

**[Introductory Panel Outside the Rooms]**

Living Rooms

The Many Voices of Colonial America

Museums choose which histories they tell. For more than 80 years, Mia used the 1772 Charleston Dining and Drawing Rooms to tell the story of decorative arts in the American colonies. But this isn't the only story embedded in these rooms.

The rooms' original owner was Colonel John Stuart, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Britain's southern colonies—charged with keeping the peace between the British settlers and the Native Americans whose land they occupied. And he owned about 200 enslaved Africans.

He was a rich and powerful diplomat in a complex colonial landscape, and he owed his wealth and status to Native Americans and Africans. He ate the rice and sold the indigo dye that Africans grew on his two plantations. He visited the homes of Cherokee leaders—and he fathered a Cherokee son.

Now, Native American and African voices are heard in these rooms, telling their own stories. The story of the Cherokee Nation and its diplomatic relations with the British Crown. The story of enslaved West Africans and how their knowledge of rice cultivation allowed Charleston to thrive. The complex and often painful story of how the United States of America began.


*This Project is part of Living Rooms, an initiative to present Mia's historic interiors and decorative arts collections in new ways. Generous support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and donors at the 2014 Mia Gala. Additional support provided by the Chipstone Foundation.*


**The Drawing Room**







United States, North America  
Charleston Drawing Room, 1772, Cypress, paint  
Gift of James F. and Louise H. Bell in memory of James S. and Sallie M. Bell, 27.78

[Charleston Drawing Room before new installation]



<p><b>[Monitor above Drawing Room fireplace]</b></p> 	<p>The monitor above the fireplace features audio and video recordings Mia created with Cherokee participants Beverly Bushyhead, Lisa Rutherford, and Shan Goshorn. Beverly Bushyhead introduces visitors to the room and to its former inhabitant, John Stuart. Artists Lisa Rutherford and Shan Goshorn reflect on Anglo-Cherokee relations in the 1760s-70s and how this legacy is reflected in their work.</p>
<p><b>[Drawing Room Panel: John Stuart’s biography will be overlaid on a 1775 map of NC and SC – map locations in brackets]</b></p> <p>Mouzon, Henry, and Robert Sayer And John Bennett. An accurate map of North and South Carolina with their Indian frontiers . . . London, Printed for Robt. Sayer and J: Bennett, 1775.</p>	<p><b>1. Town and Country</b> [Charleston, SC]          John Stuart was a businessman, a military man, a plantation owner, and eventually a diplomat—the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the southern British Colonies. This was a high-level job, the king’s representative to the powerful Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Muskogee nations in what is now the southeastern United States. And although Stuart was based in Charleston, South Carolina, he spent much of his time in Cherokee territory. The drawing room of his home, where he received and entertained guests, may have been as familiar to Cherokee leaders as it was to Charleston socialites.</p> <p><b>2. By Land and Sea</b> [Beaufort County]          Before John Stuart was a powerful diplomat, or anything else of note, he was a sailor. Born in Scotland, he arrived in South Carolina in 1748 at age 30. And he became a maritime merchant, partnering with his brother Francis to buy a large ship—the St. Helena—that made them enough money to own two plantations in Beaufort County. The farms totaled more than 1,800 acres, roughly the size of downtown Minneapolis, and were worked by about 200 African slaves.</p> <p><b>3. A Cherokee Child</b> [Cherokee lower towns]          John Stuart became a captain in the colonial militia in 1755, and he was sent with his men to the frontier—beyond the Appalachian Mountains in present-day Tennessee—to construct Fort Loudoun.</p>




	<p>There, Stuart befriended Cherokee chiefs, who called him Oo-No-Dutu (“Bushyhead”) on account of his blond, curly hair. He had a son, Tahlonteeskee, with Susannah Emory, a part-Cherokee woman, in 1758 or 1759. Tahlonteeskee took his father’s nickname as his surname, and the Bushyhead family continues today with a long history of Cherokee political, religious, and cultural leaders.</p> <p><b>4. The Peacemaker</b> [Fort Prince George]                  By 1760, John Stuart was a prominent landowner and an officer in the colonial militia. He was trusted and respected by both the British and the Cherokee. And so, when English settlers encroached on Cherokee land, and British troops based at Fort Prince George began attacking Cherokee towns, Stuart brokered a peace. The British Crown was impressed, and a year later Stuart was appointed the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the southern British Colonies, representing the king to the powerful Cherokee and Creek nations.</p>	
	<p>J.M. Payne, Nancy Riley, and Polly Weber (Cherokee)                  Embroidered coat                  Deerskin with silk thread                  1854                  Minnesota Historical Society 66.27.1</p>	<p>By the early 1800s, Native artists were creating ornately embroidered animal hide coats, blending European styling with Cherokee imagery. The coats were highly desired by traders, military men, and settlers moving West, such as native New Yorker Leonidas Wetmore, pictured below. This coat’s designs include bluebirds, orioles, turkeys, swallowtail butterflies, and a bald eagle, in addition to detailed vines and flowers. On the back of the coat is a “tree of life” design, filled with symbolic meaning for Cherokees.</p> <p>General John B. Sanborn, Sr., purchased this coat in 1854 in Kentucky, about 75 years after John Stuart left his post with the Cherokee and less than 20 years after many Cherokee people traveled through Kentucky on their way to present-day Oklahoma, a forced migration known as the Trail of Tears. The women who made this coat—J.M. Payne, Nancy Riley, and Polly Weber—may have been among the many Cherokee who managed to stay behind in Kentucky, an area of abundant mountains, fresh water, and game like that of their homeland.</p>

