

## Harvard / News Release Art Museums

# Harvard Art Museums Announce Exhibition That Investigates Connections between Renaissance Art and Science

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Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I* (detail), 1514. Engraving. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of William Gray from the collection of Francis Calley Gray, G1098.

Hendrick Goltzius, *The Great Hercules* (detail), 1589. Engraving. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gray Collection of Engravings Fund, G4613.

Jacques de Gheyn II, *Great Lion* (detail), c. 1590. Engraving. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Anonymous Fund for the Acquisition of Prints Older than 150 Years, 2009.46.

The Harvard Art Museums present [Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe](#), an exhibition that examines how celebrated Northern Renaissance artists contributed to the scientific discoveries of the 16th century. This exhibition and the accompanying catalogue offer a new perspective on the collaboration between artists and scientists: the project challenges the perception of artists as illustrators in the service of scientists, and examines how their printmaking skills were useful to scientists in their investigations. Artists' early printed images served as effective research tools, not only functioning as descriptive illustrations, but also operating as active agents in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Taking into consideration prints, books, maps, and such scientific instruments as sundials, globes, astrolabes, and armillary spheres, this project looks at relationships between their producers and their production, as well as between the objects themselves.

[Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe](#) will be on display at the Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum from September 6 to December 10, 2011, and then travel to the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art (at Northwestern University), where it will be on view from January 17 to April 8, 2012. The exhibition is curated by Susan Dackerman, Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Curator of Prints, Division of European and American Art, Harvard Art Museums. Dackerman is also Head of Student Affairs at the Art Museums.

"This exhibition crosses the wires of the history of art and the history of science," said Dackerman. "It examines the role that artists played in the scientific investigations of the 16th century by exploring printed images that have, by and large, been neglected by art history and relegated to other fields because of their scientific content."

[Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge](#) was assembled using the extensive resources of Harvard University. The planning for the exhibition and the writing of the catalogue resulted from collaboration among participants in a monthly interdisciplinary seminar at Harvard's Mahindra Humanities Center. Dackerman and Katharine Park (Samuel Zemurray, Jr. and Doris Zemurray Stone Radcliffe Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University) jointly co-chaired the seminar, and taught a graduate class in the spring of 2010. For the exhibition and its catalogue, faculty members and collection curators provided expertise, and campus collections were mined for

their riches. Interns and graduate students from various disciplines conducted research and wrote entries for the catalogue. In the fall, Harvard undergraduates who participate in the Art Museums' Student Guide program will offer tours to both their peers and the public, and the exhibition will be featured in a range of classes across departments at the university.

"Exhibitions such as Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge embody the best of what we envision for the Harvard Art Museums when they reopen following the renovation now under way. The new building will be a teaching platform for training students and emerging scholars in art history, visual thinking, curatorial practice, and conservation science," said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Art Museums. "Through outreach to faculty, staff, and students, we've worked to integrate this project—a consummate embodiment of our teaching and research mission—as deeply as possible into the fabric of the Harvard community."

### Objects on View

The exhibition shows close links between 16th-century artists and scientists through a wide variety of materials, emphasizing that exchanges of influence could work both ways. Artists and scientists each respected the authority of the other, and each desired to gain legitimacy by association with established, well-known practitioners. Over 200 objects, including prints, books, instruments, reproductions, and facsimiles will be on view throughout the fourth floor of the Sackler Museum. Galleries will be roughly divided into eight sections, and works will represent such themes as astronomy, cartography, anatomy, allegory, zoology, and botany.

### Highlights include:

- Prints of the constellations of the northern and southern hemispheres by Albrecht Dürer, which were made in collaboration with astronomers Johannes Stabius and Conrad Heinfogel in 1515. These were the first of their kind and widely appropriated by artists and astronomers for generations. Also by Dürer is a woodcut of a Rhinoceros (1515), which was the authoritative representation of the animal for centuries, although he never saw one.
- Astronomer Johann Schöner's Brixen Celestial Globe (1522), a beautifully painted globe based on Dürer's printed celestial maps.
- Jacques de Gheyn II's engraving Great Lion (c. 1590), which demonstrates the breadth of his knowledge of nature, and his Portrait of Carolus Clusius (1601), which was made for Clusius's monumental book of botanical and zoological specimens from around the world, the Rariorum plantarum historia.
- Hendrick Goltzius's depiction of the muscle-bound hero in The Great Hercules (1589), which became a study aid for anatomy students.
- Two inventions by frequent collaborators Hans Holbein the younger and Sebastian Münster: the Sun and Moon Instrument (1534), one of the largest and most complex surviving astronomical wall charts, and the Universal cosmographic map (1532), which, with its flattened and elongated spherical form encompassing all the known continents in both hemispheres, was an innovative depiction of the earth for its time.
- Heinrich Vogtherr the elder's 1544 anatomical "flap prints," showing female and male torsos made of layered and hinged paper flaps that were lifted to reveal internal workings of the body.

Visitors will be encouraged to handle 12 facsimiles of prints that were designed to be assembled, including sundials by George Brentel the younger, an astrolabe by Georg Hartmann, and flap prints of female and male anatomy by Vogtherr.

Loans on display include items from the following Harvard collections: the Harvard Art Museums; the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments; Houghton Library; Countway Library of Medicine; Botany Libraries; Map Collection, Harvard College Library; and the Ernst Mayr Library of the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Works have also been borrowed from major American and European collections and institutions.

