

Director's Report

Matthias Waschek
Jean and Myles McDonough Director



Thank you all for joining us today. Last year we tried this virtual format for the first time and it was so well received that we are happy to offer it again this year. Many more people, and many from farther away are able to join us. Although this year came with its challenges, I am happy to report that your museum was able to reopen in October 2020, after 5 months of unprecedented closure, and many of you have visited in person ever since. But the need to regulate the number of guests, the reshuffling of exhibition schedules and even the continuation of online programs couldn't fully get the visitation to pre-pandemic levels. In response to Worcester's particular challenges with COVID-19 transmission and to keep our visitors and staff safe, we implemented a mask wearing mandate for everyone, required all staff to be vaccinated and kept the numbers of staff on site at a minimum. So, when you come to visit again,(and I hope you come as soon as Friday evening for our opening reception) please know that we are doing everything possible to create a safe experience!

Lancaster Plaza



Everything continued to be affected by the pandemic, in our personal and professional lives, worldwide. Interruptions of supply chains and unexpected cost hikes impacted the work on our Lancaster Plaza. Yet, with the help of some modification, we were able to deliver a beautiful Plaza on budget. Hybrid, if not full work schedules from home, managing those uncertainties on a daily basis didn't diminish the pace with which we addressed planned tasks, yet certainly added to our unplanned challenges. All together, we have a lot to celebrate, while being aware that the impact on our community has been significant. Some of you are driving past the museum, via Lancaster, every day. I'm sure you have been watching our progress and are eager to see it complete. As with many construction projects, Covid slowed things down, yet we are thrilled with the result. I am happy to announce that in early December we will inaugurate the Lancaster Plaza, celebrating the generous support of so many, the hard work and accomplishments of so many others. Thereafter, the Museum will be significantly more physically accessible. To pull this off during the pandemic is worth celebrating, indeed.

At the same time, we are working on many multi-year facility projects behind the scenes: we are replacing the windows in the Higgins wing, we are going to replace our roofs that have long reached the end of their lives, we are inserting fire suppression systems campus wide and we are also working on the Arms and Armor gallery, which will be opening in several years. To that effect, the board of trustees voted on a relocation of our library to the sculpture studio in the Higgins wing. Stay tuned.

To accomplish all that, we need to raise money, which we do, and earn money, which we also do. Thanks to the generosity of so many of you that care deeply about WAM, we received over \$6 million of donations last year, experienced increased giving in numerous areas and are very grateful to all of our members who stayed with us-even during shutdown. We have also found some new ways to increase exposure for the museum and its collection while raising needed revenue. For example: I am just back from the first of many openings of our traveling arms and armor show, an initiative that won't only spread the word about Worcester's cultural treasures but also generate revenue, in addition to the money we are raising, to build the armor gallery of our dreams.

<u>MISSION</u>	<u>VISION</u>	<u>VALUES</u>
The Worcester Art Museum connects people, communities, and cultures through the experience of art.	By 2027, the Worcester Art Museum will be even more relevant to the experience of our city. Our revitalized campus and increased digital presence will welcome more visitors from near and far. Our collections, exhibitions, and programs will inspire in new ways, connecting the local and the global in all of their diversity. Our expanding community, staff, and volunteers will feel proud of the museum as inclusive and innovative.	We embrace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation • Inclusion • Engagement • Collaboration • Innovation • Integrity

It was a year of transition and change in many ways and one very positive one was the work that our Board, staff and volunteers were able to do to advance our Strategic Plan. During the second year of the pandemic, members of the board, staff, corporators, and outside consultants from ESC (Empower Success Corps) worked on our 2027 strategic plan – foundations for the future – and I would like to thank them all for their collaborative spirit, insight, and drive. We have a fine plan, which includes our mission, vision and value statements you see on the screen. We are grateful for your input, which informed our first set of core values, which we know will be a meaningful guide for us all moving forward. We will communicate the full strategic plan to you in early 2022. (read out MVV aloud)



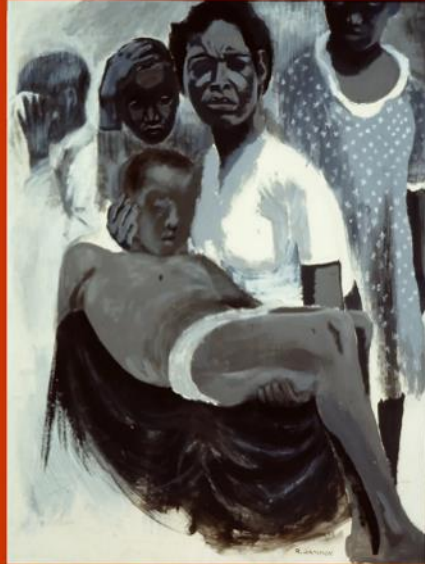
Wadsworth Jarrell, *Black Family*, 1968,
acrylic, wax and pastel, 2021.2

