

**EXHIBITION OF RARELY SEEN AMERICAN PRE-RAPHAELITE WORKS
ON VIEW AT HARVARD'S FOGG ART MUSEUM**

*“The Last Ruskinians” Explores the Influence of John Ruskin
on a Group of American Artists*



Charles Herbert Moore, Peacock Feather,
c. 1879–82. Watercolor and gouache on
off-white wove paper, 30.5 x 24.6 cm.
Fogg Art Museum, Gift of Dr. Denman W.
Ross, 1917.6. Photo: © President and
Fellows of Harvard College.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (March 15, 2007)—The Harvard University Art Museums present *The Last Ruskinians: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore, and Their Circle*, an exhibition of over 50 watercolors and drawings by the American followers of John Ruskin, including nearly a dozen rarely seen works by Ruskin himself. The exhibition is on view from **April 7 through July 8, 2007** at the Fogg Art Museum. Ruskin, the 19th-century British writer and watercolorist, never came to the United States, but had great influence on a group of artists who considered themselves American Pre-Raphaelites. These artists specialized in small landscapes and floral studies and were active in New York during the 1860s. While earlier scholars surmised that the movement died out by 1870, this exhibition examines a second flowering of the Ruskinian style in the U.S.

This resurgence was centered in Cambridge, Massachusetts and owed a great deal to Harvard's first professor of art history, Charles Eliot Norton and to his protégé, the artist Charles Herbert Moore. Drawn from the collections of the Fogg Art Museum and supplemented by loans from public and private collections, *The Last Ruskinians* demonstrates how a group of long-overlooked artists remained dedicated well into the 20th century to the highly detailed, “truth in nature” style advocated by Ruskin. These artists executed floral and landscape compositions, and

followed Ruskin's practice of documenting the architectural monuments of Venice and Florence, eventually expanding that practice to Egypt and Japan.

The Last Ruskinians is organized by Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., curator of American art, and Virginia Anderson, assistant curator of American art. Many of the artists featured in the exhibition are connected to Harvard through Charles Eliot Norton, Ruskin's closest American friend, who taught art history at Harvard from 1874 to 1898. "Norton himself never drew or painted, but he played a key role in establishing Ruskinian taste in this country," said Stebbins. "Norton was both a collector who patronized the young Ruskinian painters he believed in, and a teacher whose strong feelings about the importance of art influenced several generations of American collectors and museum-builders." Among Norton's students and admirers were Bernard Berenson and Isabella Stewart Gardner, as well as the builders of the modern Fogg Art Museum, Edward W. Forbes and Paul J. Sachs.

The exhibition also brings to light the work of Charles Herbert Moore, a distinguished artist who has been largely overlooked, despite his influence as one of the most important watercolorists of his day. Moore was one of the original American Pre-Raphaelites in New York, a co-founder in 1863 of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art and a critic for the publication *The New Path*. Moore was a close colleague of both John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton, and brought his passion for Ruskin's philosophies with him to Harvard in 1874. As an instructor, Moore worked in watercolor to copy details from a number of early Italian Renaissance paintings and numerous works from the British Museum collection. He brought these facsimiles back to Harvard, where he used them to teach art history and studio art in the days before color photography or survey texts. Moore became the first director of the Fogg Art Museum in 1896 and remained an instructor and director until his retirement in 1909.

"Charles Eliot Norton and Charles Herbert Moore are significant figures in the development of both the discipline of art history and the Art Museums here at Harvard," said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. "We are happy to be able to showcase these works in the spirit and tradition of two important—and often

unrecognized—followers of John Ruskin. Both believed, as we do today, in the capacity of art to educate, and in the contribution art museums make to society.”

A fine group of Ruskin’s own drawings and watercolors, and those of two British painters he greatly admired, Joseph M. W. Turner and William Henry Hunt, are also featured in the exhibition along with works by such important Americans as Henry Roderick Newman, Francesca Alexander, and Joseph Lindon Smith. Working largely in watercolor, these artists were active during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and their small nature studies and copies after art and architecture were painted with technical precision and in rich color. In Ruskinian style, they made highly realistic images of great delicacy and beauty.

Credit

The Last Ruskinians: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore, and Their Circle was organized by the Department of American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts, Harvard University Art Museums, with support from the Annemarie Henle Pope Special Exhibitions Fund.

Featured Works

Most of the works in the exhibition are drawn from the permanent collection of the Fogg Art Museum, supplemented with generous loans from public and private collectors. The Fogg’s holdings include a superb group of nearly 70 drawings and watercolors by John Ruskin, as well as the most extensive collection of works by Charles Herbert Moore. Please refer to the enclosed illustrated list of selected works.

Catalogue

The accompanying catalogue examines Ruskin’s significant influence on taste, collecting, and art instruction, with special emphasis on the role of his close friend and emissary in America, Charles Eliot Norton. The 104-page catalogue features original essays by curator Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., with independent scholar Susan C. Ricci, assistant curator Virginia Anderson, and curatorial assistant Melissa Renn. The essay by Stebbins and Ricci focuses on the broad influence of Ruskin and of Norton, who shaped the taste of some of Boston’s greatest

connoisseurs and collectors. Anderson's essay discusses Ruskin's influence on the evolution of Moore's artistic career, and Melissa Renn has written on Moore as an instructor at Harvard. The catalogue also contains 57 color and 24 black-and-white illustrations. The publication was funded by the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund in the Andrew W. Mellon Publication Funds.

Exhibition Programming

Gallery Talks

Fogg Art Museum

Free admission

Saturday, April 21, 11:30 a.m.

Francine Weiss, research assistant, Department of American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts

Saturday, May 19, 11:30 a.m.

Virginia Anderson, assistant curator of American art

Saturday, June 30, 11:30 a.m.

Melissa Renn, curatorial assistant, Department of American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts

M. Victor Leventritt Lectures

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, lecture hall

Free admission

Tuesday, April 17, 6:00 p.m.

Royal W. Leith, independent art scholar

"Ruskin, the American Pre-Raphaelites, and Harvard"

Tuesday, May 1, 6:00 p.m.

Virginia Anderson, assistant curator of American art

"The Cultivated Eye: Charles Herbert Moore Rediscovered"

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, comprising of the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg Art Museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the HUAM Archives, and the U.S. headquarters for the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museum are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. Adjacent to them is the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, located at 485 Broadway. Each museum is a short walk through Harvard Yard from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours: **Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.**; closed on national holidays.

General admission is \$9; \$7 for senior citizens; and \$6 for students. Paid admission includes entrance to all three Art Museums, including study rooms, public tours, and gallery talks.

Admission is free for Harvard University ID holders, Members of the Art Museums, Cambridge Public Library cardholders, and visitors under 18 years of age. Admission is free to all on Saturdays before noon. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

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

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For more information about these exhibitions or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

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