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**TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT FROM ANDREW W. MELLON
FOUNDATION ENABLES SEVEN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
MUSEUMS TO LAUNCH EXPERIMENTAL
COLLECTION-SHARING INITIATIVE**

Seven college and university art museums have embarked upon a program of significant loans and shared expertise, intended to foster intra- and inter-institutional collaboration, expand opportunities for faculty from all disciplines to teach from works of art, and strengthen the diverse community of college art museums. **Initiated by the Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG)**, the program has been **funded by a generous grant of \$750,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**. Central to the project is a strategic program of loans from YUAG's encyclopedic collection, comprising nearly 200,000 works, to six "partner museums," for use in specially developed exhibitions and related coursework (*see attached descriptions*).

The Yale University Art Gallery Collection-Sharing Initiative derives from the belief that, while digital technologies have increased access to museum collections, there is no substitute for original works of art, which contain not only a particular magnetism, but also a wealth of information about history, human culture, and much more. As such, they can serve as a vital part of educational experiences in a variety of disciplines.

The partner museums for the pilot project are the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine; Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Massachusetts; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts; Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts; and the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. Most of the partner museums had for a period of more than a decade received support from the Mellon Foundation designed to strengthen the use of original works of art across the curriculum. At a 2008 roundtable meeting, convened by the Mellon Foundation to discuss how best to advance the program and to make it deeper and more robust, Jock Reynolds, YUAG's Henry J. Heinz II Director, suggested that the Gallery loan works from its own encyclopedic collection to the other museums, extending the range and depth of the colleges' course offerings and of scholarly research in which original works are a key component.

Mr. Reynolds notes, "The Gallery is deeply grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its support. We are especially indebted to Angelica Rudenstine, recently retired from her position as Program Officer at the Mellon Foundation. Her vision has enabled museums across the country to strengthen their scholarly activities and conservation capacities, while helping

college and university museums to engage more effectively with the academic programs of their faculty and students. It is in this same spirit that the Gallery – which is blessed with an extraordinarily rich collection – proposed an initiative in which it would invite smaller college museums to borrow works that would enrich their own programs and curricula. Moreover, the program is reciprocal, as the development of new projects and the ongoing sharing of expertise will benefit the Gallery as much as the loans of artworks will benefit our partner museums.”

Ms. Rudenstine adds, “The Yale University Art Gallery Collection-Sharing Initiative responds creatively to the goals of the Mellon Foundation’s grant programs for college and university museums. It promises to have a major impact on the participating institutions, enabling them to broaden their already significant academic programs in stimulating faculty from across the spectrum of the curriculum to teach from original works of art. In awarding this grant, the Foundation took into account the possibility that Yale’s initiative might also serve as a model for other museums.”

As a preliminary step in the Initiative, each of the six partner museums considered how works from the Yale University Art Gallery collection could complement or amplify its own holdings, with the aim of enhancing its academic programs. Following planning meetings at Yale in the spring of 2009, each museum submitted a proposal for a partnership with the Gallery, including in some cases preliminary checklists of objects to be borrowed.

Each project has been – or is being – developed in a collaboration that brings together a diversity of curators, scholars, and faculty from the partner institutions and the Yale University Art Gallery. Moreover, the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and pedagogical approaches will be ongoing throughout the projects: Yale curators, conservators, and faculty will continue to work with the partner museums and colleges, including teaching, lecturing, and advising.

The **Initiative will unfold in three cycles**, with most projects lasting about one year. The **first cycle, beginning in spring 2010**, will comprise projects at **Bowdoin**, which has borrowed four early-modern European paintings and thirty early-modern American works, and **Mount Holyoke**, which will receive forty-one ancient Greek and Roman objects. The second cycle includes **Dartmouth**, with a loan of thirty to forty ancient Mediterranean objects; **Smith**, which will focus on Asian art, with a loan of thirty to forty works; and **Williams**, which will borrow between thirty-five and fifty works of American, ancient Greek and Roman, Asian, African, European, and Islamic art. Finally, **Oberlin College** will borrow between twenty and forty European Renaissance paintings and objects. Brief descriptions of each project are attached, with greater detail for those to be undertaken in the first cycle.

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