Although the use of WAM's most important acquisition fund was in the second year of temporary redirection, we were able to enrich and diversify our collection considerably over the past year. Here are some highlights:

Our American department acquired the 1968 painting *Black Family* (2021.2) by Wadsworth Jarrell (b. 1929), a founding member of the Black Artists Collective AfriCOBRA. The work is not yet on view, as it needs some treatment in conservation, but you will soon be able to see it next to the acquisition we made last year,



Wadsworth Jarrell, *Black Family*, 1968,
acrylic, wax and pastel, 2021.2



Reginald Gammon, *Holy Family*, 1964,
acrylic, 2019.46

Reginald Gammon's *Holy Family*. These works, along with other extraordinary examples recently installed in our Art Since the Mid-20th c. Gallery bring together a greater range of voices underrepresented in our galleries, which strengthen the conversations that are able to take place, and work towards creating a greater sense of belonging. We have a lot of progress to make still with this work, which we take seriously.

Krashes Collection



Attributed to Joseph Goodhue Chandler,
Child in Blue Dress, 1845, oil on canvas, 2021.42



Edwin Plummer, *Portrait of a Young Man*, about 1930
Portrait Miniature, 2021.29

Our ability to connect local heritage with our global holdings was greatly enhanced when David and Barbara Krashes gifted their outstanding collection of folk art, primarily from New England and Central Massachusetts to us this past year. This adds to our exceptional collection of self-taught artists in our stewardship. We hope to show a portion of this collection later in 2022. In considering our local past, we thought back even further -- you may have noticed that we changed our acknowledgement of the second Monday in October from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day. We now need to consider how we can honor this acknowledgment meaningfully through our work. Also here do we have a ways to go.



John Reekie, works on paper, civil war *A Burial Party*, Cold Harbor, Virginia, 1865, albumen print mounted on cardstock, Sarah C. Garver Fund, 2020.38.

John Reekie, works on paper, civil war *A Burial Party*, Cold Harbor, Virginia, 1865, albumen print mounted on cardstock, Sarah C. Garver Fund, 2020.38.

We were able to acquire this haunting photograph from the Civil War era, which was taken by John Reekie in Cold Harbor, Virginia, one of the many battle fields. It is fair to say that this work ranks among the most iconic photographs in our collection: it shows skeletons from the battle field as they are being collected by African American soldiers; four soldiers with shovels work in the background; in the foreground, a single laborer in a knit cap sits crouched behind a bier that holds the lower right leg of a dead combatant and five skulls.



*Indian Mail Suit with Helmet, Cuirass, and Vambraces, probably 19th century,
iron, steel, copper alloy gold, velvet, textile*

I already touched on our planning and development work toward opening the Arms and Armor galleries. The collection offers the opportunity to talk about this material in a global way and we are using our funds to emphasize that point. Recently, we acquired this Indian mail suit from the late 1700's, a time when the British East India Company had tightened its grip without fully controlling the country. This acquisition is one in what I hope you will see as a series of acquisitions we made this past year to strategically build upon our extraordinary collection by focusing on voices underrepresented in the collection and creating installations that begin to change the narrative meaningfully.



You probably all recognized the installation shot on the previous slide – it was taken from the Baseball Jersey show that celebrated the opening of our brand-new Polar Park stadium. The fact that the stadium opened in the midst of the pandemic is one of many indicators of our city’s ongoing dynamism – the city manager will talk further about this topic. The current slide documents both our first virtual exhibition, which went online as a response to Covid-19 restrictions, and features a stunning wedding kimono, which was the center piece of our first exhibition after reopening the Museum in October 2020. The Kimono is a commission and was also meant as a contribution to keeping the distinguished Japanese fabric design tradition alive.



*The Iconic Jersey:
Baseball x Fashion*

In spite of COVID-19, we were able to maintain WAM's role as an outsized player on the national and international stage, via Our international loan program: our registrars processed 55 loans, 22 of which were renewals of long-term loans to institutions in New England, New York, Kentucky, Texas, and Great Britain. Twenty-three objects were requested for temporary exhibitions domestically – Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Fort Worth, Washington, D.C., and around New England; and in Denmark and Spain. According to the information from the exhibition venues, more than 550,000 visitors saw our loans in person. This is outstanding, given the COVID-19 restrictions. A first in more than a decade, we were able to publish four catalogues in one fiscal year: *Jewels of the Nile: Ancient Egyptian Treasures from the Worcester Art Museum*, *Kimono Couture: The Beauty of Chiso*, *Kimono in Print: 300 years of Japanese Design*, and *The Iconic Jersey: Baseball x Fashion*. In addition, I would like to highlight George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Term Chair in Conservation and Chief Conservator Rita Albertson's contribution to *Paolo Veneziano, Art and Devotion in 14th Century Venice*, which accompanied an exhibition organized by the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

