

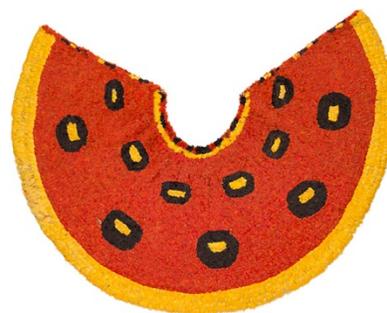
Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

Harvard Art Museums Receive \$250,000 Grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art

Grant supports upcoming special exhibition “The Philosophy Chamber: Art and Science in Harvard’s Teaching Cabinet, 1766–1820” in Cambridge, MA, and in Glasgow, Scotland



Left to right: Prepared by Charles Willson Peale, *Long-Eared Owl* (*Asio otus*), 1786–1827. Photo: Jeremiah Trimble; Courtesy of the Ornithology Department, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University. John Singleton Copley, *Nicholas Boylston*, 1773. Photo: Michael Gould; Harvard Art Museums. *Ahu’ula (Feathered Cape)*, Native Hawaiian, 18th century. Photo: Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University, PM#11-65-70/84100 (digital file 99170065). All images © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Cambridge, MA
March 3, 2017

The Harvard Art Museums have been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art to support the upcoming special exhibition *The Philosophy Chamber: Art and Science in Harvard’s Teaching Cabinet, 1766–1820*. The exhibition, featuring more than one hundred works, will present exciting new scholarship on Harvard’s 18th-century Philosophy Chamber, one of the most unusual and distinctive centers for early American art, history, and science. The grant will in part also enable the exhibition to travel to The Hunterian, at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Following its

May 19 through December 31, 2017 run at the Harvard Art Museums, the exhibition will be on display March 23 to June 24, 2018 at The Hunterian.

A grand room adjacent to the Harvard College Library, the Philosophy Chamber was home to more than one thousand artifacts, natural specimens, scientific instruments, and works of art donated to the college and dispatched to Cambridge from points across the globe. Named for the discipline of natural philosophy—a cornerstone of the Enlightenment-era curriculum that wove together astronomy, mathematics, physics, and other sciences that sought to explain natural objects and physical phenomena—the Philosophy Chamber served as a lecture hall, experimental lab, picture gallery, and convening space from 1766 through 1820. Frequented by an array of artists, scientists, travelers, and advocates of American independence, the room and its collections stood at the center of artistic and intellectual life at Harvard and in the New England region for more than fifty years.

“Just as the original Philosophy Chamber was indebted to a wide-reaching network of benefactors, the Harvard Art Museums’ present-day initiatives are made possible through the generosity of many partners and friends; we are deeply grateful to the Terra Foundation for American Art for its major support of this exhibition,” said Martha Tedeschi, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums. “Rooted in deep research and fresh curatorial insight, the exhibition invites audiences—both American and international—to explore a cultural landmark of the 18th-century Atlantic World.”

The Philosophy Chamber: Art and Science in Harvard’s Teaching Cabinet, 1766–1820 reunites approximately 120 works, many of which were scattered among various regional institutions and other Harvard museums. Showcasing a range of images and objects that have largely been hidden away for the past two hundred years, the exhibition includes many long-forgotten icons of 18th-century culture. Such treasures include Stephen Sewall’s extraordinary mural-sized painting of the inscription on the famous “writing rock” in southeastern Massachusetts, as well as Joseph Pope’s grand orrery, an elaborately ornamented model showing the workings of the solar system. Other notable works include full-length portraits by John Singleton Copley, exceptional examples of Hawaiian feather work and Northwest Coast Indian carving, and paintings by Gilbert Stuart and John Trumbull.

“With this exhibition, we revive and give prominence to a long-lost chapter in the history not only of Harvard, but of the New England region in general. Equally important, though, is the show’s lively exploration of how the arts contributed to teaching and learning more than two hundred years ago—and how this knowledge can be brought to bear on contemporary issues, such as access and the role of the

government and the arts,” said Ethan Lasser, curator of the exhibition and the Theodore E. Stebbins Jr. Curator of American Art and head of the Division of European and American Art at the Harvard Art Museums.

The Philosophy Chamber exhibition was born out of a Fall 2014 graduate seminar in Harvard’s Department of History of Art and Architecture, and has been informed by the original research and scholarship of Harvard curators, professors, doctoral students, conservators, and conservation scientists. The exhibition’s accompanying catalogue will advance scholarly understanding of early American art history, and will serve as a rich resource for any reader interested in the art and culture of the Atlantic World.

“The Terra Foundation is proud to support the Harvard Art Museums and this immersive and revelatory exhibition,” said Terra Foundation for American Art President & CEO Elizabeth Glassman. “By examining a wide spectrum of ideas associated with the university’s renowned Philosophy Chamber, the exhibition aligns with the foundation’s mission to foster the worldwide exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States. We congratulate the museums on this project, which will inspire rich and meaningful cross-cultural conversations through historical American art and make it accessible to international audiences.”

In addition to the Terra Foundation for American Art, the exhibition is supported in part by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation as well as by the following endowed funds: the Bolton Fund for American Art, Gift of the Payne Fund; the Henry Luce Foundation Fund for the American Art Department; the William Amory Fund; and the Andrew W. Mellon Publication Funds, including the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund.

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 have a rich tradition of considering the history of objects as an integral part of the teaching and study of art history, focusing on conservation and preservation concerns as well as technical studies.

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

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. Visit the [Exhibitions](#) page for information on current and upcoming installations. Visit the museums' [Calendar](#) to learn more about lectures, workshops, films, performances, special events, and other programs that are held throughout the year. Check out [Index](#), our multimedia magazine, to keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums.

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

For more information, please contact:

Lauren Marshall
Associate Director of Communications
Harvard Art Museums
617-495-4750
lauren_marshall@harvard.edu

Jennifer Aubin
Public Relations Manager
Harvard Art Museums
617-496-5331
jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu