

Bowdoin College Museum of Art to Organize First North American Exhibition of the Wyvern Collection, One of the World's Leading Collections of Medieval Art through Long-term Loan

Commencing this May, the loan of more than 100 works of art to BCMA will foster scholarship of and access to the Wyvern Collection

Preview installation on view May 23–June 2, 2019; Major exhibition to open August 2020

Brunswick, Maine, May 14, 2019—Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) is pleased to receive the multiyear loan of more than 100 works of art from the Wyvern Collection, a premier private collection of medieval and Renaissance art, which it will preview in a short-term installation this month. Beginning in August 2020, BCMA will present the first dedicated exhibition of the collection in North America, providing new insights into this medieval visual culture and displaying many of these works publicly for the first time. With this loan, the quantity, quality, and diversity of medieval and Renaissance objects available for viewing and study at Bowdoin will be unsurpassed among small liberal arts colleges in the United States. The 2020 exhibition also builds upon the success and scholarly rigor of BCMA's 2017 international loan exhibition and catalogue *Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe*.

The Wyvern Collection has key strengths in ivory carving and enamels, small-scale sculptures, and jewelry from the early Middle Ages across Europe and the Mediterranean. The selection on loan to Bowdoin College Museum of Art will include over 80 examples of metalwork, stone and wood sculpture, and illuminated manuscripts from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance; more than 20 works from Africa, including sculpture in wood, stone, and precious metals from West and Central Africa and painting, wood sculpture, and metalwork from the Christian community of Ethiopia, dating from the medieval period into the 20th century; and three remarkable stone sculptures from ancient Egypt, with dates ranging from the 8th century BCE to the 1st century CE.

The placement of this collection on loan at the BCMA offers a significant opportunity for increased access to and visibility of these objects. The collection as a unit has only been previously exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2005; select individual works have been lent to a few major institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Museum visitors and students will have a chance to preview the collection through an intimate installation of approximately 25 works on view May 23–June 2, 2019. Bowdoin faculty and the Museum's curatorial staff will investigate the collection in a year-long research project led by Stephen Perkinson, Professor of Art History and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Kathryn Gerry, Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History. Following this period of focused study, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art will present a major exhibition of the material, August 2020–February 2021. The Wyvern collection will remain on loan at BCMA through 2022.

“With a collection dedicated for over two centuries to enhancing the education of Bowdoin students, the Museum's holdings now consist of nearly 25,000 objects, ranging in medium, time period, and geographic origin,” said Frank Goodyear, Bowdoin College Museum of Art Co-director. “The loan from the Wyvern Collection meaningfully strengthens the Museum's offerings in medieval and Renaissance art, while reinforcing BCMA's historic and continued commitment to object-centered teaching and learning.”

Added Bowdoin College Museum of Art Co-director Anne Collins Goodyear, “The Wyvern Collection not only provides outstanding examples of art from the Medieval and early Renaissance era—in addition to select masterworks from antiquity and later periods—but also puts those works into a global context. Ethiopian devotional paintings, for example, will expand our ability to demonstrate the cultural exchange between Africa and the broader Mediterranean world during this period in the pre- and early modern era. As the only transhistorical and transnational museum in our region and as part of a leading liberal arts college, the Wyvern Collection enables the BCMA to share with our public an expanded view of historic global communication and cultural exchange.”

Remarked Stephen Perkinson, Professor of Art History and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, “The Wyvern collection is considered one of the world’s most important private collections of medieval art. The objects it includes cover a truly remarkable range of artistic forms and materials, bearing exceptional witness to the creativity and ingenuity of artists in this period. It is an honor to be able to bring this collection to the U.S. for the first time, presenting its works to our students as critical resources for learning, and sharing them with our broader community and region.”

The research project will include student courses led by Kathryn Gerry, Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History, and other faculty in the departments of Art History, History, Religion, English, Classics, and Africana Studies—which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Gerry commented, “The objects in this loan will have a tremendous impact on teaching across the Bowdoin campus. This past spring, my students and I used some of the pieces in the Wyvern Collection to explore issues of gender, sexuality, and race in medieval art, and I am thrilled that students were able to supply new perspectives on some of these works through exhibition labels they wrote for the preview installation this May. I have developed a new course centered on this collection for the fall, and I know the students are as excited as I am by the opportunity to generate new ideas and research working with this impressive group of objects.”

About the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art are among the most comprehensive of any college museum in the United States. Collecting commenced over 200 years ago with a major gift from the College’s founder James Bowdoin III and his family that included Gilbert Stuart’s magnificent portraits of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

The Museum is housed in the landmark Walker Art Building, designed in 1894 by Charles Follen McKim. Located on the historic quadrangle of Bowdoin College, the building is graced by murals by John La Farge, Kenyon Cox, Elihu Vedder, and Abbott Thayer. A \$20.8-million renovation and expansion in 2007 provided a stunning setting for objects as diverse as monumental Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud, Iraq; European Old Master paintings; and works by American modernists. The Museum is the centerpiece of Bowdoin’s vibrant arts and culture community and offers a wealth of academic and educational programs. The Museum is also a prominent summer venue for major exhibitions such as: *Edward Hopper’s Maine* (2011); *William Wegman: Hello Nature* (2012); *Maurice Prendergast: By the Sea* (2013); *Richard Tuttle: A Print Retrospective* (2014); *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860 – 1960* (2015); *This Is a Portrait If I Say So: Identity in American Art, 1912 to Today* (2016); *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* (2017); and *Winslow Homer and the Camera: Photography and the Art of Painting* (2018).

Fully accessible, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art is open to the public free of charge from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday; 10:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday; and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Media Contacts:

Suzanne Bergeron
Bowdoin College Museum of Art
207-725-3124
sbergero@bowdoin.edu

Catherine Coughlin/Caroline Shadle
Resnicow and Associates
212-671-5162/5172
ccoughlin@resnicow.com/cshadle@resnicow.com