We became an inaugural contributor to the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS)-funded Museums for Digital Learning platform, connecting our collection with school teachers nationwide; our first ever virtual exhibition, *Kimono Couture: The Beauty of Chiso* attracted 11,000 local, national and international on-line visits; more generally: our web traffic has grown further (see below)

Setting the stage for future impact on an international scale via our traveling exhibitions (which also help generate much needed income): *Age of Armor: Treasures from the Higgins Armory Collection at the Worcester Art Museum* (Toledo Museum of Art, the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, the Denver Art Museum, and the St. Louis Art Museum); *Frontiers of Impressionism: Paintings from the Worcester Art Museum*, (Tampa Museum of Art in Fall 2023 and a four-venue Japanese tour in 2024, opening at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum).



What the Nazis Stole from Richard Neumann
(and the search to get it back)



Giovanni Battista Pittoni, the younger (Italian, 1687–1767), *Hannibal Swearing Revenge against the Romans*, about 1720s, oil on canvas, The Seldorff Family in memory of Richard Neumann.

We were so fortunate to show the Pittoni you see on the screen, along with many other paintings and sculptures, most from the 17th and 18th centuries, that once were in the collection of Richard Neumann, a highly sophisticated art lover, who had to flee from his native Vienna due to the Nazis. The story of how the collection was at least in parts restituted is fascinating and, in case you haven't already, check out the exhibition, which is still on view until January 16th. I would also like to point out that one member of the family of Richard Neuman has joined the corporation of the Worcester Art Museum – I am so glad that you were able to join us tonight, Tom!

There are many more exhibitions that I haven't mentioned yet – do check out Hank von Hellion's installation, as part of the Central Massachusetts Artist Initiative, which we are hosting in one of our contemporary galleries. But hurry, November 28th is the last day. Also here a shout out, as Hank has agreed to join the growing membership of artists in our corporation. Welcome Hank!

Stephen Jareckie
1929-2021



Stephen Jarecki worked at the Worcester Art Museum for 35 years beginning in 1961 as registrar and later as WAM's first curator of photography, building our photography collection from scratch. By the time he retired from WAM in 1996, WAM's photography collection had grown to over 1,800 pieces. Thanks to his knowledge and methodical approach, the collection includes broad holdings in early European photographs as well as respected mid-twentieth century and contemporary photographers. His expertise in German photography, enabled the Worcester Art Museum to become one of the first museums in the country to aggressively acquire work by now canonical names like Ilse Bing, August Sander, and Albert Renger-Patzsch. In 1976, Jarekie curated WAM's large and significant Bicentennial show researching and writing the exhibition's catalog. Stephen was a very active curator, presenting at least one large exhibition each year. We are grateful for all that Stephen did for WAM over his 35 years as an employee and we, and so many others, miss him. Through his collecting, his work is now part of the museum, and his legacy will live on.

Louise Virgin
1953-2021



Dr.

Louise Virgin served as the Curator of Asian Art from 2002 to 2014 and was a specialist in Japanese art. Among her many accomplishments, Dr. Virgin renovated the Japanese gallery and established the Chinese Decorative Arts Gallery. She made notable acquisitions and is responsible for expanding our renowned Japanese woodblock print collection to include masterpieces by the great *ukiyo-e* artist, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi; she established, at WAM, the largest collection of *haiga* or *haiku*-inspired paintings in the United States; Dr. Virgin curated numerous exhibitions of Japanese, Indian, Korean, and Chinese art, including the popular 2003 exhibition, *Samurai Spirit*.

Nancy also told me she had a favorite acquisition as well:

<https://worchester.emuseum.com/objects/50543/tiger-by-waterfall?ctx=274c1d26-724e-4fc4-b2f5-7c86cd0b54cf&idx=7>



As I stated at the beginning of my report, this year was full of activities, exhibitions, programs, behind the scenes work. Time doesn't allow me to do the work of my colleagues justice and we hope you found comfort and connection at WAM throughout this challenging year. I would like to leave you with an image that announces our next exhibition, Love Stories, which speaks to a sentiment many of us have reflected on during the pandemic: the significance and meaning of love. This haunting image that we chose as the iconic representative of a loan show from the National Portrait Gallery in London encapsulates that. We hope you feel engaged with and proud of WAM, and will join us to connect, reflect, and enjoy.