Martha Tedeschi, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums, announced today the appointment of Horace D. Ballard as the new Theodore E. Stebbins Jr. Associate Curator of American Art at the Harvard Art Museums, effective September 1, 2021.

Ballard is currently curator of American art at the Williams College Museum of Art, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, where he was previously assistant curator from 2017 to 2019. He is also affiliate faculty of the joint graduate program in the history of art at Williams College and the nearby Clark Art Institute. Ballard is known to the Williamstown community as an innovative curator and dedicated mentor. He specializes in the art and visual cultures of the United States as well as 17th- and 18th-century art of the British, Portuguese, and Spanish colonies in the Americas. His research interests include 18th- and 19th-century portraiture of the Atlantic World, the history of photography, artists Thomas Eakins and Benjamin West, and the material and visual cultures of religion.

Ballard received a B.A. in English literature and American studies from the University of Virginia in 2006, an M.A.R. in religion and visual culture from the Institute of Sacred Music and Yale Divinity School in 2010, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in American studies and American visual culture at Brown University in 2012 and 2017, respectively.

He has previously held positions in curatorial, engagement, and interpretation departments at Monticello/Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Birmingham Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Yale University Art Gallery, and the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia; he has held teaching positions at Brown, Rhode Island School of Design, and Yale.

In his role at the Harvard Art Museums, Ballard will join the Division of European and American Art and oversee the museums’ collection of pre-20th-century American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts. He will work with colleagues across the museums and campus to reimagine the presentation of the art of the Americas and to acquire new objects that will diversify and expand the field. Within Harvard’s rich ecosystem of museums and arts entities, as well as programs in American and African American studies, Ballard will also identify potential collaborative opportunities around campus, including with curatorial colleagues at Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

“Horace’s scholarship and curatorial vision, combined with his experience in engagement and teaching at academic museums, make him an ideal addition to our team at a critical moment,” said director Martha Tedeschi. “My colleagues and I are excited to welcome him and look forward to working together closely on the ongoing rethinking and reframing of our galleries and collections, with the goal of presenting new perspectives on the definition of American art for the 21st century.”

“I believe in the capacious potential of academic museums to refine the ethics of our attention,” said Ballard. “The Harvard Art Museums have long been a laboratory for innovative, multidisciplinary approaches to the material and visual cultures of human civilization. I spent time in the collections as a graduate student, and I experienced firsthand the power of art to incite empathy, wonder, and sociopolitical change. The field of American art is in a period of reckoning and reflection; I am thrilled to be joining the Harvard Art Museums at such an exciting moment.”

The Harvard Art Museums’ Division of European and American Art is responsible for over 70,000 drawings, paintings, photographs, prints, sculptures, and objects of decorative art dating from the 12th century to 1900 and held by the Fogg and Busch-Reisinger Museums. The collection of American art is best known for colonial- and federal-period painting, late 19th-century painting and sculpture, and drawings and watercolors of all periods. It includes works by John Singleton Copley, Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Other areas of significance include late 17th- and 18th-century silver. Areas of recent growth in pre-20th century American art include paintings by William Michael Harnett and by members of the Peale family; a rare portrait by Julien Hudson, a 19th-century painter of African descent working in New Orleans; and an early stoneware jar by the potter David Drake.
About the Harvard Art Museums
The Harvard Art Museums house one of the largest and most renowned art collections in the United States, comprising 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 art, Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern art, 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. harvardartmuseums.org

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

For more information, please contact
Jennifer Aubin
Public Relations Manager
Harvard Art Museums
617-496-5331
jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu