

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

Harvard Art Museums Launch Redesigned and Expanded Website

Redesigned harvardartmuseums.org provides new digital platform to enrich visitor experience and increase access to collections

Cambridge, MA
November 12, 2014

The Harvard Art Museums announce the launch of their redesigned and expanded website, ahead of the museums' public opening on November 16, 2014. The website, harvardartmuseums.org, provides an enhanced digital platform to enrich the visitor experience at the museums' Cambridge, Massachusetts, facility; the new site also increases access to the museums' collections of approximately 250,000 objects. Interactive agency Area 17, known for combining technology and design to create highly functional products, worked closely with the museums' Design and Digital Infrastructure and Emerging Technology departments to integrate robust content with innovative new features. Intended to be a resource before, during, and after a visit, the new site features high-resolution images and in-depth information about works in the museums' vast collections, extensive educational and interpretive tools, and interactive navigation guides.

"As a leading arts institution, the Harvard Art Museums have a responsibility to connect with the wider community beyond Cambridge," said Thomas W. Lentz, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums. "Our redesigned website will serve as a powerful resource to visitors from around the world, in person and virtually."

Featuring an eclectic arrangement of content set against a simple white background and responsive design optimized for viewing on mobile devices, the website has a clean, accessible look and feel that reflects the spirit of the museums' newly renovated and expanded facility, designed by Renzo Piano

Building Workshop. Works from the collections of the Harvard Art Museums—comprising the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums—feature prominently throughout the site, and each of the approximately 250,000 objects also has an individual page with details about its exhibition history, provenance, and conservation. Object images are a key component; users can closely examine works using the site’s improved scrolling and zoom functionality. In many cases, multiple photos are available of the same object at various stages in its history, offering unparalleled insight into conservation and condition over time.

“The art is front-and-center on the new site,” said Kemp Attwood, partner and executive creative director at Area 17. “There are no distractions—which offers a similar experience to being in a gallery with a work of art.”

Among the website’s educational highlights are a new series of digital tours developed by the museums’ Division of Academic and Public Programs. Created by select faculty, curators, students, and staff, the self-guided tours allow for deeper engagement with objects on view in the galleries. Through text, images, and video, the tours encourage investigation and analysis of works of art and art making. Educators with special access can use the website’s proprietary content management system to create and share their own tours for teaching, thus enabling specialized study by educators and students across a variety of disciplines. A newly designed API also gives programmers and developers the opportunity to access and use object records and data from the museums’ collections for educational purposes and analysis.

The website’s new navigational tools offer assistance in both actual and virtual visits to the museums. Users can consult interactive floor plans to learn about the contents of the galleries, including images of each object on view. The maps draw on information from the museums’ internal databases to ensure details are accurate and up-to-date. An enhanced search engine provides another powerful means of engagement, enabling users to search by keyword, artist, title, and even gallery number to discover relevant information and images.

Enhancing interactivity and access was central to the website redesign. Nearly every feature, from digital tours to behind-the-scenes articles in the museums’ magazine, *Index*, is primed for sharing via email, Facebook, and Twitter. Visitors who create a free account with the new website can organize and curate their own digital collections from the museums’ vast holdings, and save them to unique URLs in order to return to or even share them with others. An additional section devoted to the

museums' retail shop also offers seamless online ordering, giving global access to those who want to purchase the shop's array of books, merchandise, gifts, and more.

All of the new site's dynamic features complement the cutting-edge curatorial and research work undertaken at the Harvard Art Museums, while also encouraging more prolonged engagement from visitors both near and far. "There are many museum websites that you visit only to find out when the museum is open and how much admission costs," said Steven Waldron, the museums' creative director. "We wanted our website to offer more. It is intended to invite multiple, in-depth visits."

About Area 17

Founded in New York City in March 2003, Area 17 takes an interdisciplinary approach—blending design, technology, and branding—to create modern, interactive systems. The agency's primary activities are user-experience design, Web engineering, visual-identity design, and strategic consulting. Comprised of 46 full-time employees, Area 17 has offices in New York and Paris and satellite offices in Argentina and London. Area 17 strives for pure, eloquent, and approachable design that cultivates curiosity and loyalty, and that creates memorable experiences. area17.com

About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the 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 Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum is dedicated to the study of art from the German-speaking countries of central and northern Europe, and is the only museum of its kind in North America; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. 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 the United States.

The Harvard Art Museums open their new facility, designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, to the public on November 16, 2014. The renovation and expansion of the museums' landmark building at 32

Quincy Street in Cambridge brings the three museums and their collections together under one roof for the first time, inviting students, faculty, scholars, and the public into one of the world's great institutions for arts scholarship and research. In the Harvard Art Museums' new home, visitors will be able to learn about research connected to the objects on display; explore new ideas in the galleries; gain a glimpse of leading conservators at work; and in the unique Art Study Center, have hands-on experiences with a wide range of objects from the collections. harvardartmuseums.org

News

Check out *Index*, our multimedia magazine, to keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums as we prepare for the opening of our renovated and expanded facility.

magazine.harvardartmuseums.org

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

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