

# WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS FOR NEW LIBRARY AT WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

Worcester, MA—March 9, 2022—The Worcester Art Museum (WAM) has begun construction on a new home for its art research library, the most important collection of this material in Central Massachusetts and a valuable resource for scholars, regional faculty, students, artists, docents, Museum staff, and the public alike. The new library will occupy a two-level, 3,400 square foot space in the Higgins Education Wing, and will include improved access and amenities for visitors, flexible space to support an array of programming opportunities, and greatly enhanced and more functional storage space for the Library’s collections. With a project budget of \$2.1 million, construction is expected to be completed in early 2023.

“For anyone interested in art and museum history, libraries and archives such as ours are essential tools,” said Matthias Waschek, the C. Jean and Myles McDonough Director of the Worcester Art Museum. “But our Library is more than an historical resource, which is why this investment is so important for the Museum and the community we serve. By creating a more accessible, more flexible space, the design for the new Library enhances our ability to support research and also organize programs of interest to the community.”

Located in the Higgins Education Wing, the Library’s main level will feature a versatile reading room space with double the capacity of the current space. In addition to a mix of tables and chairs, as well as soft seating, this space is designed to be easily converted into different seating formats to host small programs. The main level will also provide easy access to a selection of the recently published books and periodicals from the Library’s collection and provides new offices for Library staff.

The Library’s lower level will house the majority of the collection in newly installed, archive-appropriate steel compact shelving, providing safer and more durable storage for historical items. While access to this storage area will be limited to Library staff, the Library’s online catalogue will make it easy for people to identify the materials they need. Library staff will also provide orientation sessions for users to support this process.

“This investment in the Museum’s Library is transformative, a major improvement to our ability to serve those who work at WAM and the wider community,” said Rebecca Morin, WAM’s Head Librarian. “The Library was created here in 1909, only a decade after WAM itself was founded, underscoring the importance for people to have access to scholarly materials about artists and exhibitions. While art making and art presentation has changed in the subsequent century, the need for reliable sources of information remains essential, and we look forward to continuing this work in our new home.”

The Museum’s new Library project is one of a series of capital investments WAM has made over the past several years—and will be making in the future—guided by its campus master plan, developed in collaboration with WHY Architecture. Most recently, the Museum reopened its Lancaster Street entrance with a completely redesigned plaza and stairway, along with a newly

added elevator. This \$2.7 million project significantly improves one of the Museum's two major entrances, and provides the best and most direct access to the Higgins Education Wing. In 2015, WAM unveiled the Access Bridge at its Salisbury Street entrance, another construction project aimed at improving access and accessibility for visitors. Both the Lancaster Plaza and Access Bridge were designed by wHY.

The next major public project will be the construction of a new 4,000 sq. ft. gallery space to house the Worcester Art Museum's collection of Arms and Armor, acquired in 2014 following the closing of the Higgins Armory Museum. The second largest and among the most distinguished collections of its kind in the Americas, the Museum's new Arms and Armory Gallery will occupy the space being vacated by the Library.

### **Access to the Library**

The current Library space will close in early June 2022, as the migration and reinstallation of the collection begins. The Library will reopen in the Higgins Education Wing in early 2023. Museum staff (including docents and studio art faculty) will be able to access the Library collection until September 1, 2022, and will be able to borrow books through inter-library loan; there will be no disruptions in access to the Library's electronic resources. The public will be able to access the Library collection until May 31, 2022, and then again when it reopens in early 2023.

Once it reopens, access to the Library will continue to be free, and other existing services and programs—such as Personal Research Sessions, Class visits, Library tours and orientations, Inter-library Loan, borrowing privileges, Reading Group, and Story Times—will continue when the new space is completed. Moreover, the new location enhances access to the Library in several ways. With the completion of WAM's redesigned Lancaster Plaza entrance, which includes a new elevator, visitors—including those with accessibility needs—will have improved access because the Higgins Education Wing can be entered independently of the Museum's galleries. Over time, the Library will have more flexibility to provide open hours separate from those of the Museum itself.

### **About the Worcester Art Museum**

The Worcester Art Museum creates transformative programs and exhibitions, drawing on its exceptional collection of art. Dating from 3,000 BC to the present, these works provide the foundation for a focus on audience engagement, connecting visitors of all ages and abilities with inspiring art and demonstrating its enduring relevance to daily life. Creative initiatives—including pioneering collaborative programs with local schools, fresh approaches to exhibition design and in-gallery teaching, and a long history of studio class instruction—offer opportunities for diverse audiences to experience art and learn both from and with artists.

Since its founding in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum has assembled a collection of 38,000 objects: from the ancient Near East and Asia, to European and American paintings and sculptures, and continuing with works by contemporary artists from around the world. WAM has a history of making large scale acquisitions, such as its Medieval Chapter House, the Worcester Hunt Mosaic, its 15th-century Spanish ceiling, and the Flemish Last Judgment tapestry. In 2013,

the Museum acquired the John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection, comprising two thousand arms and armor objects. It continues to commission and present new works, such as 2019's exhibition, *With Child: Otto Dix/Carmen Winant*. For more information about the Worcester Art Museum, visit [worcesterart.org](http://worcesterart.org).

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$18 for adults, \$14 for seniors 65+ and for college students with ID. Admission is free for Museum Members and children ages 0-17. On the first Sunday of each month, admission is free for everyone. Museum parking is free. Tickets may be purchased in advance at [worcesterart.org](http://worcesterart.org).

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For more information, please contact:

Kelly Coates,

Worcester Art Museum

[kellycoates@worcesterart.org](mailto:kellycoates@worcesterart.org)

508-793-4390

Sascha Freudenheim

PAVE Communications & Consulting

[sascha@paveconsult.com](mailto:sascha@paveconsult.com)

917-544-6057