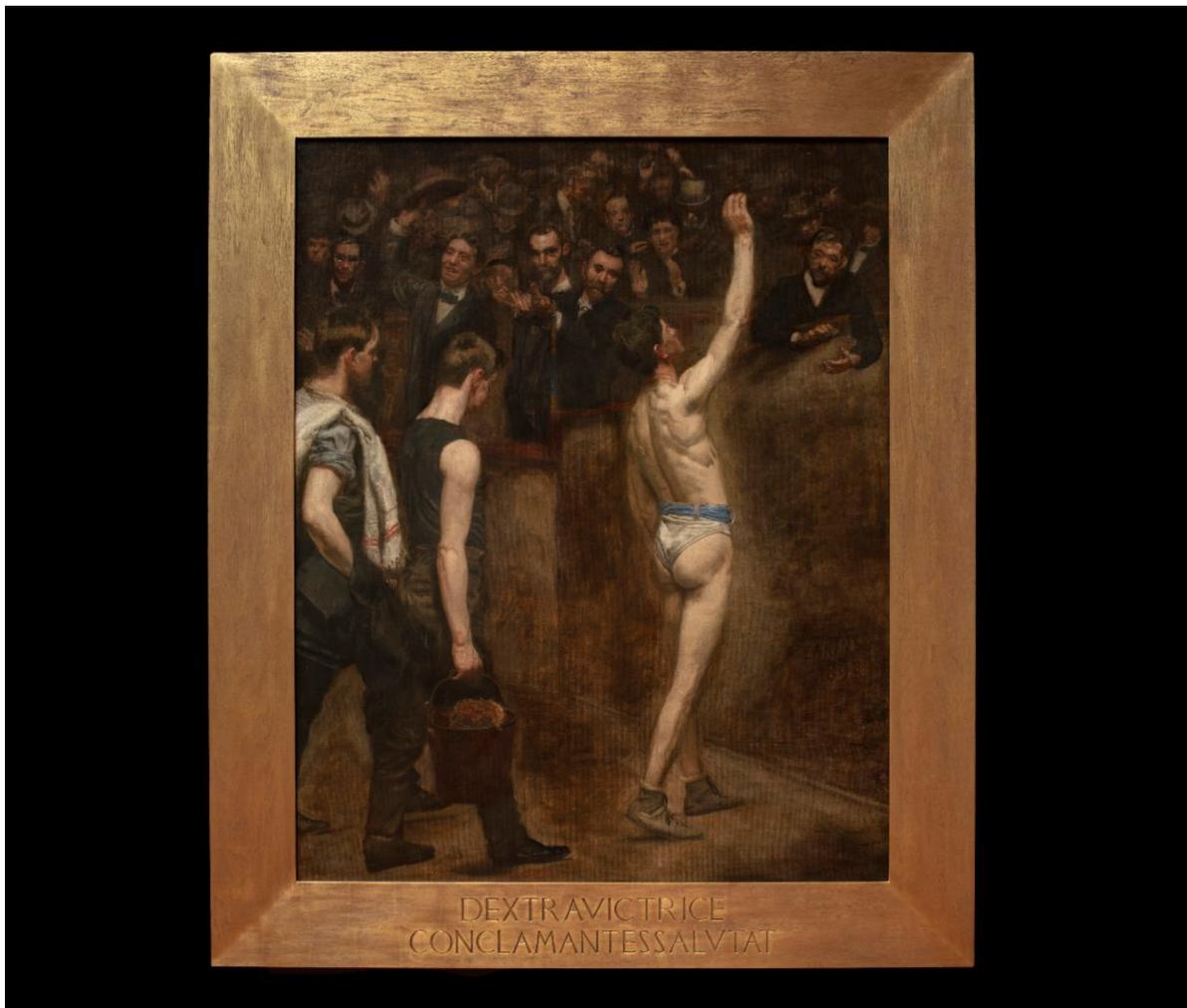


Thomas Eakins' "Salutat" installed at the Addison Gallery of American Art in a carved and gilded replica frame created by Eli Wilner & Company. Image credit: Frank Graham/Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.

