

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

The Harvard Art Museums Appoint Four to Curatorial Divisions

Cambridge, MA
September 18, 2015

The Harvard Art Museums announced today the appointment of two new curators to the Division of European and American Art and the Division of Asian and Mediterranean Art, as well as the internal promotion of two curators in the Division of European and American Art.

Ethan Lasser has been named Head of the Division of European and American Art and was promoted to Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., Curator of American Art—the first person to hold this endowed position at the museums. Lasser had served as acting head of the division since December 2014.

A. Cassandra Albinson has been appointed the new Margaret S. Winthrop Curator of European Art, and Elizabeth M. Rudy, who has been at the museums since 2011, was named the new Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Associate Curator of Prints.

In the Division of Asian and Mediterranean Art, Rachel Saunders has been named the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Associate Curator of Asian Art; she is the first to hold this endowed position at the museums.

Comprised of the Fogg Museum, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, the Harvard Art Museums reopened to the public last November after a six-year renovation and expansion project. These curatorial appointments, with deep expertise in key areas of the museums' world-class collections, will help fulfill the promise of the new facility.

“Last year, we unveiled a new model for a 21st-century university art museum—one that broke down barriers between traditional curatorial areas of expertise to create new opportunities for research, teaching and learning with the collections,” said Deborah Martin Kao, the Landon and Lavinia Clay Chief Curator and Interim Co-Director of the Harvard Art Museums. “These new curatorial appointments go to four extraordinary scholars who share our belief in the intrinsic power of original works of art, and who are committed to unlocking the full potential of Harvard’s great collections for all audiences. As representatives of a new generation of curators, they will bring energy, fresh ideas, and an intellectual dynamism that will help us grow into our future.”

The appointments, which begin this fall, were initiated and completed before Thomas W. Lentz, the former Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums, stepped down in July.

Lasser joined the Harvard Art Museums in 2012 as the Margaret S. Winthrop Associate Curator of American Art and played a key role in the Division of European and American Art as the museums prepared for reopening. Lasser developed a compelling cross-media and transnational approach to the European and American galleries, posing exciting and imaginative new questions that have propelled the field forward and contributed to the further refinement of the broader Collection Galleries program for European and American art. He also led the development of the Silver Cabinet and the galleries devoted to the Atlantic World and the interplay between painting and photography in the 19th century.

In 2017, the museums will open Lasser’s special exhibition, *From the Philosophy Chamber: Harvard’s Lost Collection, 1766–1831*, developed in collaboration with Harvard faculty partner Jennifer Roberts. For the first time since the early 19th century, an astounding collection of portraits, prints, scientific instruments, and various “curios” obtained abroad by Harvard graduates will be reunited for display and study. The reassembled Philosophy Chamber will examine the role that images and objects can play in building, organizing, and transmitting new knowledge.

Albinson brings more than a decade of curatorial experience and a commitment to teaching with original works of art. She comes from the Yale Center for British Art, where she was curator of paintings and sculpture and acting head of the department. Albinson also served as a lecturer at Yale, teaching courses on portraiture and on British and French art from the Rococo period through 1850. She has curated multiple exhibitions including *The Critique of Reason: Romantic Art, 1760–1860* and *Thomas Lawrence: Regency Power and Brilliance*. The catalogue for the latter was awarded the Historians of British Art Book Prize for a multi-authored volume in 2011. Albinson was drawn to the Harvard Art Museums’ rich collections—notably, portraiture, works by Géricault, and Pre-Raphaelite art—and the

museums' new collaborative curatorial model, with experts across specializations working together to advance teaching, learning, and research. She is currently working on a project on the importance of the color pink in the 18th century in Britain and France, and is writing a book on portraits of aristocratic women in Victorian Britain.

As the former Cunningham Assistant Curator of European Art at the Harvard Art Museums, Rudy has in-depth knowledge of both Harvard and the Harvard Art Museums. She received her Ph.D. in art history at Harvard, with a dissertation titled "Pierre-Paul Prud'hon and the Problem of Allegory." Rudy played a vital role in the reinstallation of the European and American galleries, and served as lead curator for the romanticism, impressionist, and Wertheim Collection galleries. She is currently working with Professor Ewa Lajer-Burcharth on a forthcoming show of French drawings, which involves multiple graduate and undergraduate collaborators. In addition to her experience at Harvard, Rudy also served as a curatorial fellow in the Department of Drawings and Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and has maintained an impressive record of lectures and publications.

Saunders has just completed her Harvard dissertation on a fourteenth-century Japanese handscroll illustrating the journey to India of the Chinese monk Xuanzang. She joins the Harvard Art Museums from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., where she was the Ittleson Fellow. From 2004 to 2011, Saunders was a research associate in Japanese art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. There, she curated the exhibition *Pursuits of Power: Falconry and the Samurai* and led efforts to catalogue numerous rare, woodblock-printed books. Saunders specializes in Japanese art and maintains great interest in the larger framework of the entire East Asian cultural region. She will help unlock the museums' powerful Asian art collections, buttressed by the extensive promised gift of Japanese works of art from the collection of Robert and Betsy Feinberg, through exhibitions and programs that will benefit Harvard students, faculty, and the wider public.

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, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; 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' recent renovation and expansion builds on the legacies of the three museums and unites their remarkable collections under one roof for the first time. Renzo Piano Building Workshop's responsive design preserved the Fogg Museum's landmark 1927 facility, while transforming the space to accommodate 21st-century needs. Following a six-year building project, the museums now feature 40 percent more gallery space, an expanded Art Study Center, conservation labs, and classrooms, and a striking new glass roof that bridges the facility's historic and contemporary architecture. The new Harvard Art Museums' building is more functional, accessible, spacious, and above all, more transparent. The three constituent museums retain their distinct identities in this new facility, yet their close proximity provides exciting opportunities to experience works of art in a broader context. harvardartmuseums.org

Hours and Admission

Daily, 10am–5pm. Closed major holidays. Admission: \$15 adults, \$13 seniors (65+), \$10 non-Harvard students (18+). Free for members; youth under 18; Cambridge residents; and Harvard students, faculty, and staff (plus one guest). On Saturdays, from 10am–noon, Massachusetts residents receive free admission. Visit our website for information about other discounts and policies.

harvardartmuseums.org/plan-your-visit

Exhibitions, Events, and News

Our Special Exhibitions Gallery presents important new research on artists and artistic practice, and our University Galleries are programmed in consultation with Harvard faculty to support coursework.

harvardartmuseums.org/visit/exhibitions

Lectures, workshops, films, performances, special events, and other programs are held throughout the year at the museums. harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar

Check out *Index*, our multimedia magazine, to keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums. magazine.harvardartmuseums.org

Members and Fellows

With access to exclusive perks and programs, Harvard Art Museums members enjoy special moments to celebrate and explore the museums' world-class collections and special exhibitions.

harvardartmuseums.org/support/members

The Fellows are a dynamic group of art enthusiasts and supporters who enjoy the most exclusive opportunities that the museums have to offer. harvardartmuseums.org/support/fellows

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For more information, please contact:

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