A Sketch of the New Harvard Art Museums

June 2014
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Cover: Image by Waqas Jawaid, Harvard Graduate School of Design ’14. Jawaid created this image of the new facility while serving as a graduate intern in the Harvard Art Museums’ Division of Academic and Public Programs.
An Invitation

We are delighted to share this sketch of the Harvard Art Museums, highlighting the new spaces and platforms for learning and teaching as well as for conducting original research and presenting new scholarship. The renovated and expanded facility will bring together the Fogg Museum, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum under one roof for the first time. As we prepare to open the doors this November, we want to imagine—along with you—powerful ways to put these three extraordinary art collections to work for Harvard students and faculty, visiting scholars and artists, and local community members of all ages. The programs and resources described in the pages that follow lay a foundation for the creative, generative, and practical conversations ahead.

As a university art museum, we see students as the pulse of our programs. Undergraduate student guides, graduate student teachers, fellows in an advanced museum program, research assistants, interns, and student board members: all will activate and support a variety of offerings for multiple audiences. Their contributions will be foregrounded throughout the museums, from the Art Study Center to the Collections Galleries, from the Materials Lab to the Lightbox Gallery.

We asked Renzo Piano to redesign the Harvard Art Museums to create a new kind of fine arts laboratory, one that supports faculty teaching and research. As a site for faculty from all disciplines to convene, the museums will mount exhibitions, host symposia and workshops, and present lectures and seminars that contribute to and advance university-wide conversations.

We often refer to the new Harvard Art Museums as a teaching machine; and like the building's glass interior and exposed mechanics, we want to show our inner workings. The museums developed an initial plan for academic and public programs during the 2012–13 academic year. We held a series of monthly conversations, asking Harvard deans, professors, students, and staff to share their perspectives; we conducted a study to identify groundbreaking endeavors by peer institutions; and we debated strategies. This participatory process will continue as we shape our activities moving forward—and we invite you to join us.

Our programs encourage collaboration with campus and community partners, offer a fresh take on the museums' celebrated collections, and inform intellectual and creative currents on campus. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please contact Jessica Levin Martinez, Director of Academic and Public Programs, with questions, comments, or ideas: jessica_martinez@harvard.edu.
Spaces for Learning, Teaching, and Research

Harvard Art Museums
Entrances at 32 Quincy Street and on Prescott Street

Lightbox Gallery
Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies
Level 5

Art Study Center
Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies
Level 4

University Galleries
Special Exhibitions Gallery
Level 3

Collections Galleries
(Levels 1, 2, and 3)
Level 2

Naumburg Room

Calderwood Courtyard
Level 1

Lecture Halls
Seminar Room
Materials Lab
Lower Level

Adolphus Busch Hall
29 Kirkland Street, just two blocks from the museums

Somerville Research Facility
200 Inner Belt Road, a short shuttle ride from campus
The most important thing to teach my students is that when they walk into a museum, they do have something to say, something to add. These objects are just waiting to be understood, waiting to be interpreted by anyone who's willing to take the time to engage them.

— Jennifer L. Roberts, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities, Department of History of Art and Architecture
Galleries

Collections Galleries

The works of art on display in the Collections Galleries are drawn from the internationally renowned art collections of the Fogg Museum, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum. Together, these collections include approximately 250,000 works dating from ancient times to the present, including objects from the Americas, Europe, North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Asia.

Organized chronologically and by culture, the Collections Galleries are spread across three levels of the new facility, encompassing 35,000 square feet. They will provide students and other audiences with an orienting framework: starting points and springboards that encourage independent exploration of, and critical thinking about, original works of art. These galleries aim to highlight the intrinsic power of art and, especially in a university context, reinforce its capacity to function as an engine for inquiry different from that of a written essay or numeric equation. Introductory texts describe key concepts and propositions activated by the specific display of art in each gallery, ranging from Ancient Egypt's Art of Eternity, to the 18th-century Atlantic World, to the 1960s Experiment.

The Fogg Museum is distinguished by its exceptional holdings of European and American art from the post-classical period to the present day. Celebrated strengths of the collection include early Italian Renaissance painting; 17th-century Dutch and 19th-century French and British art, especially drawings; one of America's premier collections of works by the Pre-Raphaelites; and the storied Maurice Wertheim collection of impressionist and postimpressionist works. The museum also houses significant 18th- to 21st-century American art, including paintings and works on paper; an extensive photography collection that traces the development of the medium from its earliest days; modern and contemporary sculpture; and works in new media.

The Busch-Reisinger Museum, the only museum of its kind in North America, is devoted solely to the art of central and northern Europe, with a particular emphasis on art from German-speaking countries. The Busch-Reisinger collection includes significant works of late medieval sculpture and allows for in-depth study of art after 1880, especially German expressionism, 1920s abstraction, and the multiples of Joseph Beuys, as well as contemporary developments in all media. The museum also holds one of the most important collections of Bauhaus materials outside Germany, as well as the archives of Walter Gropius and Lyonel Feininger.

The Arthur M. Sackler Museum encompasses important collections from the ancient Mediterranean, Islamic lands, and South and East Asia. Its substantial holdings span eight millennia and incorporate a range of media, including paintings, drawings, and prints; sculpture in stone, bronze, and terracotta; ceramic and metal vessels; and artifacts in a variety of materials. It houses a world-renowned collection of archaic Chinese jades, a superb collection of Persian and Indian paintings and drawings, and a major numismatic collection of more than 22,000 Greek, Roman, and Byzantine coins.

