

Elizabeth Athens Appointed Assistant Curator of American Art

Worcester, MA - December 9, 2014—The Worcester Art Museum (WAM) today announced the appointment of Elizabeth Athens as its Assistant Curator of American Art, a position generously supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In her new position, Athens will play a key role in the management of the Museum’s renowned American Art collection, which spans from 1670 to the end of the 20th century, with particular strengths in Colonial and Federal painting and American Impressionism. She will also continue the development of other facets of the Museum’s American art program, including organizing special exhibitions, spearheading acquisitions, and overseeing the reinstallation of the American collections. Athens will begin her appointment on March 16, 2015.

“Elizabeth’s expertise will further infuse the Museum’s program with depth and richness, and enable us to continue to forge meaningful connections with our audiences by engaging them with the Museum’s outstanding holdings in American art,” said Jon L. Seydl, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of European Art at the Worcester Art Museum. “This area of the Museum is especially meaningful given Worcester’s location in central New England, and Elizabeth’s appointment follows in the footsteps of the original founders of the collection, who were among the first to purchase paintings from the annual exhibitions of then-contemporary American painting at the beginning of the 20th century.”

Athens is currently a doctoral candidate in the History of Art at Yale University, where she received her Masters in Philosophy in 2011. Her research, which focuses on the intersection of American art and natural history, has received support from such foundations and institutions as the Henry Luce Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Societies, and the Paul Mellon Centre. Her previous museum experience includes a predoctoral fellowship at the Yale Center for British Art, as well as research assistantships at the Williams College Museum of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she contributed to the exhibitions *American Stories: Paintings of Everyday Life, 1765–1915* (2009), and *Americans in Paris, 1860–1900* (2006). She has also taught courses at Yale University, Wheaton College, and the Rhode Island School of Design. Athens holds an MA from the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art and a BA from Lawrence University.

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, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings, and new media. The Museum’s American art collection encompasses Colonial and Federal portraiture; Colonial and Federal silver, including work designed by Paul Revere; mid-to-late 19th-century sculpture, Gilded Age painting, with a particular focus on American Impressionism; early 20th-century photography; and prints, including extensive holdings by Abstract Expressionist artists. 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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