Eli Wilner & Company Recreates the Original Frame for Thomas Eakins' "Salutat" for the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

New York - Eli Wilner & Company is pleased to announce the completion of an important reframing project for the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy, Andover: recreating the original carved and gilded frame designed by the artist for Thomas Eakins' "Salutat", 1898, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches. The replica frame was created and given as a partial gift by Eli Wilner & Company with the additional support of Maureen Barden and David Othmer (PA 1959).



Thomas Eakins' "Salutat" in a carved and gilded replica frame created by Eli Wilner & Company. Image credit: Frank Graham/Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.

Proclaimed to be “one of Eakins’ finest achievements in figure-painting” by Eakins’ biographer Lloyd Goodrich, “Salutat” is one of the crown jewels of the Addison’s world-renowned collection of American art. One of three major canvases exploring the culture of boxing at the turn of the 20th century, “Salutat” is a portrait of featherweight “Turkey Point” Billy Smith, one of several fighters who modeled for the artist. Shown in his form-fitting loincloth, Smith acknowledges the enthusiastic applause of the all-male audience as he exits the arena with his trainers. Its source unseen, the light that plays on his lithe form seems divine, its glow emphasizing his muscular back and firm and ample buttocks. Alluding to Roman gladiatorial contests and classical representations of the male nude, Eakins sought to counter the disreputable status of boxing in the US in the 1890s and to celebrate the role of such demonstrations of physical prowess as indicators of masculinity. As the cultivation and perfection of the male body through sport and exercise became a major preoccupation by the end of the 19th century, the opportunity for and acceptability of homoerotic appreciation of the male body in American art flourished.

ABOUT THE LOST FRAME

The painting’s original frame was designed with a broad profile and was constructed of chestnut, in a style typical of the artist. The gilded surface had an engraved inscription at the bottom that provided context for the painting, ‘Dextra Victrix Conclamantes Salutatus’ (With his right hand the victor salutes those acclaiming him). The original frame was lost sometime between the painting’s appearance in the Eakins memorial exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1917 and its acquisition for the Addison’s collection in 1929. Gordon Wilkins, Robert M. Walker Associate Curator of American Art described the importance of re-creating this frame, “For the first time in over 90 years, the Addison is able to present Salutatus —arguably one of the single most important paintings in our collection— as the artist

wished for it to be displayed.”



Detail from the Eli Wilner & Company studio of the hand-carved inscription during the creation of the replica frame for Thomas Eakins' "Salutat" in the collection of the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.



Detail from the Eli Wilner & Company studio of the hand-carved inscription and gilding process during the creation of the replica frame for Thomas Eakins' "Salutat" in the collection of the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

One of the initial challenges in recreating this particular lost frame was sourcing the most appropriate wood. Due to insect blights, chestnut lumber of the quality used for the original frame is no longer available. To match the character and grain of the original frame as closely as possible, the Wilner woodworking team used butternut wood. The original frame's width and profile was determined through careful digital analysis of the surviving photographs, and then the wood was able to be cut to the appropriate width and depth. After carefully surfacing the shaped lengths, the team discussed which pieces to use on which sides to best harmonize the variations in the grain, and in particular which area would be ideal for the carved inscription. Further digital work was done to analyze the nature of the original carving, with attention paid to the fact that the original clearly showed the hand of the carver in their interpretation of certain letters. After the final layout was approved, a master carver recreated the text precisely. Unlike most gilded frames of the period, this style of frame has only clay applied to the surface, and no gesso layer. In this case, red clay was used, followed by the application of gold leaf, rubbing back the surface, and finishing. During the extended finishing process, the Wilner team reviewed the frame under a variety of light sources, until they achieved a period-appropriate character. The frame was then crated and shipped to the Addison where it was united with the painting and installed in the gallery.

ABOUT ELI WILNER & COMPANY

Eli Wilner & Company has completed over 10,000 framing projects for private collectors, museums, and institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and 28 projects for The White House. In 2019, Wilner was honored by the Historic Charleston Foundation with the Samuel Gaillard Stoney Conservation Craftsmanship Award, for their work in historic picture frame conservation.