The offices and research resources of the three museums' curatorial divisions are located on Level 3, adjacent to the Collections Galleries. Research resources available for consultation include curatorial libraries and unique object files documenting aspects of the specific history of, and scholarly opinions about, works in the collections. Students and scholars with specific research questions may also consult curators about the works of art in their care. Consultation of object files, curatorial libraries, and curators can be arranged by appointment.
Special Exhibitions Gallery

The 5,000-square-foot Special Exhibitions Gallery will allow for the presentation of complex and nuanced research exhibition projects. This gallery is a site where curators will contribute to current scholarship and to the production of new knowledge that will advance the field. The conception, development, and implementation of these projects will engage students and faculty, and will usually be accompanied by a significant publication, online and print interpretive materials, and thought-provoking programs. This gallery will also support major loan exhibitions from around the world.

The inaugural special exhibition will be *Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals*, on display November 16, 2014 through July 26, 2015. The exhibition has benefited from the expertise of Professor Timothy Hyde, from Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, and will be mounted in conjunction with a GSD installation in the Frances Loeb Library at Gund Hall that addresses the dialogue between art and architecture over the last century.

University Galleries

Four distinct University Galleries will support and advance innovative teaching and learning from original works of art; these galleries will be installed in conjunction with faculty. Whether works are displayed for an entire semester or for the duration of a single assignment, whether they are decided in advance or arranged and interpreted as a course develops, these dynamic spaces will engage students and the public and will help realize the curricular goals of participating professors. The galleries will be a site for curatorial experimentation and will have the potential to inform the museums’ interpretive strategies and program offerings.

University Teaching Gallery

This 1,000-square-foot gallery will support courses in the visual arts through semester-long installations, with preference given to History of Art and Architecture (HAA) courses, including those that fulfill the department’s undergraduate requirements, such as historical courses in visual and environmental studies as well as in classical archaeology. The gallery may be used for a single class or divided for use by two or three courses. As in the past, HAA will program this gallery in consultation with the museums. In the inaugural year, Professor Suzanne Preston Blier will select works to complement her course on world’s fairs, and Professor Yukio Lippit will select works to complement his course on Japanese genre painting.

University Study Gallery

This 1,000-square-foot gallery will be, in effect, an extension of the Art Study Center (see p. 12). Short-term displays will support courses in all departments, with preference given to the Harvard College Program in General Education. The collections will be used for “looking assignments” in each of the General Education course categories: Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding, Culture and Belief, Empirical and Mathematical Reasoning, Ethical Reasoning, Science of Living Systems, Science of the Physical Universe, Societies of the World, and the United States in the World. Faculty from diverse fields have selected objects to be installed for the Fall 2014 semester; they include professors Richard Beaudoin (Music), Peter Burgard (German), Emma Dench (Classics and History), Peter Galison (Physics and History of Science), Stephen Greenblatt (English), John T. Hamilton (Comparative Literature and German), Joseph Koerner (HAA), Louis Menand (English), Alina Payne (HAA), Doris Sommer (Romance Languages and Literatures), and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (History).

University Research Gallery

This 1,000-square-foot gallery will advance research in the development, implementation, use, and assessment of special exhibitions, including course-related projects focused on exhibition-making. This gallery can be used to teach ways of visualizing and constructing an argument with original works of art in a given space. It is also a site for curatorial experimentation, allowing for and encouraging a range of faculty engagements, from generating exhibition concepts to evaluating visitor experience, among others. Projects under development include a collaboration with Professor Ewa Lajer-Burchardt (HAA) on drawing as a modern medium and with Professor David Roxburgh (HAA) on Qajar lacquers.
University Collections Gallery

This 450-square-foot gallery will be dedicated to the display of works of art from university collections beyond those held by the Harvard Art Museums, such as those in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, the Harvard Semitic Museum, the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments, and Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, among others. Embedded in the Collections Galleries program, this gallery presents university collections in a different display context and allows for expanded dialogue between these objects and those held by the Harvard Art Museums. This prominent space creates opportunities to represent areas in which the Harvard Art Museums have not historically collected in meaningful ways. For example, works in an African art exhibition, guest curated by HAA alumna Kristina Van Dyke (Director, Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts), will be on long-term loan from the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The University Collections Gallery also serves as a platform to connect the Harvard Art Museums with other campus museums, and to consider collecting histories and museum practice.

Adolphus Busch Hall

Built between 1914 and 1917, Adolphus Busch Hall housed Harvard’s Germanic Museum (now the Busch-Reisinger Museum; see p. 6) for almost 70 years. Initiated by literature professor Kuno Francke two decades earlier, the museum was intended to illustrate the development of northern European, mostly German, art. Until 1930 the collection included only reproductions, notably plaster casts of medieval and Renaissance sculpture and architectural stonework. A gift from Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1903 included 22 plaster casts, among them reproductions of the Freiberg Golden Portal, the Naumburg west choir screen, and the Hildesheim bronze doors. Such replicas were commonly used for study at the time, giving students the opportunity to examine full-scale plaster reproductions of masterpieces without having to travel abroad. Adolphus Busch Hall and the plaster cast collection on view there continue to serve as valuable teaching resources. This spring, Professor Jeffrey Hamburger (HAA) taught with the cast collection in his course Casts, Construction, and Commemoration: German Gothic in America and Abroad, which examined German monumental sculpture from the 11th through 13th centuries in a broad context.

Teaching and Tours

The museums’ curricular and extracurricular support sets in motion key recommendations made by the Harvard Task Force on the Arts, the presidential initiative to make the arts an integral part of the cognitive life of the university. The task force’s recognition of the arts as “irreplaceable instruments of knowledge” calls on the Harvard Art Museums to open their collections to students in all academic disciplines. Alongside our work with faculty and students in the Departments of History of Art and Architecture and Visual and Environmental Studies, the museums will feature new and expanded offerings to support a range of teaching in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Rich opportunities abound for students outside of coursework as well.

