

Harvard / News Release Art Museum

American Art Campaign Completed at Harvard Art Museum

\$10.5 Million Fund Endows Two Curatorships and Ongoing Operations of Department Founded in 2002

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The Harvard Art Museum today announced the successful completion of a campaign to endow the Department of American Art. Highlights of the campaign include establishment of the Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., Curatorship of American Art, the Diane and Michael Maher Assistant Curatorship of American Art, and the Benjamin Rowland Fund for American Art.

Topping its \$10 million goal, the American art endowment fund has raised \$10.5 million, which will underwrite the two curatorships and permanently endow ongoing operations in the Department of American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts. More than a dozen supporters of the museum and friends of Ted Stebbins, who has served as Harvard's curator of American art since 2002, have endowed the curatorship in his honor. After Stebbins retires, the head curator will be known as the Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., Curator of American Art. Diane and Michael Maher of Winter Park, Florida, provided the funding for the assistant curator position now held by Virginia Anderson, who will henceforth be known as the Diane and Michael Maher Assistant Curator of American Art.

Professor John Wilmerding of Princeton University, a distinguished scholar and curator in the American field, and like Ted Stebbins a former student of Professor Benjamin Rowland at Harvard, has established the Benjamin Rowland Fund for American Art. Rowland served on the Harvard faculty in the Fine Arts Department from 1930 to 1972 and was a legendary figure and instructor of many outstanding scholars of American art. The newly established Rowland Fund will support the department's activities, including publications, exhibitions, student internships, and acquisitions.

"The generosity of many friends and donors will allow Ted Stebbins and the Department of American Art to continue the important scholarly research into our existing collection and its energetic expansion that has characterized this department since it was formally established six years ago," said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museum. "It strengthens the university's commitment to the arts, and we are enormously grateful to everyone who has helped in this important effort."

"Working at Harvard has been the most gratifying and rewarding experience of my professional life," said Stebbins. "I deeply appreciate the support and generosity of my friends and colleagues. The establishment of a permanently funded Department of American Art is a dream come true. With the upcoming renovation of the museum's facilities we will have dedicated gallery space for American art for the first time, and we look forward to playing an active role in the reenergized museum."

The Harvard Art Museum's collection of American art is among the most distinguished in the United States and yet has remained undiscovered by many. It was built over the course of three centuries, however the Department of American Art was not established until recently, in November 2002, when Stebbins was appointed its first curator.

Among the department's nearly 3,000 works of painting, sculpture, and decorative arts are masterpieces such as John Singer Sargent's contemplative oil painting The Breakfast Table (1883-84), and Albert Bierstadt's Rocky Mountains, "Lander's Peak" (1863). There is a strong historical collection built around a core of commissioned portraits of Harvard presidents and donors by some of the best artists of the times: John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, and Sargent. And yet before the creation of the American Art Department in 2002, the collection had come together without a clear plan. There were gaps, Stebbins noted, especially in the 20th century. "In 2002, we had no Georgia O'Keeffe, no Arthur Dove," he said. Major paintings by both artists have since been acquired for the museum, as well as important works by Jacob Lawrence, Joseph Stella, and Willem De Kooning.

In the six years since the formation of the American Art Department, Stebbins, in collaboration with Anderson and former assistant curator Kimberly Orcutt, has mounted six exhibitions, acquired 93 new works of art (including 27 portraits), and written six publications, including the 543-page catalogue American Paintings at Harvard, Volume Two: Paintings, Watercolors, Pastels, and Stained Glass by Artists Born 1826-1856 (2008), the first of a planned three-volume set.

Stebbins is recognized as one of the world's leading scholars of American art and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1997. He holds a law degree as well as a master's and a doctorate in Art History from Harvard. From 1968 to 1977 he served as Curator of American Paintings and Associate Professor of Art History and American Studies at Yale University. Following that, he held the position of Curator of American Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from 1977 to 1999. He is much admired for his work there, organizing more than a dozen major exhibitions and directing the acquisition of more than 300 American paintings to the collection, including Copley's Henry Pelham (Boy with a Squirrel) (1765) and Winslow Homer's Driftwood (1909). He is perhaps best known for his work with the MFA's Lane Collection. Working with William and Saundra Lane, he guided the acquisition of nearly 100 works, including important paintings by Charles Sheeler, Stuart Davis, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, and many other American modernists.

Wilmerding commented: "When Ted Stebbins leaves Harvard, which I hope is far in the future, he will leave behind an important legacy, both in having set very high standards of scholarship and acquisition, and in passing on a fully funded department to his successors. He deserves our thanks and congratulations."

Donors who endowed the Stebbins curatorship include: James W. and Francis McGlothlin, Charles O. Wood III and Miriam M. Wood, Russell C. Ball III, the Estate of Horace D. Chapin, Lawrence J. and Michelle Lasser, Daniel and Susan Pollack, Mildred S. Lee, Thomas H. Lee and Ann Tenenbaum, Saundra B. Lane, Frank Gren, Tunie Hamlen Howe, Michael Kempner, Logan D. Delaney, Jr., the Heinz Family Foundation, and two anonymous donors.

Those making major gifts to the American art endowment include John Wilmerding, Richard and Elizabeth Gosnell Miller, John and Catherine Coolidge Lastavica, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Bolton Fund, Gift of the Payne Fund, and an anonymous donor.

About the Harvard Art Museum

The Harvard Art Museum is one of the world's leading arts institutions, comprised of three museums (Fogg Museum, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum) and four research centers (Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museum Archives, Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, Turkey). The Harvard Art Museum is distinguished by the range and depth of its collections, its groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of its staff. As an integral part of Harvard and the community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and visitors. For more than a century, the Harvard Art Museum has been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and is renowned for its seminal role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

General Information

In June 2008, the Harvard Art Museum's 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 at 32 Quincy Street will house the three museums in a single state-of-the-art facility.

Hours

Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.
The Harvard Art Museum is closed on all national holidays.

Admission

Paid admission includes entrance to the museum, public tours, and gallery talks. General admission is \$9; \$7 for senior citizens; and \$6 for students. Admission is free for Harvard University ID holders, Members of the Art Museum, Cambridge Public Library cardholders, visitors under 18 years of age, and is free to all on Saturdays before noon. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or www.harvardartmuseum.org.

The Harvard Art Museum receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

For more information about the Harvard Art Museum, please contact:

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