



John Stomberg Named Director of Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Mount Holyoke's President Lynn Pasquerella is pleased to announce the appointment of John R. Stomberg as the new Florence Finch Abbott Director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Currently deputy director and chief curator of the Williams College Museum of Art, Stomberg will offer two decades of experience in art and museum education as he takes on his new position at Mount Holyoke on August 1st.

"I am absolutely convinced that John is exactly the right person for the Museum and for Mount Holyoke at this time," said Pasquerella. "John is a passionate voice for liberal education and how the Museum is critical to Mount Holyoke's mission of using liberal learning for purposeful engagement in the world. His breadth of knowledge and leadership experience will provide an invaluable complement to an already extraordinary museum staff."

"John Stomberg will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in art history, exhibition development, the use of original objects in teaching, and the care and nurturing of the collection," said Art Museum Advisory Board member Susan Weatherbie, a member of the search committee and a former MHC Trustee. "He has a special understanding of the critical role a teaching museum plays within the life of a liberal arts college and education. He will be a wonderful member of the Mount Holyoke Community."

Stomberg earned a B.A. in art history from Georgetown University in 1987, and received both a master of arts (1990) and a Ph.D. (1999) in art history from Boston University. He has been associated since 2002 with the Williams College Museum of Art, where he was initially hired as associate director for administration and programs. During his tenure at Williams, he chaired the exhibitions committee, curated exhibitions, and spearheaded collections planning and acquisitions, among other things. Since 2005, he has also been a lecturer in art at Williams College, teaching survey courses in western art history and a course of his own design, "Photography and Modernity in the United States, 1880-1950."

Stomberg is also a prolific writer; among his many distinguished publications is the award-winning catalogue *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, which accompanied an exhibition of the same name at Williams and received great critical attention. *Beautiful Suffering* has become a standard text in addressing the question of whether it is inherently problematic to seek aesthetic pleasure in a rendering of pain. The essays it contains, composed by scholars in fields as diverse as art history

and political science, including Stomberg, address powerful images of suffering that explore some of the most pressing issues we face today.

Before coming to Williams College, Stomberg was assistant director (1995-1998) and then director of the Boston University Art Gallery (1998-2002). During that time he enhanced the Museum's publications and traveling exhibitions program, inaugurated several interdisciplinary initiatives, and established educational outreach programs for area school children. He taught a variety of art history courses at Boston University from 1992 through 2002, in addition to teaching in its MFA program and at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, Northeastern University, and Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

Stomberg is highly regarded within the university and college museum community. Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director at the Yale University Art Gallery, said he has worked closely with the new director on a Mellon Foundation collection-sharing project among the museums of six distinguished liberal arts colleges including Mount Holyoke. "We view John as one of the finest leaders and educators at work in our field, and we heartily congratulate Mount Holyoke College on his appointment," said Reynolds.

"John is an experienced and esteemed member of the museum community. Under his leadership, the Museum will thrive and shine," added search committee member Brian Allen, director of the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy, and a member of MHC's Art Museum Advisory Board.

The search committee was chaired by Robin Blaetz, associate dean of faculty and associate professor and chair of Film Studies. In addition to Weatherbie and Allen, members included: MHC faculty members Bettina Bergmann, Anthony Lee, and Elizabeth Young; vice president for development Charles Haight; and Ellen Alvord, the Andrew W. Mellon Coordinator of Academic Affairs. Curator Wendy Watson has served as the interim director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum since July 2010.

Founded in 1876, the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum was one of the first collegiate museums in the United States-and today is one of the most vibrant. It serves as a cultural laboratory for the campus and is actively used by faculty and students across the disciplines. It is an integral part of the intellectual and cultural life of the Five College area and its surrounding communities and an affiliate of Museums10, a consortium of ten academic and community museums in the region.

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