Harvard Curricular Support

The museum setting promotes active learning and interdisciplinary thinking, as it challenges students and teachers to develop evidence-based interpretations and to make connections across cultures and time. The Harvard Art Museums’ collections and exhibitions serve as a catalyst for teaching and research projects across disciplines. Museums staff, comprised of educators, curators, conservators and conservation scientists, technologists, and others, routinely consult with faculty and teaching fellows to identify ways that the museum can best support course goals. In close consultation with faculty, museums staff identify relevant works of art for discussion, facilitate gallery conversations, lead materials-based investigations and experiments, design assignments, and share research materials including collections data, object files, treatment records, and
archival documents. Collections-based assignments have ranged from virtual exhibitions and image annotations to research papers and presentations in various languages, as well as musical compositions such as The Trio Project. For this assignment, faculty member Richard Beaudoin asked students in Music 51b to take inspiration from a 16th-century Turkish ceramic plate with floral decoration. He had students imagine the plate’s white ground as silence, with the other three colors representing the layering of individual instruments.

Harvard Extracurricular Support

The Harvard Art Museums support student-driven initiatives that benefit from the museums’ collections. These include a wide array of arts-related groups on campus. One partner is the Phillips Brooks House Association (PBHA), a 100-year-old student-run, community-based nonprofit organization committed to service and social action. The museums welcome PBHA student volunteers—mentors, tutors, and advisors—to use the museums to support college preparatory work, ESL training for new Americans, K–12 after-school enrichment classes, and other programs.

Student Guide Tours

Harvard undergraduates from a variety of disciplines will offer engaging tours of the Harvard Art Museums for university and community audiences. Working in close collaboration with colleagues at the museums and the university, the program director will train a cohort of 10 to 15 undergraduates over the course of a semester to guide visitors through the collections. The program will include talks with curators, conservators, artists, and Harvard faculty; a behind-the-scenes look at the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies (see p. 14); the examination of original works of art; and training in oral presentation. Student guides are encouraged to share the unique perspectives that their individual fields of study bring to looking at the collections. The students will range from sophomores to seniors and will represent fields of study as diverse as history of art and architecture, English, chemistry, anthropology, computer science, and the comparative study of religion.

Graduate Student Teaching

The graduate student teaching program will train Harvard graduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Education to develop and facilitate gallery experiences for high school students. The Harvard Art Museums will form a partnership with the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, the neighborhood high school located just steps from the museums. This proximity allows for a “museum school” model in which classes need only travel a block to engage with original works of art. Graduate student teachers will in turn share their expertise with Harvard teaching fellows, who assist undergraduate courses by teaching sections, conducting tutorials, recommending grades, and supervising independent study projects. Working with Harvard’s Derek Bok Center for Learning and Teaching, students will offer peer-to-peer instruction that will encourage and support object- and collections-based teaching at Harvard.

The Museum Program

The Fogg Museum’s legendary Museum Course trained generations of museum leaders. The course was conceived by former Director Paul J. Sachs, who led the course from 1921 until 1948. After Sachs’s retirement, it was taught intermittently by other prominent figures, including Professors Jakob Rosenberg, J. P. Coolidge, and Seymour Slive, until the mid-1980s. Since then dozens of interns, fellows, and advanced students—including History of Art and Architecture alumni Christine Mehring (Professor of Art History and the College, University of Chicago), Jacob Proctor (Curator, the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society), and Scott Rothkopf (Curator and Associate Director of Programs, Whitney Museum of American Art)—have contributed to and benefited from working within the museums. In 2015, the Harvard Art Museums will launch a new and reconfigured training program for emerging scholars (graduate and postgraduate) interested in the production and presentation of original scholarship in a museum context.
In-Focus Talks

Curators, conservators, educators, fellows, and other staff members will offer afternoon focus talks based in their areas of expertise. Free and open to the public, these will be 30-minute drop-in talks (a 20-minute talk with discussion to follow) for diverse audiences. During the museums’ inaugural year, talks will focus on aspects of the installation process, exploring both intellectual and more practical considerations. Museums staff and invited guests will, for example, tease out arguments at play in the galleries, learn more about conservation treatments, look closely at specific collections, or draw connections between works of art throughout the museums.

Multimedia Gallery Materials: A Case Study Approach

Installations in the Collections Galleries, Special Exhibitions Gallery, and University Galleries express the museums’ strength and distinctiveness as a teaching and learning institution. The museums will produce multimedia tours, accessible on tablets and smartphones, that consider objects through a variety of perspectives using a case study approach. Relying on multiple sources of evidence and drawing on theoretical propositions, the following multimedia gallery materials will launch at the museums’ opening in November 2014, and they are designed to grow over time.

Driving Concepts

This digital tour invites visitors to consider five objects representative of the breadth and depth of the collections and how they relate to the thematic categories of time, mapping, fragment, revolution, and longing. These concepts emerge from the works of art on permanent display and connect powerfully to the curators’ presentation of the collections. This approach was inspired by the History of Art and Architecture’s 2012 survey course, Landmarks of World Art & Architecture, which took as its sub-theme, “art and revolution.” Each faculty member approached his or her area of expertise through the lens of revolution—whether scientific, intellectual, technical, political, or visual. Visitors will experiment with evocative concepts and come to see the art object as an engine that drives intellectual inquiry. As thematic categories, the driving concepts provide routes of access into diverse objects across collections, as well as putting them into generative dialogue with one another.

