

**Winslow Homer, Shih Chieh Huang, John O'Reilly, & William Bullard Featured
In New Exhibitions at the Worcester Art Museum in 2017**

**Four Exhibitions Present Different Artists Capturing American History and Culture
Across Two Centuries, While Also Reflecting Worcester's Vibrant History and Present**

Worcester, MA—February 23, 2017—Throughout 2017, the Worcester Art Museum will present four major exhibitions that range from 19th-century painting, to photography at the turn of the twentieth century, to contemporary artists tackling both personal and wider social themes. In May, the Museum will present an exhibition of new work by Worcester-based artist **John O'Reilly**, whose photomontages mix contemporary and historical images to frame new insights into human interactions and the human form. In June, the New York based-artist **Shih Chieh Huang** will install his new, most ambitious immersive environment to date, a large-scale assemblage in Huang's improvisational and whimsical signature style—drawing on the industrial materials of today, such as mass-produced computer cooling fans, LED lights, and plastics.

In October, the Museum will show an exhibition drawn from an archive of over 5,400 glass negatives left behind by **William Bullard**, a recently-rediscovered photographer active in Worcester between 1897 and 1917. The installation focuses on Bullard's stunning portraits of Worcester's community of color, made up of people of African American and Native American descent. The images provide an invaluable window into both American and Worcester history during this period. And in November, the Museum will present an exhibition that evocatively demonstrates a turning point in the life and work of American painter **Winslow Homer**, during his two year sojourn on the northeastern coast of England. This period marked a change from his pictures of American rural life and scenes of middle-class leisure to a new style that emphasized the power of nature.

"Worcester has always been an unexpectedly international city, a place historically—and currently—welcoming different peoples and cultures, and the Museum's reflects this diversity in its collections and programs," said Jon L. Seydl, director of curatorial affairs and curator of European Art at WAM. "The exhibitions of Winslow Homer and William Bullard present a complex story about America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, while the O'Reilly and Huang shows address a breadth of approaches to contemporary art that have become a hallmark of our Museum, as we present regional voices of national importance and also bring in emerging international artists whose works connect to other aspects of the Museum's collection and the city's long tradition of technological innovation and invention."

John O'Reilly: A Studio Odyssey

May 13 - August 13, 2017

A Studio Odyssey covers the artistic range of John O'Reilly's 50-year career, examining the evolution of his creative process and giving the Worcester-based artist his first solo exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum. O'Reilly is best known for self-portrait photomontages that use Polaroid photographs and mix images of himself with fragments of photos of works by other

artists. Confronting both personal and world history, the artist draws on his vast knowledge of art, literature, and music history—including the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, French writer Jean Genet, Henry James, and Thomas Eakins—to explore these themes and bring together the human form in incongruous ways. His work also delves into issues of homosexuality, both as an aspect of his own identity and as an often-repressed, complicated narrative within society. More recently, O'Reilly has incorporated found coloring books into his art, reconnecting with his World War II childhood and exploring his own feelings about mortality. Moving from photomontage to collage, these new works explore a range of different influences, while continuing to use a more metaphoric self-portrait to engage with his biography.

Curated by Nancy Kathryn Burns, the Museum's Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, the exhibition features 75 of O'Reilly's works—including over 20 created since 2000. The exhibition highlights the role the artist's studio has played in his creative process, placing special emphasis on the rich art historical and literary allusions in his work.

Early support for *John O'Reilly: A Studio Odyssey* has been provided by Stephen J. Javaras and Robert A. Collins. Media partner is Worcester Magazine.

Reusable Universes: Shih Chieh Huang

June 24 - November 11, 2017

This exhibition features a new installation by the Taiwan-born, New York-based artist Shih Chieh Huang. Huang's work combines his longstanding fascination with technology and the materials of modern life to transform mundane manufactured objects into novel and remarkably complex sculptural forms. For his exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum, developed by Assistant Curator of Asian Art Vivian Li, Huang will create his most ambitious immersive environment to date—a kinetic and light installation consisting of over one hundred various-sized sculptural elements. Exploiting the gallery's 18-foot ceilings, Huang's installation will be more vertical than his previous works, making use of the height to hang different elements and create a large-scale sensory experience. The work's unique sonic experience produced only from the air-driven movement continuously inflating and deflating the sculptures reflects Huang's decades-long study of the creative and organic possibilities of manufactured materials.

