

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

Laure Marest Appointed Associate Curator of Ancient Coins at the Harvard Art Museums



Photo: Mike Ritter.

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Martha Tedeschi, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums, today announced the appointment of Laure Marest as the new Damarete Associate Curator of Ancient Coins—one of the few numismatic positions based at a U.S. university museum. Marest will lead the charge in rethinking the presentation of the museums' sizable collection of ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and other coins, as well as related objects, and in proposing fresh perspectives for the field through programs and publishing. She will begin her new role at Harvard on September 18, 2023.

Marest is currently the Cornelius and Emily Vermeule Associate Curator of Greek and Roman Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where she was previously assistant curator from 2017 to 2022. While at the MFA, she co-curated *The Marlborough Gem* (2023) and worked with colleagues to renovate and install five new permanent collection galleries featuring the art of ancient Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire, which opened in December 2021. Marest was the lead curator for the Gods and Goddesses Gallery, a major display of large-scale sculptures of ancient Greek and Roman deities—including the MFA's monumental *Juno*—and more intimate objects used for religious rituals. She also is

author of a forthcoming publication on the collection of ancient Greek and Roman engraved gems at the MFA.

In her role at the Harvard Art Museums, Marest will join the Division of Asian and Mediterranean Art and oversee the museums' numismatic collection. Working with colleagues across the museums and the Harvard campus, as well as with community stakeholders, she will participate in a museum-wide rethinking and reframing of the museums' permanent collections galleries and contribute to exhibitions and publications. She will research the current numismatic holdings and make acquisitions to diversify the collection. She will also work closely with students and faculty to continue to expand use of the collection in undergraduate and graduate teaching across disciplines; she will mentor students and curatorial fellows, training and nurturing the next generation in her field.

"We are delighted to welcome Laure to the Harvard Art Museums," said Tedeschi. "Harvard students and our public audiences have long been fascinated with ancient coins, which feature prominently in our collection galleries. Laure's expertise across different media and her wide-ranging interests and passion for inclusive storytelling will further expand our efforts to connect visitors to the peoples and cultures of the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East."

"I am excited to join the Harvard community and to work closely with colleagues across the museums and faculty to animate the numismatic collection and rethink the permanent displays," said Marest. "And it is a great honor to succeed Carmen Arnold-Biucchi, a grande dame in the field, in this position, which itself was named after Damarete, an exemplary female ruler of Syracuse whose deeds were praised in antiquity."

Marest has previously held teaching positions at the University of California, Berkeley, and California State University, Northridge, as well as curatorial assistant and intern positions in the Department of Antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. At the Getty, she assisted with several exhibitions, including *Modern Antiquity: Picasso, De Chirico, Léger and Picabia in the Presence of the Antique* (2011–12), *The Art of Ancient Greek Theater* (2010–11), *Collector's Choice: J. Paul Getty and His Antiquities* (2009–10), and *Carvers and Collectors: The Lasting Allure of Ancient Gems* (2009).

Marest received her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, and holds degrees from California State University, Northridge, and the Sorbonne, Paris. She has participated in excavations in Albania and Italy and was previously involved as a researcher and photographer for the Pompeii Artifact Life History Project and as a gem specialist and photographer for the Pompeii Archaeological Research Project: Porta Stabia. Her research interests include ancient Greek art, especially coins, engraved gems, and portraiture of the Hellenistic period, as well as the reception of antiquity in the 18th and 19th centuries. She has presented at numerous conferences throughout the United States and has published in the *American Journal of Numismatics* and contributed to *Hellenistic Sealings & Archives: Proceedings of The Edfu Connection, an International Conference* (2021) for the Studies in Classical Archaeology series, and to *Proceedings of the XV International Numismatic Congress* (2017).

Comprising over 20,000 coins, the numismatic collection of the Harvard Art Museums is comprehensive and ideally suited for teaching. Greek, Roman, and Byzantine coins from c. 630 BCE to 1453 CE form the core of the collection, but it also features examples of (west) Asian, Islamic, western medieval, and later coins. Thanks to the long-term loan of the Arthur Stone Dewing Collection, the museums' holdings of Greek coinage are particularly strong and include the world's largest collection of Syracusan decadrachms. The coin collection has grown steadily through bequests, gifts, and purchases over the last 125 years. Among these, the Thomas Whittemore bequest of Byzantine coins is especially notable. The bequest of Frederick M. Watkins contains Greek and Roman coins of exceptional quality. The 2005 acquisition of the collection of Margarete Bieber, the 2008 acquisition of the Zvi Griliches Collection, and the transfer of the Alice Corinne McDaniel Collection from Harvard University's Department of the Classics have significantly enriched the holdings of ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish coins.

About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums house one of the largest and most renowned art collections in the United States, comprising three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on art from Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. Together, the collections include over 255,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in the United States. The Harvard Art Museums have a rich tradition of considering the history of objects as an integral part of the teaching and study of art history, focusing on conservation and preservation concerns as well as technical studies. [harvardartmuseums.org](https://www.harvardartmuseums.org)

The Harvard Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Hours and Admission

Open Tuesday–Sunday, 10am–5pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is free to all visitors. For further information about visiting, including general policies, see [harvardartmuseums.org/visit](https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit).

For more information, please contact

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