Hotspots

Hotspot tours provide digitally guided opportunities for deeper investigation of selected works on display in the Collections Galleries. Each tour focuses on a single object or a grouping of objects in order to share new research, draw attention to the collections’ strengths, show complementary material, or highlight a gallery’s main proposition. Materials and resources include findings from ongoing collections-based research projects, holdings from Harvard’s rich archives and libraries, and multimedia content. Works related to the Hotspots will be accessible in the Art Study Center (see p. 12), introducing visitors to the use of this special resource as well as the types of explorations that are possible there.
Art + Science

The historical, technical, and material knowledge of works of art contributes to our ability to evaluate and appreciate what we see. This tour gives insight into how the conservator's investigation of an object's physical properties, often aided by sophisticated technologies, can deepen our experience of original works of art. Designed to encourage close looking, the digital Art + Science tour will invite visitors to observe visual clues to artists' technical choices, to materials, and to a work's transformation over time. Visitors are also asked to consider the role of conservation in the interpretation of art. The physicality of objects—what their materials, structure, and condition reveal—will be further explored in the Lightbox Gallery and Materials Lab (see pp. 16–17).

Making a Museum: The Busch-Reisinger

This multimedia tour of the Busch-Reisinger collection focuses on objects in the new museum installation, while also directing visitors to programs at Adolphus Busch Hall (see p. 8), the historic home of the Busch-Reisinger Museum. This museum is dedicated to art from the German-speaking countries of central and northern Europe. Its long collecting history, statements of purpose, and archival documents reveal how and why museums change, how they adapt to historical context, and how they shape the study of art history. The history of the Busch-Reisinger demonstrates that the museum is never a neutral space: museum spaces are arguments; collections and exhibitions are a series of decisions that manifest ideologies and agendas. As a case study in the development of museums and laboratories, which are essential to the modern research university, this tour looks at issues raised by campus institutions founded at similar times and with empirical pedagogic methodologies, such as the Mineralogical and Geological Museum (est. 1891/1901), the Harvard Semitic Museum (est. 1903), and the Harvard Forest (est. 1907).

School Group Explorations

Materials available for K–12 audiences will support and encourage teachers to design and lead their own tours. These tours will foster critical thinking and looking skills by having students notice details and relationships, explore multiple perspectives, ask questions, solve problems, and make connections and comparisons using works on view in the galleries. Digital materials suggest objects and strategies for object-based teaching; propose thematic entry points and key questions; and recommend gallery activities and classroom connections. Tours will be geared to developmental stages and aligned with the Common Core State Standards. School Group Explorations will be complemented by professional development workshops for teachers.

It’s an extraordinary gift to have the richness and diversity of collections that exist at Harvard. It’s an incredible archipelago of knowledge production and imagination; and it’s an indispensable resource. . . . I feel like there is a responsibility to think about ways to share that experience, not only on campus, but beyond.

— Matthew Battles, Fellow, Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University; Associate Director, metaLAB (at) Harvard
Anatomy of the Harvard Art Museums

This digital tour introduces visitors to the special architectural features of the Harvard Art Museums' new building, designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, and explains the ways in which the design enhances institutional goals. It shows how the architect's renovation of the historic Fogg (designed by Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch, and Abbott) and striking addition bridge old and new, while also complementing nearby buildings by architects H. H. Richardson, Le Corbusier, and James Stirling. The tour focuses on qualities of light, transparency, public access, sustainability, and art stewardship. It also offers a compendium of the project's building materials, from the glass roof and exterior wood cladding to the travertine courtyard and Pennsylvania Blue stone floor.

Art Study Center

Providing opportunities for the close, sustained viewing of works of art has long been central to the Harvard Art Museums' mission of teaching and research. Designed to offer an environment for both small-class and individual study, the Art Study Center will provide learning, teaching, and research opportunities for students, faculty, and the public through the close examination of original works of art from the collections of the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler museums. Each of the three museums has its own dedicated art study center offering access to thousands of works of art across all media, including Greek vases, Roman bronze figurines, Byzantine coins, Chinese jades, Japanese surimono prints, Islamic paintings and drawings, Rembrandt etchings, Paul Gauguin still lifes, David Smith sculpture, photographs by Diane Arbus, Lyonel Feininger drawings, and multiples by Joseph Beuys. The Art Study Center as a whole (the three museums' study centers, two seminar rooms, as well as large reception and orientation areas) totals approximately 5,000 square feet on the fourth floor of the new facility, making it unique in scale among U.S. museums.

To welcome and encourage visitors

— Harvard Art Museums advanced curatorial fellows will share their expertise and help guide visitors in selecting objects for study.

— The Division of Academic and Public Programs will produce teaching and learning resources to guide viewers in their investigation of original works, in consultation with curators and the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, which works to advance the quality of undergraduate education at Harvard.

These resources may relate works of art in the Art Study Center to those in the galleries by elaborating on gallery propositions, for example, or focusing on a specific artist, movement, or object type. Connections to the galleries can be conceptual as well as behavioral; visitors will be encouraged to bring the deep experience of prolonged looking in the Art Study Center to the gallery setting. In an important 2007 report on study center learning by Project Zero, an educational research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Director Shari Tishman explains that the study center experience promotes high-end cognition: forms of thinking and learning that are characteristic of sophisticated disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry, such as making nuanced discernments, posing sophisticated problems, exploring multiple perspectives, and making generative comparisons and connections. Teaching and learning resources designed for use in the Art Study Center will encourage this type of critical attention. Researchers and visitors may also consult curatorial object files that include documentation on the specific history of, and scholarly opinions about, works in the collections.
Study Days

During Study Days, the Art Study Center will act as a private forum to test ideas relating to aspects of the collections. The museums will convene international scholars, faculty members, graduate students, curators, and conservators to work through problems of interpretation and to consider areas for further research. Participants will be invited to raise new questions and share fresh insights with a public audience at the end of the day. Study Days planned for the near-term once the museums reopen will bring together researchers to analyze and discuss works by Mark Rothko and John Singleton Copley.