	<p>Lisa Rutherford (Cherokee)          Turkey Mantle          2016–17          Wild turkey feathers, brain tanned          deerskin, artificial sinew, thread,          hemp cordage          Courtesy Lisa Rutherford</p>	<p>Artist’s Statement: I created this turkey feather mantle after studying written and oral accounts of historic Cherokee mantles. Mantles are made for ceremony and for warmth, incorporating colorful feathers of birds that possessed attributes the wearer wished to emulate, including geese, turkeys, parakeets, flamingos, and any brightly colored bird.</p> <p>In the 1700s, every Cherokee town had a Peace Chief and a War Chief. The War Chief wore a turkey feather mantle similar to this one, but included red and black feathers signifying blood, the color of life, and black, representing death or enemies. The Peace Chief wore a white mantle.</p> <p>There are historic accounts of feather mantles. Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto wrote about feather mantles worn by Southeast tribes in his 1540 chronicles. British Lt. Henry Timberlake, who lived with Cherokees for a few months in 1762 and ultimately accompanied three tribal leaders to England, described Cherokees wearing feather mantles in warmer weather and buffalo mantles in winter.</p> <p>They are worn today with traditional clothing, even on the fashion runway.</p>
	<p>Euro-American artist          Powder horn with map and scenes          from the Anglo-Cherokee War          (1759–1761)          1760–1          Cow horn (domesticated cattle);          wool yarn; black and white glass          pony beads; wood          The Warnock Collection WC8908004</p>	<p>Powder horns are gunpowder flasks made from cattle horns. And in the 1700s, they were the constant companion of every man—Native American or Euro American—who owned a gun and spent time in the backwoods or the battlefield. John Stuart almost certainly owned one.</p> <p>They were often finely decorated, marking the journeys or military exploits of their owners. Colonel James Grant commissioned this horn as a gift to his commanding general in celebration of their victories during the Anglo-Cherokee War, which ended in 1760 when John Stuart negotiated a peace between the British and the Cherokee. The engraved map shows Fort Prince George in northwest South Carolina, where</p>

		<p>Grant and his company were based during their campaigns against the Cherokee towns depicted on the horn.</p>
	<p>Euro-American artist                  Powder horn with scenes from the Indian Congress at Fort Picolata, East Florida, November 17, 1765                  1768                  Cow horn, wood                  The Warnock Collection WC8308081</p>	<p>This powder horn shows the first Indian Congress at Fort Picolata, in the British colony of East Florida. Made about seven years after the powder horn to the right, it depicts John Stuart, then the Royal Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and James Grant, then governor of East Florida, negotiating a land treaty with the local Creek people.</p> <p>The scene matches a description provided by an eyewitness from Philadelphia, who noted that Governor Grant and Superintendent Stuart were seated at a table in an open pavilion covered by pine branches, with about 50 Creek chiefs assembled before them. The chiefs offered deerskins as gifts and carried a pipe “dressed with eagle feathers,” which they smoked with Grant and Stuart.</p> <p>After negotiations were concluded, each chief received a silver medal—“some as big as ye palm of my hand, others bigger than A dollar”—hung from a silk ribbon. “Then ye governour &amp; superintendent...shaked hands with them all.”</p>
	<p>Shan Goshorn (Eastern Cherokee)                  Cherokee Portraits (Sonny, Mike, and Kody)                  2013                  Photographs                  Courtesy Shan Goshorn</p>	<p>Artist’s Statement: In 1762, three Cherokee warriors journeyed to England in the company of British lieutenant and diarist Henry Timberlake to meet King George III. Even though the Cherokee men spoke only their native language, the delivery of their orations and their exotic appearances made a fascinating impression on their British audience, who became convinced that their guests were foreign royalty.</p> <p>These are portraits of three contemporary members of the Warriors of the Anikituhwa, who are wearing clothing typical of Cherokee men in the 1700s. Traditionally, these warriors would serve as the first line of defense for the Cherokee people.</p>

