

University of Virginia | Art Museum

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Architectural Historian and Museum Curator Bruce Ambler Boucher Appointed Director of the University of Virginia Art Museum

January 29, 2009. Bruce Ambler Boucher, who has divided his career between education, scholarship and museum administration, will become the director of the University of Virginia Art Museum on March 1. He currently is the curator of European sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago, a position he has held since 2002.

Boucher was introduced to a group of gathered U.Va. administrators, faculty, museum staff, students and friends in the museum this afternoon.

“Bruce Boucher is a distinguished scholar and museum professional who brings a wealth of experience and expertise from the world stage to U.Va.,” said Elizabeth Hutton Turner, the University’s vice provost for the arts, to whom he will report. “Moreover, his proven abilities as an administrator, curator and scholar will guide our plans for expansion in the arts and our collections as he advances the mission of the museum and the University to engage the public with the experience of great art through innovative, in-depth programs.

“We are most fortunate that such a seasoned professional has agreed to lead our museum and join in the arts at our University. Great things are coming!”

Boucher’s career as an architectural historian, educator and museum curator spans more than 35 years.

During his years at the Art Institute, he oversaw a staff of 10 and raised funds for acquisitions and exhibits.

In addition, Boucher is an expert on the 16th-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio, whose work has had profound influence on the architecture of the Western world. Thomas Jefferson studied Palladio’s work in preparation for his design of U.Va.’s Academical Village.

“I look forward to joining the University of Virginia both because of its great reputation and because of the opportunities that its art museum offers,” Boucher said. “The museum is an important part of the Jeffersonian ideals of this university, and it will be an honor to work with the museum’s excellent staff in determining its future path.”

Boucher is the author of numerous books, among them *Andrea Palladio: The Architect in His Time*, and he lectures widely on Palladio as well as Italian artists such as Donatello, Tintoretto and others, with a focus on the artists working in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. He was chief curator of the exhibition, *Earth and Fire: Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova*, which was shown at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 2001–2002. He also co-authored the exhibition catalog.

Prior to joining the Art Institute, Boucher taught art history at University College London for 24 years. He also spent two years as visiting member of the Research Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, between 2000–2002. During his tenure at the Art Institute, Boucher taught at the University of Chicago, and he lectures regularly at institutions around the country and abroad.

This year he lectured in Vicenza, Italy, at a symposium marking the 500th anniversary of Palladio’s birth. He has also spoken on Palladio’s villas at New York’s Institute of Classical Architecture and most recently at a symposium on Palladio at Notre Dame University.

Boucher earned his B.A., magna cum laude in Classics and English from Harvard University and a B.A., M.A., in English Language and Literature at Magdalen College, Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. Before entering Oxford, he traveled to Italy and fell in love with the art and architecture. This event led him to change his course of research. After Oxford he went on to earn a M.A. with distinction at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, and then a Ph.D. there with a thesis on the Venetian sculpture of the architect Jacopo Sansovino.

Boucher serves on numerous professional organizations and advisory committees. He has received various honors, including a fellowship at the prestigious Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies at the Villa I Tatti, the Alexander von Humbolt Fellowship, and the Salimbeni Prize for his monograph, "The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino." He also was a guest scholar at the J. Paul Getty Museum and served as guest curator on the research department of the Victoria and Albert Museum from 2000 to 2002.

Boucher, 60, will be joined by his wife, Diane, formerly the director of research for the Commission for Looted Art in Europe.

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