Up-Close Seminars

A signature program of the Art Study Center, Up-Close Seminars will be led by visiting or local artists, curators, faculty members, and graduate students and will be aimed at the general public. Rarely traditional in their choice of subject, the seminars will feature speakers who argue a thesis using original objects of their choosing; they will juxtapose works of different media, including drawings, prints, photographs, small-scale sculpture, paintings, and decorative art objects. The seminars exemplify the range of exploration and discovery possible in the Art Study Center. The object list and key arguments from each seminar will be documented and archived as a resource for future study. In 2014–15, the seminars will focus on topics as diverse as ancient bronzes, Albrecht Dürer's engravings, Japanese folding screens, and Bauhaus art and design.

Harvard Interdisciplinary Workshops

Many academic committees and area research centers at Harvard organize a monthly workshop that brings together faculty and graduate students to discuss a participant's research or work in progress. By hosting a range of interdisciplinary workshops, the Harvard Art Museums will be able to share their specialized collections across campus and encourage integration into current research. Discussions featuring the museums' research centers, including the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis and the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, will complement established workshops at Harvard, such as the Medieval Studies Interdisciplinary Workshop, the African Studies Workshop, the Squishy Physics Seminar Series, the Korea Colloquium, and the Workshop in History, Culture, and Society, among others. The museums will also organize workshops to introduce faculty and other practitioners to special exhibitions, with the aim of encouraging them to incorporate the exhibitions in their teaching and programming.

To allow innovation and imagination to thrive on our campus, to educate and empower creative minds across all disciplines, to help shape the twenty-first century, Harvard must make the arts an integral part of the cognitive life of the university: for along with the sciences and the humanities, the arts—as they are both experienced and practiced—are irreplaceable instruments of knowledge.

The Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies provides analysis and treatments for the Harvard Art Museums' collections in all media. Training and education are fundamental activities of the Straus Center, a tradition established at its founding more than 80 years ago, when it became the first institution in the United States to use scientific methods to study artists' materials and techniques. The Straus Center is a pioneer in the use of sophisticated examination and instrumental techniques to analyze the structural and chemical nature of works of art and historical objects. Today it continues to play a leading role not only in preserving specific works of art, but also in developing new methods and techniques for the field of conservation and in training the next generation of conservators.

The Straus Center will occupy the uppermost floors of the new facility in Cambridge, but will also have a presence at the museums' Somerville Research Facility (see p. 19). The offices of the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art (CTSMA) will also be located in the Straus Center. CTSMA's archives and collections can be accessed at the Somerville Research Facility.

Whereas museum conservation labs typically operate behind the scenes, the Straus Center will give visitors views into the paper, objects, paintings, and analytical labs. An elaborate shading system allows controlled, natural light to enter the labs, and glass walls make visible the work that was previously hidden from view.

Materials-Based Course Support

The Straus Center is a powerful resource for the Harvard Art Museums and for the university. Conservation professionals in the Straus Center teach courses in technical art history and support materials-based inquiry in courses across Harvard's curriculum. In alternating years, the staff of the Straus Center teaches History of Art and Architecture 101, a course that considers issues related to the making of works of art and to their physical alteration over time. They also teach History of Art and Architecture 206, a course focused on the scientific investigation of works of art. Together with students, conservators and conservation scientists consider artists' material choices, resources, constraints, and innovations, as well as the diagnostic tools used for description, dating, authentication, and conservation.

Outside of a museum space, outside of an art space, very often people understand art as entertainment. Sometimes they will go so far as to say that art is a mode of expression—as if the feelings preexisted. But in an art space we can demonstrate to students that art is a vehicle for exploration: exploration of meaning, exploration of materials . . . it's a lab.

— Doris Sommer, Ira Jewell Williams, Jr., Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of African and African American Studies
Naumburg Room

The Aaron and Nettie G. Naumburg Room will be reinstalled in the new Harvard Art Museums, adjacent to the Collections Galleries on the second floor. An English Jacobean–inspired dining room, living room, entrance hall, and stairway, integrating Renaissance stained glass and other historic elements, the Naumburg Room provides a unique gathering place where museums staff, faculty and students, and guests can come together to discuss ideas that spring from experiencing and contemplating original works of art. It provides a physical and intellectual space that carries on the great tradition of Harvard past—lively and engaging conversation advanced in a distinguished setting.

Harvard College House Teas

Master's Teas are a deeply held and beloved ritual of Harvard's residential college system. Hosted by a House Master, who is a senior member of the faculty or administration, these study breaks teem with food and friends. The Harvard Art Museums Student Board will cohost House Teas for undergraduate Houses to build community and introduce students to ideas, people, and spaces on campus that they might not otherwise encounter. Board members will invite selected faculty members, museums staff, visiting artists, and others to discuss special exhibitions and other new projects.

Special Receptions

The Naumburg Room will feature special events for visiting scholars, artists, and other notable figures as well as faculty receptions and alumni gatherings. This room will also serve as a gracious meeting and conference space for the museums.