		Currently, they serve as ambassadors representing the Eastern Band of Cherokee and are role models within the community.
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	<p>Shan Goshorn (Eastern Cherokee)                  Playing Their Hand                  2013                  Arches watercolor paper splints                  printed with archival inks                  Courtesy Shan Goshorn</p>	<p>Artist’s statement: A Cherokee gambling basket I examined during my research at the Smithsonian archives inspired this basket. Woven in the shape of that historical piece, the exterior of my basket features reproductions of historical accounts written about three Cherokee warriors who journeyed to England to meet King George III in 1762. These men fascinated the British public, and contemporary newspaper and magazine “paparazzi” of the day recounted their every move—where they dined, who they visited, what they wore. There was even a rather bawdy song that alluded to the effect these men were having on society ladies. The charades and posturing these men must have endured reminded me of modern-day “poker faces,” or presenting a very calculated side of yourself.</p> <p>The interior includes a photograph of some old, carved wooden gambling pieces also found in the museum archives. These pieces are embellished to resemble the underside of a box turtle.</p>
	<p>Cherokee artist                  Bandolier bag                  1825–50                  Black wool trade cloth; multi-colored                  glass seed beads; red wool yarn; red                  silk ribbon; cotton cloth                  The Warnock Collection WC8812005</p>	<p>Cherokee men wore bandolier bags during their negotiations with the British and other Native leaders. They likely still wore them in the 1800s, when American independence from Britain led to huge losses of Native territory. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act forced Cherokee and other Southeastern Native communities from their homelands. Thousands of Cherokee people were escorted by the U.S. military to “Indian Territory” in modern-day Oklahoma along the deadly Trail of Tears, or what Cherokee call the “trail where they cried.”</p>

	<p>Cherokee artist Moccasins 1825–50 Native tanned deerskin; black and red silk; multi-colored glass seed beads; metallic beads; black pigment The Warnock Collection WC8812005</p>	<p>When Cherokee leaders met with foreign dignitaries, they wore their finest diplomatic attire, including elaborately beaded sashes and moccasins. Over time, Cherokee women artists incorporated expensive imported materials into their work, such as silk and woolen cloth from Britain and beads from Italy. Indeed, Cherokee artists continue a distinctive beading style, creating elaborate abstract designs on deerhide and imported cloth.</p>
	<p>Choctaw Artist Sash 1825–50 White glass seed beads; red wool cloth; black wool cloth; thread sewn The Warnock Collection WC8411005</p>	<p>The striking motifs on this sash have appeared on Southeastern materials as far back as the early first century. By the 1700s, artists found that the brilliant red wool cloth made the white beads and black outlines even more dramatic. These sashes are depicted in many portraits of Cherokee leaders from the 1700s and 1800s.</p>
	<p>Cherokee Artists Market and storage baskets 1940s River cane with natural cane and walnut dyes Courtesy Lambert Wilson</p>	<p>In the 1700s, Euro American colonists greatly admired the baskets that Cherokees made to serve food and store household goods. Woven out of split river cane, and colored with natural dyes such as pokeberry and walnut, these baskets were so popular among the colonists that by 1716 the British Crown stepped in to regulate the basket trade—presumably to tax them. As the colonists encroached on Cherokee lands, however, they claimed river cane as food for their livestock, and Cherokee artists turned instead to oak, maple, honeysuckle, and other wood for basketmaking.</p> <p>Cherokee basketry continued to change after the Cherokee Nation’s forced relocation to Oklahoma (1835–8). In the 1900s, as tourists came to the Cherokee Reservation, Cherokee women sold baskets to support their families. The baskets became even more decorative as each artist developed her own patterns and styles.</p>

**Charleston Dining Room**



United States, North America  
Charleston dining room, 1772, Cypress, paint  
Gift of James F. and Louise H. Bell in memory of James S. and Sallie M. Bell, 27.79



[Charleston Dining Room before new installation]



**[Monitor above Dining Room sideboard]**






The monitor above the sideboard features audio and video recordings Mia created with African American and African participants Jonathon Rose, Pierre Thiam, and Henrietta Snype. Jonathan Rose, a Sierra Leonian whose ancestors were brought to the Carolinas as enslaved laborers, introduces the Dining Room and the importance of rice to the colonial economy. Senegalese chef Pierre Thiam discusses the centrality of rice cultivation to his native region of West Africa and describes the shared rice-centric culinary traditions of West Africa and the Southern USA. South Carolina artist Henrietta Snype discusses the importance of West African basketry technology to rice cultivation in the colonial USA, and of West African contributions to US culture.