In preparation for this exhibition, the Art Museums' print collection acquired a number of objects, including two sundial pamphlets by Georg Brentel (1615), portraits of botanist Carolus Clusius by Jacques de Gheyn II (1601) and scholar Wenzel Jamnitzer by Jost Amman (c. 1572-75), an etching of The Ptolemaic System by Jost Amman (1579), and the engraved Great Lion by Jacques de Gheyn (c. 1590).

### Public Programming

A full schedule of public programming, involving the exhibition researchers as well as guest scientists and artists, is planned for the fall. Events include an opening-night panel discussion with the researchers; a panel discussion at the Museum of Science, Boston, featuring artist Alexis Rockman and James McCarthy, Alexander Agassiz Professor of Biological Oceanography, Harvard University; and a public symposium featuring art historians, historians of science, and artists, with Lorraine Daston (Max Planck Institute, Berlin) as keynote speaker. Unconventional gallery talks will include performances by the musical group Blue Heron, the Boston preview of artist Josiah McElheny's film *Island Universe*, an evening of star gazing outside the Sackler Museum, and a discussion with new-media artist Brian Knep. Free family days will be held on September 24, October 22, and November 19, with thematic activities provided each afternoon. Detailed information about these events will be available on the Art Museums' website at [www.harvardartmuseums.org/ppk](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/ppk) in the coming months.

### Publication

An accompanying catalogue, published by the Harvard Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press, will be released in September. The publication was edited by Susan Dackerman and features essays by Dackerman, Lorraine Daston (Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin), Katharine Park (Samuel Zemurray, Jr. and Doris Zemurray Stone Radcliffe Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University), Suzanne Karr Schmidt (Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow in Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago), and Claudia Swan (Associate Professor of Art History at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois). Images of each object in the exhibition are accompanied by catalogue entries written by Harvard and Northwestern University graduate students. The catalogue will be available for sale in the Harvard Art Museums' shop, located in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum; to inquire about ordering, call 617-495-1440 or email [am\\_shop@harvard.edu](mailto:am_shop@harvard.edu). To request a copy for review, please contact Jennifer Aubin in the Art Museums' Communications office (see below).

### Gallery and Education Tools

Selected objects in the exhibition will be featured in the Guide by Cell tour, and "pathway cards" will enable viewers to explore five themes on focused, self-guided tours. One of the pathway cards will be designed specifically for family audiences.

Teacher Resources: On the Art Museums' website ([www.harvardartmuseums.org/ppk](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/ppk)), exhibition-related materials designed for school groups will be available, and will include detailed highlights of exhibition themes, suggestions for pre- and post-visit activities, downloadable images for classroom use, and suggested curricular connections. Lesson plans will align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

### Online Tools

Later this summer, the Art Museums' will launch an interactive tool at [www.harvardartmuseums.org/ppk](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/ppk) that allows users to digitally construct six prints from the exhibition and manipulate them as they were used in their day. Objects include a cylindrical sundial by Georg Brentel and a female anatomical flap print by Heinrich Vogtherr. The digital tool will offer an audio interpretation of each print, a zoom feature, and a step-by-step explanation of the printing and woodcutting processes, and a kiosk will be set up in the galleries for access on-site.

An iPhone/iPad application for constructing and manipulating the Vogtherr anatomical print will be available for download. The application will include an image gallery with details of each of the print's components, including translations of the German text that appears on the print.

### Press Preview

A preview of the exhibition will be held for members of the press on Thursday, September 1, 2011, at 9:30am. RSVP to [jennifer\\_aubin@harvard.edu](mailto:jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu). Parking is available first-come, first-served at the nearby Broadway Garage, 7 Fenton Street; to reserve, email a request to [jennifer\\_aubin@harvard.edu](mailto:jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu) beginning two weeks before the event.

### Credits

Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe was organized by the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA, in collaboration with the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

The exhibition and catalogue are made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Mrs. Arthur K. Solomon, Lionel and Vivian Spiro, Walter and Virgilia Klein, Julian and Hope Edison, Novartis on behalf of Dr. Steven E. Hyman, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Barbara and Robert Wheaton, the Goldman Sachs Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

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### About the National Endowment for the Humanities

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov).



Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

### About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler) and four research centers (Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. The collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media, ranging in date from antiquity to the present and originating in Europe, North America, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the art museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and other visitors. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in this country.

In June 2008 the building at 32 Quincy Street, formerly the home of the Fogg and Busch-Reisinger museums, closed for a major renovation. During this renovation, the Sackler Museum at 485 Broadway remains open and has been reinstalled with some of the finest works representing the collections of all three museums. When complete, the renovated historic building on Quincy Street will unite the three museums in a single state-of-the-art facility designed by architect Renzo Piano.

### Hours and Admission

Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-5pm. Closed on major holidays. Admission: \$9 adults, \$7 seniors 65 and over, \$6 college students with valid ID. Free for Harvard University students and affiliates, members of the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge Public Library cardholders, and children under 18. For Massachusetts residents with valid ID, free on Saturday, 10am-noon. Paid admission includes entrance to the museum, guided tours, and gallery talks. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or [www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit).

The Harvard Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

### For more information, please contact:

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