Harvard Art Museums Student Board

The Harvard Art Museums will appoint a student board with representation from each of the college's 12 residential Houses as well as graduate and professional schools to deepen and sustain student involvement with the museums and to disseminate information about resources, spaces, and programs. To help more effectively integrate the museums in student life, board members will:

— advise on aspects of student life at Harvard;
— promote events to the student community;
— collaborate with campus partners to design AM/PM events (see p. 18); and
— cohost Harvard College House Teas in the Naumburg Room.

Monthly board meetings will capture the energy of a start-up and benefit from the entrepreneurial spirit of the board's members. The 2014–15 student board is comprised of undergraduate and graduate students who share their perspectives as campus leaders. Board members represent more than a dozen academic disciplines, and they participate in extracurricular pursuits ranging from Hasty Pudding Theatricals and The Harvard Crimson to the Harvard Men’s Ultimate Frisbee Club and the Harvard College First Generation Student Union.
Lecture Halls and Seminar Room

Harvard Film Archive

The new Harvard Art Museums will be physically connected to the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts (CCVA), home to the Harvard Film Archive (HFA), one of the largest and most significant university-based motion picture collections in the United States. The HFA program at CCVA is a cinémathèque, showing any given film or video only once. The museums will complement this program in the 300-seat Menschel Hall with a program that will allow for an extended theatrical run of groundbreaking films and videos. To further bring the moving image and time-based media to the museums, special film programs will be developed through HFA, CCVA, and Harvard Art Museums collaborations that connect to and grow from curatorial projects and initiatives in the Collections Galleries, University Galleries, and Special Exhibitions Gallery. An inaugural collaborative project will focus on artists whose work bridges the gallery and the cinema.

Lectures, Artist Talks, and Symposia

The Harvard Art Museums will host a robust program of scholarly lectures, artist talks, roundtables, and symposia featuring the world's leading voices on art and visual culture. These talks introduce new scholarship and bring different perspectives to the podium. Most events will take place in the 300-seat Menschel Hall, 100-seat Deknatel Hall, or 35-seat seminar room, and will stream live on the Web or be archived for future research. Public talks and symposia, held in the evening and on weekends, are designed to amplify (or complicate) the ideas and arguments that the collections and their interpretations raise. The museums will extend special invitations to classes, extracurricular student organizations, and community groups to attend talks of particular relevance to them. Certain guest speakers will contribute to the Harvard curriculum by visiting classes to share their points of view. During weekdays, Harvard College will administer the lecture halls and seminar room, which will be devoted to Harvard classes in all departments.

Lightbox Gallery

Digital Experience

The Lightbox Gallery is positioned at the building summit directly beneath the glass roof, which is the uppermost part of what architect Renzo Piano refers to as the Light Machine. This gallery offers two views that change a viewer's perspective: one, a sweeping vista down through the building architecture to the Calderwood Courtyard; and the other, an immersive look at the collections digitally projected on a wall. Here the Harvard Art Museums will assemble and present digital information about the museums' holdings in experimental and imaginative ways. In collaboration with university partners such as metaLab—a research unit dedicated to innovation and experimentation in the arts, media, and humanities—the museums will test new modes of inquiry and display. For instance, working with an interdisciplinary group of graduate students, metaLab is developing Curarium, a digital platform that can be used to annotate, curate, and augment works of art. Director Jeffrey Schnapp (Romance Languages and Literatures; Harvard Graduate School of Design) and Associate Director Matthew Battles call it “a collection of collections”; it will encourage connections both between objects in the Harvard Art Museums' collections and with those of other museums at and beyond Harvard.
Experiences will range from a fully navigable virtual storage environment to abstract visualizations of collections data. On this wall, visitors might choose to browse the museums’ 250,000 objects at once, see aggregated collections from different angles, or examine hidden details related to a work’s creation that can be captured only by radiography. At times the projection wall will be open to students, professors, and visiting artists as a medium for creating interactive works based on the museums’ collections.

New Media

At designated times, the Lightbox Gallery will be programmed to present a digital work of art, either alone or alongside a complementary art object. Juxtaposition of digital image and object can create a dynamic space for viewers to consider the original object in the age of technology. This line of inquiry can also be pursued in the Materials Lab, where technology is explored as an artistic medium in its own right, and not simply as a tool to document or reproduce works in other media.

Materials Lab (M/Lab)

The M/Lab is a site to explore material ingenuity and innovation in art media, with the goal of enriching the interpretation and appreciation of art making and its products. Visiting artists, along with conservators, conservation scientists, and technicians from the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, will share their material investigations and lead experiments with Harvard faculty and students, researchers, and visitors. The hands-on, active learning experiences conducted in the M/Lab will combine talks, demonstrations, and experiments with close looking at works of art on view in the galleries, the Art Study Center, and the Straus Center.

Materials Rotation

A special feature of the permanent collections installation at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum in 2012–13 was the display of disparate objects made from the same material, such as bronze, wood, or wax. These material rotations offered a fresh look into the Harvard Art Museums’ collections and encouraged visitors to examine closely and ponder artists’ choice of materials, technique, and process. This focus on material ingenuity will be carried over to the M/Lab’s rotating calendar of materials investigations. Featured materials will drive the range of public programs offered by artists (whether faculty, student, or local) and conservators who test the conditions, limitations, and possibilities of materials new and old. Traditional materials could include wax, ink, and paint; nontraditional materials might be food products or found objects; and new media could include projection and digital technologies.

