

**Trio of Acquisitions Enhances 19th- and 20th-Century Paintings Collections
At Worcester Art Museum**

**Works by German Artist Otto Dix and Belgian Artist Philippe-Jacques Van Brée
Inspire New Installation Formats and Upcoming Events**

Worcester, MA—August 18, 2016—The Worcester Art Museum announced today the acquisition of *The Pregnant Woman* (1931), a major painting by the German artist Otto Dix, a superlative example of his intense, naturalistic style, as well as two magnificent paintings by the Belgian artist Philippe-Jacques Van Brée, *The Studio of the Flower Painter Van Daël at the Sorbonne* (1816) and a smaller replica done in the same year. Acquired with the help of dedicated funds, “these three works continue a tradition of bold acquisitions which have helped to build the Museum’s outstanding collection over time,” said Matthias Waschek, C. Jean and Myles McDonough Director of the Worcester Art Museum. “The ‘Otto Dix’ provocative nude breaks new ground in our holdings of the first half of the 20th century, while the two paintings by Philippe-Jacques Van Brée fit a more traditional beauty narrative but contain important historical details about the role of women in the arts.” All three go on view at the Museum on August 24.

Otto Dix

Dix is considered to be one of the most significant European artists of the 20th century.

Following World War I, like many of his peers, Dix abandoned abstraction and expressionism

for a representational style that engaged with the social and political currents of the era, a movement formally known as New Objectivity. *The Pregnant Woman* is exemplary in its unique execution, developed by Dix in response to his study of Old Master painting technique, and combines this new mode with an un-idealized presentation of a pregnant woman. At once familiar and alien, the painting captures the social and physical realities of pregnancy at this time—a subject that preoccupied the artist for much of his career—including the pressure for women to repopulate the country following the incredible loss of life during the war, the impoverished conditions in the Weimar Republic for raising children, and the discomfort of this woman’s pregnancy.



While the painting is very much of its moment and a tribute to Dix’s tremendous skill as a portraitist, the subject—and the complexity and strength of the visual experience—offers a thought-provoking platform for discussions about representations of the female body, motherhood, and beauty over

time. To foster these dialogues, WAM will create a focused installation of the work within one of its European galleries. Marcia Lagerwey, Curator of Education and co-curator of the

installation of the Dix, said “As a woman, I empathize with the subject’s vulnerability and discomfort in a late-stage pregnancy. But what makes this work particularly fascinating is the questions it elicits. We want to know who she is, why she is looking away, what she is thinking.” The painting will be accompanied by texts delving into its historical context and artistic significance and symbolism—as well as other personal and contemporary perspectives on the work. Comfortable seating will encourage active and longer looking, engagement with didactic materials, and conversations among visitors.

Phillippe-Jacques Van Brée

The two paintings depict the studio of Jan Frans Van Dael, one of the most significant floral painters in France in the years around 1800. The larger canvas is Van Brée’s masterpiece, and was shown at the Salon in Paris in 1817. The second iteration, more loosely painted, is a smaller replica, which Van Brée seems to have made for Van Dael as a gift, and which Van Dael kept in his possession until his death.

“Van Brée’s paintings are breathtaking in their detail and utterly compelling in the way that they capture the subculture of Van Daël’s remarkable studio, while offering remarkable insight into the work of painters in the early 1800s. As testaments to the accomplishment of female artists in the public arena, Van Brée’s works also declare the significance of flower painting as an intellectual pursuit, with

roots in science, antiquity, and contemporary art,” said Jon L. Seydl, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of European Art. “Van Brée is a lesser known artist, who deserves much greater attention. His ability to combine the swiftness of a moment with broader historical detail speaks to his skill as an artist and offers a rare glimpse into studio practice.”



The beautiful paintings, superb in their detail, are among the best examples of Van Brée’s work, and serve as remarkable documents of studio life in France at the time. The canvases capture an energetic scene of students at various levels of apprenticeship, creating new work and exchanging ideas. All of the artists are female, highlighting their active role as both amateur and professional painters. Marie-Caroline de Bourbon-Sicile, who had just married into the French royal family, is at the center, underscoring the importance of Van Daël’s studio to Parisian cultural life in the wake of Napoleon’s fall and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy

in 1815. Van Daël's likeness appears as a portrait on the wall, along with his many inspirations, including cases of specimens of bird, butterflies, and beetles as well as a view into the garden in which the flowers were grown. As a result, the painting transcends genres, incorporating elements of floral painting, contemporary history painting, portraiture, and scenes of daily life.

The paintings will be brought into dialogue with other works in the collection, including major works by female artists in the collection to further highlight the role of women artists in art circles in the 18th and 19th centuries. In January 2017, Van Brée's paintings will become the cornerstone of the Museum's annual *Flora in Winter* exhibition, in which floral designers from the region are invited to create and present floral arrangements inspired by works of art.

Photo credits:

Otto Dix, *The Pregnant Woman*, 1931, oil on canvas, Museum Purchase, 2016.11.
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Philippe Jacques van Bree, *Interior of the Studio of Van Dael and his students at the Sorbonne*, 1816, oil on canvas, Museum Purchase, 2016.13

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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