si.edu/research/awards/eldredge/winners](http://americanart.si.edu/research/awards/eldredge/winners).

The museum’s research programs include fellowships for pre- and postdoctoral scholars, extensive photographic collections documenting American art and artists and unparalleled art research databases. An active publications program of books, catalogs and the journal *American Art* complements the museum’s exhibitions and educational programs.

**About the Smithsonian American Art Museum**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its National Historic Landmark building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Follow the museum on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/), [Tumblr](https://AmericanArtMuseum.tumblr.com/), [Instagram](https://instagram.com/), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/), [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/), [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/), iTunes U and [ArtBabble](https://artbabble.org/). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000. Website: [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

# # #