Visiting Artist Workshop

Each year Harvard University hosts close to 100 visiting artists. They are invited by research centers or academic departments and are in-residence anywhere from a few days to the entire year. In cooperation with the host departments, the Harvard Art Museums will invite artists interested in working with students and/or community members in the museums’ spaces to discover the potential—or constraints—of the artists' chosen media. These weekend-long workshops will bring together artists and “apprentices” to foster collaboration and material exploration.
Calderwood Courtyard

The renovation and expansion project both preserves and dramatically enhances the design of the historic Calderwood Courtyard and its function as a center of activity and circulation. From here visitors—Harvard faculty and students, community members and international guests, and families and student groups—will be oriented to galleries, guided tours, programs, and classes as they enter from either Quincy or Prescott Street. They can pass through the courtyard without entering the galleries to enjoy the cafe and shop, attend performances, and view striking works of art installed in this welcoming, public space.

Intersections

Student-driven Intersection performances will transform the Calderwood Courtyard, a hub of activity and circulation, into a site for performance art that responds to the visual art installations in the surrounding galleries. Within the courtyard’s arcade, Harvard student artists will interpret works of art in other expressive media, from hip-hop music to Bhangra dance, from experimental theater to spoken word. Designed to be ad hoc and dynamic, Intersection performances will generate possibilities for collaboration across traditional artistic boundaries.

AM/PM

The Harvard Art Museums will invite Harvard students for evenings of lively talks, student performances, and film screenings. Working with campus partners such as the Harvard Radcliffe Dramatic Society and the Institute of Politics, the museums will offer experiences in the Materials Lab on the lower level, the Lightbox Gallery at the summit of the building, and everywhere in between to encourage students to connect with the museums and with each other, as day turns into night.

An Engaged Community

We warmly welcome our neighbors and out-of-town guests to fully experience our new spaces for learning and teaching. From the Calderwood Courtyard, visitors are invited to explore the galleries on their own, facilitated by a student guide, or with a digital tour. Daily programs might include an Up-Close program in the Art Study Center, a workshop in the Materials Lab, or a film in Menschel Hall.

Certain museum programs are being developed directly with local partners, such as the graduate student teaching program, which supports Cambridge Rindge & Latin School teachers and students in the galleries. Other programs leverage university connections to Boston-area groups, such as the museums’ work with Phillips Brooks House, a student-run nonprofit organization committed to service and social action. The rotating schedule of special exhibitions, summer installations, and films will also present new possibilities for the Harvard Art Museums to develop activities with local organizations and civic agencies.

Through both programs and the Harvard Art Museums' magazine Index, the museums will give the public opportunities to share opinions and ideas—and the chance to join an engaged community of museumgoers.
Somerville Research Facility

Students and scholars are invited to visit the museums’ Somerville Research Facility, a site for research into the portions of the three museums’ collections stored there, together with their connected research materials. It also provides access to the museums’ research centers, including the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, the archives and research resources of the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, and the Harvard Art Museums Archives. Visits will allow for deeper object- and materials-based research and study, offering a different view of the institution and its activities. The Somerville facility is accessible by a short shuttle ride from campus.

Archaeological Exploration of Sardis

The Archaeological Exploration of Sardis (AES), sponsored by the Harvard Art Museums and Cornell University, has been excavating since 1958. Its mission since inception has been to explore, record, and interpret the topography, history, and material culture of the ancient city of Sardis in western Turkey, one of the great centers of the ancient world. AES also ensures the preservation of its antiquities and makes them intelligible through conservation and restoration; teaches and trains in the disciplines associated with archaeological fieldwork; maintains expedition records for research; and publishes and presents the results of fieldwork and research. Scholars, students, and specialists (anthropologists, archaeologists, art historians, architects, classicists, conservators, numismatists, epigraphers, object illustrators, and photographers) participate in the excavation and contribute to its extensive documentation and publication. Drawings, field books, maps, plans, photographs, and reports are housed and accessible at the Sardis office, the administrative and publication headquarters of the project.

Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art

The Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art (CTSMA) was founded in 2001 in partnership with the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Its mission is twofold: to study the materials and issues associated with the making and conservation of modern works of art; and to serve as a resource for conservators, scholars, and students by collecting, preserving, and presenting relevant research and materials. These include artists’ materials and interviews, documents related to conservation assessments and treatments, and ephemera associated with the creative process, all of which are accessible at the Somerville Research Facility.

As an ongoing endeavor, the center also continues the work of the Artists Documentation Program (ADP), which CTSMA director Carol Mancusi-Ungaro initiated in 1990 at the Menil Collection (Houston), with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The program carries on as a partnership between the Harvard Art Museums, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Menil Collection. The ADP website includes interviews with prominent artists about their materials and techniques, as well as their intent for the future preservation of works of art, providing enhanced scholarly access to digitized archival materials. The CTSMA director’s office will be located in the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies at the museums’ Cambridge facility (see p. 14).

Harvard Art Museums Archives

The Archives collects, organizes, and preserves historical documents relating to the Fogg Museum, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, making them available to staff, students, scholars, and interested members of the international art community. Its mission is to document and promote knowledge and appreciation of the Harvard Art Museums’ history, programs, and goals, and the professional and personal
accomplishments of its principals. Holdings include letters, photographs, scrapbooks, audio- and videotapes, artifacts, architectural drawings, teaching materials, and student works, and they date from the founding of the Fogg Museum in 1895 to the present. The Archives also maintains the administrative and curatorial records of the institution, documenting exhibition history, departmental activities, and the museums' events and programs.

Collections Workrooms

Many objects from the Harvard Art Museums' collections are housed in state-of-the-art conditions at the Somerville facility. Collections Workrooms at this site complement the Art Study Center (see p. 12), providing access to objects and collections that are large and deep in scale, especially fragile, or require special handling. Classes and individual scholars will be able to study these works together with related documentation and source materials.

