

**2014 – 2015 Programming Series Provides New Lens for Examining Masterpieces
Drawn from Collection and Major Loans from Institutions Worldwide**

Spanning movements and genres, the Master Series spotlights important works by William Hogarth, Norman Rockwell, Raphael, Anthony van Dyck, Rembrandt, and Yoshitoshi

Worcester, MA – October 29, 2014 – In fall 2014, the Worcester Art Museum (WAM) launches a series encouraging audiences to form new perspectives on some of the world’s most celebrated artists with monthly scholarly talks that delve deeper into examining singular works from WAM’s extensive encyclopedic holdings and significant loans from international institutions. On view in different galleries throughout the Museum, the select installations cover a range of time periods and mediums, from Raphael’s seminal work *The Small Cowper Madonna* (about 1505) on loan from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., to such collection highlights as Tsukioka Yoshitoshi’s *Fujiwara no Yasumasa Playing the Flute by Moonlight* (1882). Each artwork introduced to WAM’s galleries in 2014 and 2015 will be coupled with a dedicated talk by art historians, conservators, and art critics, among other scholars on the third Thursday of each month, who will utilize the canvas as a portal for developing a more nuanced understanding of some of the most pivotal figures in art history.

The singular works highlighted throughout *The Master Series* will each be presented in a different context, with some integrated into existing installations such as *[remastered]*—an innovative exploration of 16th-18th-century paintings primarily drawn from WAM’s collection—and others on display in *The Jeppson Idea Lab*, a devoted space where visitors can further their exploration of related topics. Among the artworks that will go on view in 2014 and 2015 include *Study for “The Nightwatchman”* (1962), by **Norman Rockwell**; *Portrait of a Nobleman* (1619), by **Anthony van Dyck**; and *The Three Musicians* (about 1624 – 25), by **Rembrandt van Rijn**. As visitors make their way through the galleries, special signage will help them discover these and other highlighted works in *The Master Series*.

“In developing this new programming series, our aim was to prompt visitors to move beyond basic name recognition and form a more holistic perspective on what makes these artists transcend the time in which they lived to become the masters we recognize in our contemporary day and age,” said Jon L. Seydl, WAM Director of Curatorial Affairs. “We look forward to introducing new avenues for our audiences to engage with these works, either in the setting of our permanent collection galleries or in dedicated displays that foster a different type of viewing experience.”

At each *Master Series* Third Thursdays program guests will enjoy an art talk by noted scholars such as Italian Renaissance art expert Linda Wolk-Simon, and Deborah Solomon, author of *American Mirror: The Life and Art of Norman Rockwell*, followed by an evening of music, drinks, and refreshments. Included below is the full schedule of events. For more information, please visit: <http://www.worcesterart.org/master-series/>

William Hogarth, Portraits of William James and Elizabeth James (1744)

Jeppson Idea Lab, Through February 8, 2015

On view in an intimate exhibition that explores their recent conservation, the Worcester Art Museum presents the first paintings by William Hogarth to enter an American museum collection. Part of WAM’s Jeppson Idea Lab initiative, the display highlights the techniques and findings from the year-long conservation process, made possible by a nearly \$35,000 grant from the TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund.

Painted by Hogarth in 1744, *William James* and *Elizabeth James* were prominently displayed at the Museum for almost 100 years following their acquisition in 1910. Removed from view for a 2008 gallery renovation, the pendant portraits were long considered to be in good condition before WAM's conservators embarked on this extensive project. The Jeppson Idea Lab, a series that presents single or small selections of objects from WAM's permanent collection to engage viewers in the Museum's conservation, curatorial, and other scholarly work, explores the conservation process and its findings in depth.

Norman Rockwell, *Study for "The Nightwatchman"* (1962)

Rose Gallery, November 4, 2014 – February 8, 2015

Master Series Third Thursday: November 20, 6 p.m.

Reflections on Rockwell: Deborah Solomon, author of *American Mirror: The Life and Art of Norman Rockwell* talks about one of America's most beloved artists.

An enormous Norman Rockwell drawing, recently acquired from the Higgins Armory Museum, and depicting a guard dozing in front beside the armor, will go on view beside letters by Rockwell about the commission and WAM's painting by the artist, giving insight into both Rockwell's technique and showcasing the artist's gift for narrative.