<p><b>[Dining Room Panel: Details of John Stuart’s plantations and rice farming will be overlaid on an 1825 map of Beaufort County, SC]</b></p> <p>Mills, Robert, Charles Blacker Vignoles, Henry Schenck Tanner, and Henry Ravenel. Beaufort District, South Carolina. [Baltimore: F. Lucas, Jr. for Mill’s atlas, ?, 1825]</p>	<p><b>Raising Rice</b></p> <p>John Stuart owned rice and indigo plantations in Beaufort County, South Carolina—and about 200 enslaved Africans to work them. Rice was big business in South Carolina, but it was also extremely hard to grow, requiring canals, dams, and drainage systems to manipulate water and salt levels. In fact, British colonists didn’t know how to grow rice. But West African societies had perfected rice cultivation over thousands of years, and Stuart’s enslaved laborers found the marshy coast of South Carolina practically identical to the land they had farmed in Africa.</p> <p>It’s no coincidence that the enslaved Africans working the rice fields of South Carolina were from what was then called the Rice Coast (present-day Senegal to Côte d’Ivoire). Plantation owners sought them out, not only for their rice-growing knowledge but also the technology they used to sow, harvest, prepare, and store the crop. The rice recipes they brought with them evolved into staples of Southern cooking.</p>	
	<p>England Tilt-top table, c. 1750 Mahogany The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 17.56</p> <p>England Pair of armchairs, c. 1755 Mahogany Gift of the Groves Foundation 83.99.1,2</p>	<p>The Charleston Rooms have showcased colonial American architecture and decorative arts since they opened in May 1931. Yet John Stuart, the room’s original owner, was a Loyalist and a representative of the British Crown, and new research reveals that his tastes reflected his English leanings. He had furnishings from London, likely similar in fashion and quality to this exquisite English tilt-top table and pair of armchairs.</p>
	<p>Sapi artist Nomoli figure 1300–1600 Stone, rice residue Sierra Leone Private Collection</p>	<p>In coastal Sierra Leone, people working the earth—farmers, well-diggers, diamond miners—occasionally come across stone figures called nomoli. The centuries-old statuettes are attributed to the extinct Sapi peoples, ancestors of the present-day Mende and Southern Bullom inhabitants, and may represent kings, chiefs, and dignitaries from the past. But little is known of their origin or purpose—some may have played a role in ancient divination rituals. In any case, from the mid-1600s through the mid-1900s, local rice farmers put the nomoli</p>

		<p>to work. They placed the figures in temporary shelters near their fields, “fed” them small portions of cooked rice, and implored them to protect and increase the crops.</p>
	<p>Bassa peoples, Liberia or Côte d'Ivoire                  Figurative rice ladle                  Wood, iron                  Gift of N. Bud and Beverly Grossman                  2000.201</p>	<p>The West African Bassa peoples and their neighbors make large ceremonial ladles associated with feasting and generosity. They are given to women who distinguish themselves with their labor in the rice fields and hospitality in the village, and are treasured as status symbols. The owner of such a ladle would dance with it in public or fill it with rice to distribute during communal meals. The ladles are sometimes carved in the shape of a person or, as here, decorated with a woman's head.</p>
	<p>American or Senegalese artist                  Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, or Senegal, West Africa                  Rice winnowing basket                  No date                  Plant fiber, dye                  American Museum of Natural History                  AFE/00021</p>	<p>This basket likely entered the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York, about a hundred years ago. But where was it made? The original museum file does not say. In fact, coiled baskets from western Africa and the southeastern United States are so similar that this one could be from Senegal...or South Carolina. The resemblance is no coincidence. Enslaved Africans from the Rice Coast, which includes Senegal, were brought to the Carolinas to work on rice plantations, and their methods of rice cultivation, basket-making, and food preparation has shaped local craft and cuisine to this day.</p>

	<p>Sierra Leonean artist Sierra Leone, West Africa Basket and lid Before 1910 Plant fiber, dye American Museum of Natural History 90.0/ 6613 AB</p>	<p>These two baskets are made from coiled grass, a style found throughout Africa. The technique was brought to the American South by Africans, just one example of African technology put to use on rice plantations. Africans also brought the mortar and pestle to crack open rice grains, freeing the grain from its hard shell, and wove wide circular trays to then winnow the rice—tossing it in the air to separate the shell, or husk, from the grains.</p>
	<p>Basket Congo Free State, Eastern Province (?) Before 1907 Plant fiber  American Museum of Natural History 90.0/ 2656</p>	
	<p>Henrietta Snype, American Fanner Basket 2017 Sweetgrass, bulrush, and pine needles Collection of Henrietta Snype</p>	<p>[Label to come; this basket is a commissioned piece for the installation]</p>