

THE DRIEHAUS MUSEUM ANNOUNCES SOLO EXHIBITION OF HISTORIC
SCULPTOR,
EMMA STEBBINS: CARVING OUT HISTORY
OCTOBER 8, 2026 – APRIL 18, 2027



CHICAGO (July 16, 2026) – The **Driehaus Museum** announces dates for ***Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History***, a touring exhibition that examines the full scope of Stebbins’s history-making career as one of the most significant American sculptors of the nineteenth century. From 1857 to 1870, Stebbins created innovative marble and bronze sculptures while living in Rome and studying within the circles of historic sculptors. Her work models inventive and incisive interpretations of literary and biblical subjects, as well as unprecedented allegories of American industry. With the Bethesda Fountain in 1863, Stebbins became the first woman to earn a commission for a public sculpture from the City of New York. Organized by the Heckscher Museum of Art in Huntington, New York, earlier this year, *Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History* is curated by Karli Wurzelbacher, Chief Curator of the Heckscher Museum, and is the first museum exhibition devoted to the late artist’s work. *Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History* takes place at the Driehaus Museum, 50 E. Erie Street, from October 8, 2026 to April 18, 2027.

The exhibition reunites Stebbins’s oeuvre of neoclassical works, including 13 marble sculptures from across the US and Europe, in addition to paintings and a wealth of archival materials contextualizing her practice, her network, and her popularity on both sides of the pond. Stebbins was married to renowned Shakespearean actress Charlotte Cushman and one section of the exhibition prominently displays Stebbins’s bust of Cushman along with photographs, rare works on paper, and first editions of Stebbins’s posthumous biography of her partner. As a professional sculptor in a female marriage in the nineteenth century, Stebbins reimagined what a woman’s life could be in the mid-nineteenth century, embedding layers of meaning into her work that upend traditional understandings of gender, sexuality, and agency.

“In her lifetime, Stebbins was widely celebrated, yet even by the time of her death she was beginning to slip from view, her contributions gradually left out of the history books. This exhibition seeks to correct that quiet erasure and restore her rightful place as a significant artist of her era. We are deeply grateful to Art Bridges for their partnership in bringing renewed attention to her work and ensuring her story is once again seen and

valued,” says Driehaus Museum Executive Director **Lisa M. Key**. “Stebbins’s life and art reflect enduring questions about recognition, memory, and identity. By revisiting her legacy, we hope to illuminate how easily even celebrated artists can be forgotten, and how vital it is to bring their voices back into focus to inspire future generations.”

Generous support for *Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History* is provided by Art Bridges Foundation.



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ABOUT THE DRIEHAUS MUSEUM

The Driehaus Museum engages and inspires the global community through exploration and ongoing conversations in art, architecture, and design of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its permanent collection and temporary exhibitions are presented in an immersive experience within the restored 1883 Nickerson Mansion, and the 1926 Murphy Auditorium. The Museum’s collection reflects and is inspired by the collecting interests, vision, and focus of its founder, the late Richard H. Driehaus. For more information, visit driehausmuseum.org and connect with the Museum on [Facebook](#), TikTok, and [Instagram](#).

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Image credit:

Emma Stebbins (1815–1882), *Sandalphon (also known as Angel of Prayer)*, 1866, marble, 32 1/4 x 12 x 13 in. The Heckscher Museum of Art, Museum Purchase: Town of Huntington Art Acquisition Fund

Emma Stebbins (1815–1882), *Commerce (also known as Sailor)*, 1860, marble, 23 7/8 x 10 1/2 x 11 in. The Heckscher Museum of Art, Gift of Phillip M. Lydig III.

Emma Stebbins (1815–1882), *Industry (as known as Miner)*, 1860, marble, 28 7/8 x 10 x 10 1/2 in. The Heckscher Museum of Art. Gift of Phillip M. Lydig III.

Emma Stebbins (American, 1815–1882) *Bethesda Fountain*, 1870, bronze and stone. New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. © 2026 David Almeida

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