

JAMES AND MAISIE HOUGHTON ESTABLISH CURATORSHIP OF CONTEMPORARY ART

CAMBRIDGE, MA (February 23, 2007)—Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums, has announced the establishment of the Maisie K. and James R. Houghton Curatorship of Contemporary Art. This new position was funded by a gift from the Houghtons, and will be filled by its first incumbent, Helen Molesworth, when she begins her new role at the Harvard University Art Museums this month.

“I am thrilled to be able to announce and celebrate the Houghton Curatorship, as well as Helen Molesworth’s arrival as the first Houghton Curator,” said Lentz. “Having the support of such respected leaders as Jamie and Maisie Houghton is of enormous help to the Art Museums. This is an especially critical time for us, as we plan for our new art center in Allston, where Harvard’s collection of contemporary art will have even greater visibility. I am deeply grateful to Jamie, Maisie, and the Houghton family for once more demonstrating their commitment to Harvard and their support for the arts.”

James R. Houghton is the senior fellow of the Harvard Corporation and recently retired as chairman and CEO of Corning Inc., the world’s leading producer of optical fiber and a global manufacturer of laboratory glassware, electronics, and light bulbs. He is a 1958 graduate of Harvard College and a 1962 graduate of Harvard Business School. Houghton is the seventh member of his family to lead Corning Inc., which was founded by his great-great-grandfather in 1851. In addition to his many roles at Harvard, he also serves as a trustee of the Corning Incorporated Foundation, the Pierpont Morgan Library, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he chairs the board. Maisie Kinnicut Houghton is a 1962 graduate of Radcliffe College. She and Jamie have two children: James D. Houghton ‘86 and Nina B. Houghton. The Houghtons are collectors of contemporary art, with a focus on glass.

Jamie Houghton's family has a long history of philanthropy to Harvard, including the Houghton Library, the Houghton Professorship of Chemistry and Biochemistry, and the Houghton Professorship of Theology and Contemporary Change. In 1997, the Houghtons established the Houghton Endowment for Women and Leadership in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

“Maisie and I are delighted to be able to support the Art Museums at this time and in this way,” said Mr. Houghton. “We have been very impressed with the quality of Tom Lentz's leadership. We applaud his vision to create a new art center in Allston focusing on contemporary art, as well as his plan to renovate and transform the Art Museums' facilities at 32 Quincy Street. We are particularly looking forward to Helen Molesworth's arrival as the new Houghton Curator.”

In February 2006, the Harvard University Art Museums announced a comprehensive master plan to transform its facilities for teaching, research, and presentation of its renowned collections. Part of this multifaceted plan includes an increased commitment to contemporary art. Central to that is the Houghton Curatorship and a new art center in Allston with public galleries, primarily for the exhibition of the Art Museum's growing collection of modern and contemporary works.

Molesworth becomes the first full curator of contemporary art since the Art Museums established a department of modern and contemporary art in 1997. A distinguished scholar, Molesworth comes to the Art Museums from the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, where she has been serving as chief curator of exhibitions since 2003, with oversight of the center's exhibitions, programs, and publications. In her new position at the Art Museums, Molesworth joins the current curator of modern art, Harry Cooper, in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art.

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