

PRESS RELEASE

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The Williams College Museum of Art Presents  
*A Collection of Histories*  
April 7, 2011 – June 12, 2012

Photos available upon request.

Press Contact: Suzanne Silitch, Associate Director of Communications for the Arts;  
(413) 597-3178; [suzanne.silitch@williams.edu](mailto:suzanne.silitch@williams.edu)

Williamstown, Mass. – The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is pleased to present *A Collection of Histories*, one of the eight exhibitions in the museum's reinstallation project, *Reflections on a Museum*, which looks at "the museum" as its subject. *A Collection of Histories* uses the museum's two Assyrian reliefs, which have been in the collection since 1851, as case studies for how works of art accumulate collections of histories over time. By unpacking the layered meaning of these reliefs, one can examine the significance of context, interpretation, and confront an essential question: Who owns the past?

To encourage a dialogue around the issues of history, the exhibition incorporates an HD flythrough animation of the palace of Ashurnarsipal II and an innovative virtual reality station with an intelligent tour guide. According to Donald Sanders from Learning Sites, which manufactured the technology, this is the "first of its kind in the country, and perhaps wider area." Learning Sites worked in collaboration with Liz Gallerani and museum staff to create technology, the second collaboration after an animation project in 2001. The animation loops continuously in the gallery, providing background about the reliefs including their location, cuneiform inscriptions, figures, and iconography. The animation provides the visitor with the artwork's original context. The VR module also provides the visitor with a deeper level of personal engagement with the material. The visitor controls

the module and navigates throughout the palace with options to look at photographs, descriptions, and 3D modules, thus giving the user a sense of the overall palace schema and program.

### **Learning Sites**

Learning Sites (<http://www.learningsites.com/>) is a local Williamstown company that specializes in "Reliable Archeological Visualizations for Interactive Education and Research." It was founded in the late 1980s by Bill Riseman, who used design software to assist the field of archeology. Riseman and archeologist and professor Donald Sanders met in 1992 and began working together on didactic virtual reality, hypertext, and multimedia projects.

### **The Williams College Museum of Art**

WCMA houses nearly 13,000 works that span the history of art. The museum's principle mission is to encourage multidisciplinary teaching through encounters with art objects that traverse time periods and cultures. An active, collecting museum, its strengths are in modern and contemporary art, photography, prints, and Indian painting. The museum is also noted for its stellar collection of American art from the late 18th century to the present. With the largest collection in the world of works by the brothers Charles and Maurice Prendergast, the museum is a primary center for study of these American artists in a transatlantic context of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Williams College Museum of Art is located on Route 2 in Williamstown, Massachusetts, in the heart of the picturesque Williams College campus. It is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 am to 5 pm, and on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm. Admission is free and the museum is wheelchair accessible; [wcma.williams.edu](http://wcma.williams.edu).

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