In addition to his new work, Huang will create on site an iteration of his *Organic Concept*, an infinitely scalable sculpture made from rolls of painter's plastic and box fans. The creation will be a public performance at the Museum on July 20, 2017. Afterwards, *Organic Concept* will be temporarily installed in the Museum's Renaissance Court.

Like the artists of the 1920s and 1930s who were documenting the new industrial landscape of America, Shih Chieh Huang's work bears witness to the decline of heavy industry in the U.S. and the acceleration of the technology industry into people's everyday lives globally in the late 20th century. An artist trained in both the traditional visual arts and the emerging field of digital art, Huang's work provokes the viewer to consider society's rapidly changing relationship with technology: by constructing grand works of "low-tech" art made from high-tech parts that are

intentionally built to look unfinished, Huang endeavors to recapture the curiosity and wonder in early technology that will inspire visitors to likewise experiment and build anew.

Early support for *Reusable Universes: Shih Chieh Huang* has been provided by the Taipei Cultural Center in New York. Media partner is Artscope Magazine.

Rediscovering an American Community of Color: The Photographs of William Bullard

October 14, 2017 - February 25, 2018

At the time of his death in 1918, photographer William Bullard (born 1876) left behind a trove of nearly 5400 glass plate negatives, over 230 of which are portraits of Worcester's people of color. Taken primarily in Worcester's Beaver Brook neighborhood, where Bullard himself lived, these images offer a unique look at a community made up of recent Southern migrants, people of Native American descent, Black Yankee families, and a handful of immigrants from the Caribbean. For the first time, over 80 of these portraits will be on display. Serendipitously, Bullard left a logbook behind, identifying over 80 percent of his sitters, making this collection especially rare. As a result, the exhibition is able to tell the personal stories of Bullard's sitters.

Coinciding with the "New Negro" movement, which sought to reframe how African-Americans of the period constructed a new progressive and cultured public identity, Bullard's images depict confident and well-dressed citizens in many of the same poses—and with many of the same fashionable accessories, such as bicycles—as portraits of white Americans of the same period. Co-curated by Nancy Kathryn Burns, the Museum's Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, and Janette Thomas Greenwood, Professor of History at Clark University, the exhibition provides a unique window into an American community of color between the end of Reconstruction and the start of the Great Migration, a period often overlooked.

Working with Frank Morrill, owner of the Bullard collection of negatives, Greenwood also created *The Worcester People of Color Photo Project*, an online resource to identify and track down descendants of Bullard's sitters. A community advisory board, made up of local descendants and community leaders, also linked Morrill and Greenwood with family members. Clark University students, who have helped conduct research, will create a website to accompany the exhibition. The exhibition will also include a scholarly catalogue edited by Burns and Greenwood.

Organized in partnership with Clark University, *Rediscovering an American Community of Color* is supported in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities.

Coming Away: Winslow Homer and England

November 11, 2017 - February 4, 2018

By the 1870s, Winslow Homer had established himself as a popular figure in American painting, from his sketches of army life during the Civil War to his portraits of bourgeois leisure. During an 1881–82 stay in the small fishing village of Cullercoats on the northeast coast of England,

however, Homer's subjects and style changed. Where his earlier paintings often used nature as a backdrop for the presentation of his subjects, his paintings from this time emphasized instead the dynamic struggle between humanity and the natural world. Homer's brushwork during this time also became more vigorous, in keeping with the power of the North Sea and the ruggedness of the people who lived and worked along its coast.

Jointly organized by Elizabeth Athens, Assistant Curator of American Art at the Worcester Art Museum, and Brandon Ruud, Abert Family Curator of American Art at the Milwaukee Art Museum, the exhibition demonstrates the impact of Homer's years in England on the rest of his career. It features the two major oils to come from his English period—the Worcester Art Museum's *The Gale* (1883–93) and the Milwaukee Art Museum's *Hark! The Lark* (1882)—along with more than 60 additional paintings, watercolors, drawings, and photographs. Among these are five extraordinary Homer watercolors from the Worcester Art Museum's collection, as well as comparative works by English artists Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Frank Holl, and J.M.W. Turner. Following its run in Worcester, the show will be on view at the Milwaukee Art Museum from March 2–May 10, 2018.

Early support for *Coming Away: Winslow Homer and England* has been provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art and by the Wyeth Foundation for American Art.

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum's encyclopedic 37,500 piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to collect photography. As the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience.

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Friday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$14 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$12 for seniors 65+, and \$12 for college students with ID. Members and children under four are free. Parking is free. For more information, visit worchesterart.org.

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