Looking Ahead

The programs described here aim to capture the museums' rich history and take advantage of the new opportunities afforded by the renovated and expanded facility. During building construction, the museums piloted programs and created digital prototypes to test ideas on campus and in the neighborhood. This phase proved critical to the design of learning experiences and demonstrated the power of seeing the museums' work as experimental and responsive. We embrace the opportunity to work closely with incoming and seasoned students, faculty, and community members to ensure that the interpretation of the museums' extraordinary collections is relevant and fresh.

The most inspiring part is the potential for doing something extraordinary for Cambridge kids. The location of the museums, just down the street from Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, seems almost too perfect to be true.... I feel confident that with the strong sense of collaboration that already exists, we will be able to build something truly special in the future.

— Jeffrey Young, Superintendent of Cambridge Public Schools
One of the things that the Student Guide Program helped me realize is that I want to learn for the rest of my life, but also that I have this inability to keep it to myself.

— Isabel Hebert '13
Preface to OPEN

OPEN is a forthcoming book on the renovated and expanded Harvard Art Museums.

The art museum as an institution has undergone dramatic change over the last few decades in the United States and around the world. Once thought of as quiet aesthetic temples, these often elite sanctuaries were powerful arbiters of taste and knowledge not simply in artistic and cultural spheres, but in popular perceptions as well. Art museums now occupy a far more complex, even challenged role in society. The university art museum in particular has hardly been immune to those shifts. It has been forced to confront not only the altered roles and purposes of museums, but also the evolving nature of universities and pedagogy in a rapidly changing world, one where the visual is perhaps more privileged than at any other time.

This book attempts to capture some of the thinking and new ideas that propelled the reinvention of the Harvard Art Museums. Far more than a renovation and expansion of a physical facility, the entire enterprise was systematically reconsidered—physically, structurally, operationally, and conceptually—by museums staff over the last decade. The goal was to create new and different kinds of art museums for Harvard University.

The Harvard Art Museums have played a leading role in the development of art history, conservation, conservation science, and even in the evolution of the art museum as an institution. Key figures such as Edward Forbes, Paul Sachs, and Agnes Mongan were instrumental in building the museums’ reputation and profile throughout the twentieth century, and we wanted our future to honor and expand on that historic purpose.

Part of a rich and varied museum ecology in the Boston area, the Harvard Art Museums are comprised of three separate museums—the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums—each with a different history, collection, guiding philosophy, and identity. The museums’ collections, among the largest and most important in the United States, are a powerful teaching and learning resource: in effect, Harvard has a major metropolitan museum on its campus. From the outset of the planning process, we wondered how we could use this great resource more effectively and imaginatively—for the benefit of students, faculty, and the community. What are the viable models for a university museum at the beginning of the twenty-first century? What is the role of original works of art in an advanced education? How can works of art support teaching in an academic context, and how is this different from other learning experiences?

These questions generated discussion and debate, revealing sharp differences of opinion and philosophy. Yet certain core principles and beliefs quickly coalesced. Despite the impressive range and richness of the museums’ collections, it was evident that they should be used differently than those of, say, a large public or civic museum. Our purpose should not be simply to display our great works, but to deploy them in innovative ways that create unique teaching and learning experiences.
Long guided by a teaching and research mission, the museums were until 1990 led by Harvard’s art history faculty, who remain essential partners in our work. This historic collaboration in training undergraduates and emerging scholars in art history, visual thinking, and curatorial and conservation practice was crucial to our new vision. Equally important, however, was our desire to create the conditions—both physical and intellectual—for new seeing and thinking experiences for all students. By bringing newly enhanced facilities together with our rich collections and staff expertise, we knew that the Harvard Art Museums could play an even greater part in helping students develop skills different from those generated in classrooms, scientific laboratories, or libraries. And to arrive at this conclusion, we drew on two of our core principles: that there is inherent power in using original works of art as teaching instruments and enduring value in intense, sustained observation as part of the learning process.

We needed a physical facility that would meet the requirements of twenty-first-century users and pedagogy, but also one that would allow us to work differently than many other art museums. We identified three goals that would be fundamental to the future: the university’s great collections had to be made far more accessible; they needed to be put in service to all students, faculty, and the community (not simply to the specialists we train); and new models and strategies were needed to encourage cross-disciplinary work among Harvard’s multiple fields and faculties. Indeed, this emphasis on cross-fertilization had to be applied internally as well; our three constituent museums had become siloed, with little of the collaborative research and exploration that one might expect such celebrated collections to warrant. These were the imperatives embraced early on in the planning process, and they collectively shaped all subsequent thinking about both the new physical facility and the programs that will animate its spaces.

With this new facility, all three museums are united under one roof and as a single destination. Renzo Piano Building Workshop has created not only a highly functional, state-of-the-art structure, but also more accessible and transparent spaces. What had previously been hidden—much of which is fundamental to the workings of a university art museum—has now been revealed and put to new purposes for future generations. While the new Harvard Art Museums have a number of distinctive features and interpretive platforms, there remains much of what originally distinguished this institution—including something that runs counter to our modern lives: an invitation to slow down and engage in the kind of thoughtful looking and thinking that works of art can uniquely produce.

We hope that the new Harvard Art Museums will no longer be perceived as a static “treasure house,” or as a long past president of Harvard once referred to it, “an elegant playground for young gentlemen,” descriptions that in the past have implied a lack of serious purpose in a university setting. Our intention today is quite different: that the museums will instead become a more dynamic and closely integrated element in Harvard’s educational mission—and that they will be viewed as essential to it.

Thomas W. Lentz
Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director, Harvard Art Museums