

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Dr. Theresa A. Cunningham Named VMFA's New Assistant Curator of European Art**  
Cunningham Will Assist With the Research and Interpretation of  
More Than 10,000 Works in VMFA's Collection



Dr. Theresa A. Cunningham is VMFA's new Assistant Curator of European Art and the Mellon Collections. Photo by Sandra Sellars, © 2023 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

**Richmond, Virginia** — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Theresa A. Cunningham as the museum's new Assistant Curator of European Art and the Mellon Collections.

"We are delighted to welcome Theresa to the curatorial ranks at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts," said Alex Nyerges, VMFA's Director and CEO. "In collaboration with Sylvain Cordier, the museum's Paul Mellon Curator and Head of the Department of European Art, Theresa will play a key role in the stewardship, interpretation, and future installations and exhibitions of works of art in this impressive collection."

VMFA's European art collection comprises more than 10,000 paintings, sculptures, decorative art objects and works on paper dating from the early medieval period to the mid-twentieth century, as well as the Mellon collections of French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and British sporting art.

"It gives me tremendous pleasure to welcome Theresa to VMFA," said Dr. Cordier. "She will be an invaluable asset to the museum. I look forward to working with her on the many fascinating projects that we have ahead of us, including exhibitions, acquisitions and the ambitious transformation of the European galleries in the context of VMFA's upcoming expansion and renovation project."

While French Impressionism has been a primary area of Cunningham's research, her recent projects have focused on still life painting and "trompe l'oeil," or art that uses optical illusions to replicate three-dimensional realism. She has

curated exhibitions and published extensively on wide range of subjects, including medieval art, seascapes, Impressionism and modern art.

Cunningham has also contributed to several peer-reviewed publications including the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* and *Print Quarterly*. Her essay “Walter McEwan, Dutch Interior with Four Figures” will appear in the forthcoming publication *American Paintings in the Palmer Museum of Art* (2023).

Cunningham comes to VMFA from the Dixon Gallery & Gardens in Memphis, Tennessee, where, as Assistant Curator, she focused on collection research and interpretation, presenting new approaches to its permanent collection and special exhibitions such as *The Impressionist Landscape and Beyond* (2022), *Sketching in Color: Pastels in the Dixon Collection* (2022) and *Jeanne Seagle: Of This Place* (2023).

Prior to her position at the Dixon, Cunningham was a Margaret R. Mainwaring Curatorial Fellow in the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s Department of Prints, Drawings and Photographs. She curated the exhibition *Unexpected Surfaces* (2021) during her fellowship.

Cunningham was a graduate curatorial assistant at the Palmer Museum of Art at Pennsylvania State University, the school where she received her Ph.D. in art history after defending her dissertation, *Scales of Seeing: Spatial Experience in Paris, 1849–1899* (2020). Cunningham earned her master’s degree in the history of art and archeology from the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University and her bachelor’s degree in art history from Boston College. “I am thrilled to be joining the team at VMFA at such an exciting moment in the museum’s history,” said Cunningham. “I look forward to collaborating with VMFA colleagues to present this wonderful collection to visitors through both the upcoming reinstallation project and special exhibitions.”

For more information about the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, visit [www.vmfa.museum](http://www.vmfa.museum).

### **About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA’s permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris and one of the nation’s finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Wing I after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

**The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit [www.vmfa.museum](http://www.vmfa.museum).**

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