

## WORCESTER ART MUSEUM ACCESS BRIDGE TO OPEN NOVEMBER 14

Salisbury access bridge, designed by wHY architecture, and a partial redesign of the front plaza creates an inclusive entryway for all visitors

*Bridge to be officially opened during special ribbon-cutting ceremony at 9:30 a.m.*

Worcester, MA—November 2, 2015—On November 14, 2015, the Worcester Art Museum (WAM) will unveil a new accessible walkway to the historic main entrance on the Salisbury side of the building, which leads visitors into the Museum’s grand Renaissance Court. Designed by Kulapat Yantrasast of wHY Architecture, the “bridge” not only significantly improves access, it also boldly combines contemporary design with the Museum’s 1933 Beaux-Arts exterior. The new walkway will be officially opened during a special ribbon-cutting ceremony at 9:30 a.m. Matthias Waschek, The C. Jean and Myles McDonough Director of the Worcester Art Museum; Anita Walker, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council; and the Honorable Harriette Chandler, Massachusetts State Senator, 1<sup>st</sup> District and Senate Majority Leader, will speak. Following a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, the bridge will be opened at 10am for visitors, young and old, arriving to attend the Global Art and Music Community Day, one of the most highly-attended events of the year.

“All our visitors - including those with mobility issues and families with strollers - can now use the Museum’s front door, entering a place of art via a work of art,” said Matthias Waschek. “We want the WAM experience to start well before entering the gallery spaces. As we honor our past, embrace our presence and look towards the future, this small but thoughtful and very creative project by wHY architecture is just the beginning of much more holistic upgrades of our campus.”

In addition to emphasizing the Museum’s visitor-focused culture, wHY’s design also reflects the Museum’s diverse holdings by representing both historic and contemporary aesthetics. Without altering the Salisbury Street doors or distracting from the formal entrance, the design honors WAM’s past, while the bridge itself in its sleek aesthetic and incorporation of minimal shapes reflects the tastes of today. The bridge’s metallic siding creates a dynamic visual parallel with the columns above. Through the Salisbury doors, the visitor encounters the Museum’s Renaissance Court, which immediately reinforces the diversity of WAM’s collection, with the treasured Worcester Hunt Mosaic and, currently, a contemporary photographic mural by Robert and Shana ParkeHarrison, as part of the *Wall at WAM* project.

In addition to the creation of the access bridge itself, the re-landscaping of the adjacent area, gracefully connects the bridge with both new and existing walkways around the Salisbury Street and Lancaster Street sides of the building. By removing 11 parking spaces from directly in front of the Salisbury Street entrance, the area as a whole has become more open, and gives greater respect to the Museum’s historic, formal entrance.

These changes are part of a set of strategic goals and initiatives the Museum established under its Vision 2020 plan. Broadly focused on transforming and growing the Museum’s audience, the plan looks at both programmatic and infrastructure changes necessary to increase visitation and support sustained engagement with families and younger audiences. Under this rubric, the Museum has in recent years reopened the long-closed doors on its main facade; secured sponsorship support to provide significant free public access during the summer months; become a polling site for the City of Worcester; offered educational programs as part of general admission, thus increasing participation across all programs for all age ranges; and launched an ambitious series of gallery reinstallations—such as *[remastered]* and the Jeppson Idea Lab—that have focused on helping visitors see the contemporary relevance of art and art history.

Partial funding for the Salisbury Street Access Bridge project has been provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council-Cultural Facilities Fund, as well as the Stoddard Charitable Trust, the George I. Alden Trust, the Fletcher Foundation, and the Manton Foundation.

**ABOUT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM:**

Founded in 1896, The Worcester Art Museum serves Worcester and the broader region, promoting art and art education for the benefit of all. Over more than a century, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of over 38,000 objects, including the first paintings by Monet and Gauguin, as well as the first photographs to be acquired by an American institution. Unlocking for visitors fifty one centuries of art, WAM's holdings contain distinguished examples in as diverse fields as European, American, Asian, Pre-Columbian and Contemporary Art. The newly acquired collection from the Higgins Armory Museum – one of the finest in the country – has provided a springboard for diversifying and expanding exhibitions, activities, and programs to reach and engage new audiences. Architectural features, such as a Medieval Chapter House, the Renaissance Court and the Worcester Hunt Mosaic add to the uniqueness of the Worcester Art Museum experience. Further symbolized by the re-opening of the Salisbury Street doors in 2012 and the re-configuring of the main entrance with universal access features (2015), the Museum continues toward its goal of accessibility for all visitors.

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Friday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$14 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$12 for seniors 65+, and \$12 for college students with ID. Members and children under 4 are free. Parking is free. For more information, visit [worcesterart.org](http://worcesterart.org).

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