Raphael, *The Cowper Madonna* (1505)

Gallery 212, January 24 – September 27, 2015

Master Series Third Thursday: February 19, 6 p.m.

Raphael: Raphael scholar Linda Wolk-Simon sheds light on this Renaissance master.

The Cowper Madonna by Raphael, one of the most significant Renaissance paintings in America, will come to Worcester from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., for a special, focused installation. Painted when Raphael moved from Urbino to Florence, this work stands at the beginning of the highly influential Madonnas that secured his reputation. Raphael's work will be paired with Worcester's *Northbrook Madonna*, a piece that came into the collection in 1940 with an attribution to Raphael that has long been discarded, but without clear consensus on the work's relationship to Raphael and his studio. This two-painting installation, which will also address the underdrawing of the two pictures, will explore Raphael's masterful interpretation and the spread of his early style among followers in Central Italy.

Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of a Nobleman* (1619)

Jeppson Idea Lab, March 14 – October 11, 2015

Master Series Third Thursday: March 19, 6 p.m.

Portrait of a Nobleman: Matthew Cushman, project conservator at Yale University, and Jon L. Seydl, director of curatorial affairs and curator of European art, discuss what conservation has revealed about this painting by Anthony van Dyck.

Centering on a major conservation treatment by former Mellon Fellow Matthew Cushman, this Idea Lab presentation looks at a portrait of an unknown Antwerp nobleman, painted by Anthony Van Dyck very early in the artist's career, just after his departure from Rubens' studio. Scientific research and cleaning have revealed Van Dyck's process—including numerous changes to the costume to keep up with evolving fashions—and led to the discovery of the picture's date.

Rembrandt, *The Three Musicians and the Stone Operation* (about 1624 – 25)

[remastered] galleries, through August 2015

Master Series Third Thursday: April 16, 6 p.m.

Rembrandt and Fallibility: Jon L. Seydl, director of curatorial affairs and curator of European art, shares insights on two early works by the Dutch master.

On loan from one of the greatest private collections of Dutch Golden-Age paintings in the world, a very early work by Rembrandt, from a series of allegories depicting the five senses, is on view in the [remastered] galleries. While painted early in Rembrandt's career, the work still reveals many of his distinctive hallmarks. An ornate painting of Antony and Cleopatra by Jan Steen from the same collection is on view alongside the Rembrandt.

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, *Fujiwara no Yasumasa Playing the Flute by Moonlight* (*Fujiwara no Yasumasa gekka roteki zu*) (1882)

PDP Gallery, February 28 – May 24, 2015

Master Series Third Thursday: May 21, 6 p.m.

Yoshitoshi: Speaker TBD

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892) is remembered as one of the greatest designers of the Japanese woodblock print at a time when the medium was facing increasing competition from photography and lithography. The artist's tumultuous life and work mirrors one of the most transformative periods in Japanese history—the change from a feudal to a modern society emulating Western ways of government and social conduct.

This exhibition will feature a variety of Yoshitoshi's most engaging works—images of horror and cruelty, supernatural creatures, commanding acts of bravery by legendary figures from Japanese history, images of samurai, and portraits of women. But it also proposes new ways of understanding his life and artistic trajectory, which became increasingly retrospective in his final decade, reinforcing the notion of Yoshitoshi as an artist living between two eras.

The exhibition will draw special attention to his masterpiece, the scroll painting *Fujiwara no Yasumasa Playing the Flute by Moonlight* (1882), one of the great works of Japanese art in an American museum collection.

ABOUT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM:

Founded in 1898, the Worcester Art Museum serves Worcester and the broader region. The Museum houses an encyclopedic collection of paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings, and new media. WAM's collection has historically been strongest in European Renaissance paintings, but with recent acquisitions and donations, like Veronese's *Venus Disarming Cupid* and the integration of the collection from the Higgins Armory Museum, it continues to diversify and expand its curatorial and programmatic offerings. Symbolized by the opening of the Salisbury Street doors in 2012, the Museum continues toward its goal of accessibility for all visitors.

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