

Worcester Art Museum's "Medieval Holidays: A month-long celebration of the season" offers festive holiday enjoyment for all ages

Programs and events center on the reopening of the newly redesigned Medieval Galleries

October 28, 2016 (Worcester, MA) The Worcester Art Museum announces new holiday season festivities and programming, centered on its renowned collection of medieval art and arms and armor. "Medieval Holidays: A month-long celebration of the season," features a full schedule of musical performances, family programs, and art making from November 27 through December 31.

The Museum's new celebration of medieval art has, as its centerpiece, the much-anticipated reopening of the newly redesigned Medieval Galleries on December 17. Closed for nearly two years, the galleries will present works of art from the Museum's medieval collections beside pieces from the John Woodman Higgins Collection of arms and armor, considered to be among the best in the country.

Many of December's events will be held in the Museum's grand Renaissance Court, adorned for the season with new medieval-styled decorations. Among the notable programs is the Medieval Family Weekend, packed with activities, tours, performances and interactive arts projects. A child-sized castle, decorated for the holidays, welcomes adventurous children keen to explore and provides a photo backdrop fit for a king or queen. WAM's popular annual Gingerbread Castle Competition invites professional, business partner, amateur, and youth submissions. Holiday concerts include perennial WAM favorites, the Salisbury Singers and Merrimack Valley Ringers, as well as new additions, including Saint Joseph's Abbey Choir and the Worcester Hills Recorder Society.

"The castle, the decorations and many of the performances are new this year," says Megan Blomgren Burgess, public events coordinator at the Museum. "For example, we're using greenery that you would find in medieval gardens — ivy, wheat, holly, boxwood and berries — in very ornamental ways. Our staff came together to think about programming that is unique to WAM and collection focused."

WAM also offers 25 studio arts workshops for adults, teens and youth in December. Participants in most of these one-day workshops will bring home works ranging from specially designed holiday pop-up cards to portrait painting — all of which will make one-of-a-kind gifts.

The Museum Shop will have expanded hours in December, with a special Third Thursday night of free gift-wrapping, music and a cash bar. The Museum Café will serve luncheon Wednesdays through Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"Medieval Holidays: A month-long celebration of the season" is sponsored by Interstate Specialty Products, Inc. Media partner is 961 SRS.

FULL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

All events are free with Museum admission, unless noted otherwise.

Saturday, December 3, 10:30 to 11 a.m.

Saturday Family Tour

A brief, intergenerational Museum tour with a winter theme. Free.*

Saturday, December 3, 11–11:30 a.m.

Saturday Family Make Art!

Hands-on artmaking activity, suitable for the whole family. Materials provided. Free.*

*Admission to the Museum is free from 10am to 12noon on the first Saturday of each month.

Sunday, December 11 to Sunday December 18

Gingerbread Castle Competition

Voting for the People's Choice award in WAM's annual best gingerbread castle contest takes place in Stephen Salisbury Hall from December 11 to December 18. Judges decide best in show at the professional, Business Partner, amateur, and youth levels. The community is invited to a festive Awards Ceremony on Sunday, December 18 at 3 p.m. The contest entry form can be found online at: <http://bit.ly/2eemJok>

Sunday, December 11, 2 p.m.

Concert: Salisbury Singers

This chorus of talented singers under the dynamic leadership of Music Director Michelle Graveline presents their special holiday concert in Renaissance Court, which is always a popular event at the Museum.

Thursday, December 15, 5:30 to 8 p.m.

Champagne & Shopping in the Museum Shop

Free gift wrapping

The public is invited to enjoy shopping, live music, cash bar, and complimentary gift wrapping at this special holiday evening event in the Renaissance Court. Museum Members receive a complimentary glass of champagne while shopping. No admission charged for those just visiting the Museum Shop. Free gift wrapping complements of the WAM Members Council. Valet parking is available. Members receive a 20 percent discount from November 30 through December 24. The Museum Shop is open seven days a week from December 1–24. On Mondays and Tuesdays access to the Shop is via the front doors on Salisbury Street.

Saturday, December 17, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday, December 18, 11 a.m.– 5 p.m.

Medieval Family Weekend of

WAM celebrates the re-opening of its newly renovated Medieval Galleries with special gallery tours, beautiful new medieval-styled decorations, back-to-back events and family activities throughout the Museum. The two-day celebration is packed with programs for family and friends including art carts, arms and armor shows, combat demonstrations, musical performances, medieval dance, art making, shopping and more.

Saturday, December 17, 2 p.m.

Concert: Merrimack Valley Ringers

The Merrimack Valley Ringers, a popular and unique hand bell ensemble, annually delights WAM audiences with their infectious joy. The performance will be in the grandly festooned Renaissance Court.

Sunday, December 18, 2 p.m.

Concert: Saint Joseph's Abbey Choir

The renowned Saint Joseph's Abbey Choir performs an inspiring selection of early medieval organum and motets in the Museum's Renaissance Court.

Sunday, December 18, 2:30 p.m.

Concert: Worcester Hills Recorder Society

The Worcester Hills Recorder Society, founded in 1993, makes its debut in the Museum's Renaissance Court with its program, *Flora Musica*.

Gingerbread Castle Awards Ceremony, 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 18

Winners of the third annual Gingerbread Castle Competition will be announced in the Museum's Renaissance Court. Winners will receive prizes for: People's Choice, Best Youth (12 & under), Best Business Partner, Best Professional, Runner-up Professional, Best Amateur and Runner-up Amateur.

First Night Worcester

Saturday, December 31, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WAM participates in First Night Worcester with free admission for anyone with a First Night Worcester button. All visitors are invited to make a noisemaker for their New Year's celebration. To purchase a First Night Worcester button, visit firstnightworcester.org.

December Studio Art Workshops

The Museum offers more than 25 workshops for youth, teens and adults in December. Family friendly workshops include Festive Cards and Make Your Own Noise Maker. Adult workshops include Photography, Open Studio Printmaking and WAM's popular Pet Portrait workshop. Participants make works that can be used as memorable gifts. Complete descriptions and registration information is at worcesterart.org/classes.

MUSEUM TOURS

Tours begin in the Lancaster Street Welcome Center, unless otherwise noted.

December Tour of the Month: Celebrations

Saturday, December 3 and December 17, 2 p.m.

During this time of holidays and celebrations, WAM explores different kinds of celebrations, from holidays to courting to celebratory gatherings.

Zip Tours

Saturdays at noon.

These 20-minute, docent-led talks offer a short but in-depth view of a single work or artist.

December 3: Northcote: Chess Players

December 10: Bierstadt

December 17: Sampling of Medieval Gallery

December 24: Andrea del Sarto: St. John the Baptist

December 31: Giovanni Moroni: Portrait of a Man

Public Tours

Sundays at 1 p.m.

Every Sunday from December 4 through December 18, public tours offer an overview of the permanent collection. These one-hour docent-guided tours leave from the Salisbury Street Welcome Center.

Self-Guided Tours and Family Guides

Self-guided thematic tours and family guides are available at the Guest Service Desks at the Lancaster and Salisbury Street Entrances.

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 St. in Worcester, Massachusetts, 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. Admission is free from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on the first Saturday of each month from, thanks to support from the TJX Foundation, Inc. Parking is free. For more information, visit worcesterart.org.

Contact

Worcester Art Museum

Julieane Frost

508-793-4373

JulieaneFrost@worcesterart.org