PRESS RELEASE

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Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art Names Philippe Halbert, PhD, as Richard Koopman Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts

Hartford, Conn. (January 9, 2024) — The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has named Philippe Halbert, PhD as Richard Koopman Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts.

A graduate of the College of William and Mary and the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture, Halbert is an art historian and earned his PhD in the history of art from Yale University, where he studied the intersections of art, empire, race, and self-fashioning in the Atlantic world. His academic work centers American decorative arts and material culture broadly, from its Indigenous roots to interconnected phenomena of diaspora, creolization, and settler-colonialism.

Halbert has served as Interim Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth since November 2022.

“I am committed to telling dynamic, object-centered stories of people and place that transcend geographic, ethnic, linguistic, and temporal bounds,” Halbert said, explaining that his academic interdisciplinary research and professional endeavors are grounded in a desire to encourage appreciation of American decorative arts by specialists and general audiences of all ages.

Proficient in French and Spanish, Halbert has been involved in the development of numerous exhibitions and special installations at the Wadsworth. Oversight responsibilities include over 3,000 decorative arts objects (circa 1650-2020) at the Wadsworth, with duties ranging from daily care of the collection and related research to overseeing rotations in the permanent collection galleries, developing special exhibits, volunteer training, and building partnerships with other institutions and constituents in Hartford and beyond.

Special projects underway and upcoming include New Nation, Many Hands, a special exhibition of federal-era decorative arts and material culture drawn from the permanent collection (on view June 2023-September 2024); reinterpretation of the Wetmore parlor, a painted and paneled room from a circa 1746 Middletown, Connecticut, house; and reevaluation of the Wadsworth’s American decorative arts holdings in anticipation of their reinstallation in 2025.
“Philippe is an outstanding scholar and curator of the Atlantic world, especially the interaction between France and North America. His passion for the material culture of vast early America is infectious and his love of curatorial work, breadth of knowledge, and extensive scholarship are incredible assets for the Wadsworth,” said Matthew Hargraves, Director of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. “We are delighted that he has assumed this new role and look forward to his continued stewardship of our remarkable American Decorative Arts collection.”

Previously in his career, Halbert served as a curatorial intern at various museums, including at the Yale University Art Gallery, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Colonial Williamsburg. He has earned numerous awards and fellowships and been an adjunct lecturer and consultant for various institutions, including at the Embassy of the United States in Paris. He is a resident of West Hartford, CT.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism— are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn.

Current hours are noon–5pm Thursday–Sunday. Berkins on Main café hours are noon–4pm Thursday–Sunday. The Auerbach Art Library is open by appointment only, 10am–5pm Friday. Visit thewadsworth.org for current safety guidelines. Admission: $10–20; discounts for members, students, and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Pay-what-you-wish “happy hour” admission 4–5pm. Advance ticket registration via thewadsworth.org is encouraged, not required. Phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.