

News from the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum
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Tiny bronze gods on exhibit at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Gem-like exhibition, curated by recent Mount Holyoke College alumna, features 27 antiquities from 10 collections

Editor's Note: Electronic images available on request

SOUTH HADLEY, Mass. - Visitors to the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum can learn about a lesser-known facet of Roman culture--the intriguing worship of domestic gods--in the exhibition *The Legend of the Lares*, on view through May 28. The exhibition runs concurrently with a year-long, museum-wide installation celebrating MHCAM's 140th anniversary.

The Legend of the Lares

In ancient Rome, the domestic gods called *Lares Familiares* took the form of bronze statuettes or painted figures and were worshipped daily in household shrines. *The Legend of the Lares*, curated by 2015 Mount Holyoke College graduate Taylor Anderson, provides an overview of these enigmatic and versatile gods, and the devotional tools of the Roman home. The gem-like installation features more than a dozen bronze Lares and other gods, ceremonial implements such as incense burners, lamps, and libation bowls, and a marvelous, recreated *lararium*, the small temple-like structure that housed the Lares and was a primary symbol of a Roman family's piety.



The Legend of the Lares is the first museum exhibition to focus specifically on these household deities. "While many people today are familiar with the marble temples of ancient Rome and the Olympian gods and goddesses --Jupiter, Venus, Mars, to

name a few--the religious practice that took place in the privacy of Roman homes is new to most," explains Anderson. The exhibition is the culmination of original research Anderson conducted while an undergraduate at Mount Holyoke College and the capstone project for her Art Museum Advisory Board Fellowship.

The impetus for the exhibition was the MHCAM's 2013 purchase of an exquisite Roman statuette from the 1st-2nd century CE, *Lar holding a patera and cornucopia*. An exemplary representation of a Lar Familiaris, this bronze is the most significant acquisition of Roman art in nearly 20 years for MHCAM, which has long been recognized for its stellar collection of objects from the ancient Mediterranean world. *The Legend of the Lares* also brings together more than 20 antiquities from 9 other prestigious collections, including the Colby College Museum of Art, the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College, the Harvard Art Museums, the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, the Princeton University Art Museum, the Smith College Museum of Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, and one private collection. Highlights include the Wadsworth Atheneum's *Lar carrying an animal-shaped rhyton* and the Harvard Art Museum's *Aphrodite holding mirror and apple*.

Related event: Princeton University Professor of Classics Harriet Flower will give a lecture, "The Roman Lares, Gods of the Home and Journey" at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, February 2, in Gamble Auditorium. Opening reception to follow. This event is free and open to the public. Media are invited to attend.

140 Unlimited: Recent Acquisitions in Honor of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's 140th Anniversary

One of the oldest collegiate art museums in the country, MHCAM marked its 140th anniversary this past November, and the celebration continues this spring with its museum-wide exhibition of recent acquisitions. *140 Unlimited* features extraordinary artworks that have been donated and purchased over the last five years. The works span cultures and genres and include Asian sculptures and ceramics from the first to 16th centuries, an Italian pastiglia box from about 1530, a Mende dance mask from Sierra Leone, Pueblo ceramics from the 19th and 20th centuries, photographs, and global contemporary art, including works by Chuck Close, Christian Boltanski, Richard Learoyd, Zanele Muholi, Lin Tianmiao, Kara Walker, and many others.



Each of the Museum's nine galleries was completely or partly reinstalled last summer to integrate recent acquisitions into its displays, and wall text and labels were added throughout. "The exhibition *140 Unlimited* provided an opportunity for us to not only celebrate the generosity of MHCAM's donors, but to look anew at our galleries and how we display our permanent collection," notes Associate Curator Hannah W. Blunt. "Visitors will not only enjoy seeing our newest holdings, but will discover fascinating objects from the collection that have rarely, if ever, been on view." *140 Unlimited* runs through May 28.

Related event: Florence Finch Abbott Director Tricia Y. Paik will give an Art à La Carte Gallery Talk, "140 Unlimited: A Contemporary Look" at 12:20 p.m. Thursday, February 16, in the Museum. This event is free and open to the public. Media are invited to attend.

About the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (MHCAM) aims to spark intellectual curiosity and creativity through direct engagement with works of art and material culture. Founded in 1876 with a handful of global artifacts and one Albert Bierstadt painting, the Museum's holdings now exceed 24,000 objects and continue to grow through gifts and purchases. Particular strengths of the collection are its exemplary Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities; art and artifacts from the indigenous Americas; paintings, sculpture, and decorative art from Europe and the United States; photography, prints, ceramics, and numismatics; and works by women artists. In recent years, the Museum has made significant acquisitions of global contemporary art, including important works by Zanele Muholi, Kiki Smith, Alec Soth, Lin Tianmiao, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, and others. Through thought-provoking exhibitions and educational programs, MHCAM serves as a nexus for experiential learning across academic disciplines, and as a resource for the broader community.

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum is free, open to the public, and fully accessible. Visit artmuseum.mtholyoke.edu for more information.

IMAGES: Roman, *Lar holding a patera and cornucopia*, 1st-2nd century CE, bronze, Purchase with the Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, 2013.31; Installation view, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Photograph Laura Shea

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