



THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM *News Release*

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For Immediate Release

ELIZABETH E. BARKER APPOINTED STANFORD CALDERWOOD DIRECTOR OF THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM

(Boston, MA, July 24, 2014) The Trustees of the Boston Athenæum announced today the appointment, by unanimous vote, of Elizabeth E. Barker as Stanford Calderwood Director of the Boston Athenæum. Dr. Barker will assume her position on October 1, 2014. She succeeds Paula D. Matthews, who retired as Stanford Calderwood Director and Librarian in July 2013.

Deborah Hill Bornheimer, President of the Boston Athenæum's Board of Trustees said, "In Elizabeth Barker, the Boston Athenæum has found an executive of brilliance, scholarship, and infectious charm. Her deep reverence for the Athenæum's historic place in American cultural life is clear, while her youthful vision and vitality promise fresh eyes on opportunities ahead. Those of us who love the Athenæum feel Dr Barker is an exceptional person who can lead the institution to new heights."

Elizabeth E. Barker appointed Calderwood Director

Dr. Barker is currently director of the Mead Art Museum and lecturer, history of art, at Amherst College, Amherst, MA, where she has served since 2007. As she prepares to take the helm at the Athenæum, Dr. Barker reflected on the opportunities awaiting the distinguished institution.

“The empowering vision of those who, in 1807, founded the Athenæum as a place where a curious person could quench the thirst for knowledge remains fresh and compelling,” Dr. Barker remarked. “Today, thanks to devoted labors of everyone who has contributed to this extraordinary institution, the Athenæum is poised to spring to new levels of excellence, inclusivity, and engagement. I am deeply honored that the Trustees have entrusted me with this important work—and I can’t wait to get started!”

A 1992 *cum laude* graduate of Yale University, Dr. Baker received the Ph.D. in Art History from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in 2003. She brings to the Athenæum twenty years of distinguished experience as a curator, administrator, and museum director, and as an accomplished scholar of British art.

The Calderwood Director serves as the Chief Executive of the Boston Athenæum, working closely with the Board of Trustees to plan for the Athenæum’s future, and overseeing the overall management of the Athenæum, collaborating with senior administrators to prioritize organizational goals and oversee short and long-term management and planning.

Charles (Sandy) Wilkes, Chairman of the Mead Art Museum Advisory Board, stated, “Dr. Barker’s tenure at the Mead was nothing short of remarkable and our sadness over her departure is only outweighed by our

excitement at seeing her assume such important, new responsibilities. We are saying farewell to Dr. Barker with our fondest best wishes and deepest gratitude for a job well done”.

At the Mead Art Museum, Dr. Barker increased the museum’s endowment by 50%, and secured grants and donations of more than \$7.5 million. The Mead acquired more than 1,200 artworks during her tenure, including important collections of American drawings, Korean ceramics, and Japanese prints, major paintings by Martin Johnson Heade, William Blake, and Alfred Sisley, and a rare Roman sarcophagus. She dramatically increased the public accessibility and visibility of the Mead by expanding public access to the museum from 39 to 79 open hours per week, opening a gift shop-café and public study room, launching new marketing and publicity programs, and significantly increasing the museum’s on-line presence and digital outreach. During her tenure, the museum digitized 94% of its collection, and increased physical attendance by 267%. As part of a comprehensive initiative to integrate the art collection more fully into the academic life of the Amherst College that became a hallmark of Dr. Barker’s tenure, class visits to the museum grew by 404%.

Administratively, Dr. Barker restructured and expanded the Mead’s professional staff and reorganized budget planning, completing a comprehensive financial benchmarking study and introducing a long-range budget planning process. She established a national Advisory Board, with which she developed two strategic plans, drafted collection and conservation plans, and extensively revised the code of ethics, mission statement, and other critical policies.

Dr. Barker was selected as Calderwood Director after a year-long, international search conducted by a seven-member search committee

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composed of Trustees John Wigglesworth Everets, Deborah Hill Bornheimer, and Maisie Houghton, Trustee Emerita Elizabeth Johnson, and Athenæum senior administrators Robert West, James Reid Cunningham, and Stanley Cushing.

Prior to joining the Mead Art Museum, Dr. Barker was director of the Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, from 2005-2007. She served on the curatorial staff of the Department of Drawings and Prints in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, from 1994 to 2004, beginning as a curatorial intern before rising through the ranks to the position of associate curator. At the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, she served as guest curator and lead catalogue author of the exhibition, *Joseph Wright of Derby in Liverpool* (2007-2008), also shown at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, England. In 2000, she was a visiting curator at the British Museum in London as part of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and British Museum Exchange Program.

Among her many honors are the A. Conger Goodyear Fine Arts Award at Yale, the Robert Lehman Fellowship and the Robert Goldwater Fellowship at New York University, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art Nine Month Fellowship, the New York Times Foundation Fellowship, Met/British Museum Exchange Grant, and the Henry Allen Moe Prize of the New York State Historical Association. She has twice been a finalist for the William M.B. Berger Prize for British Art History. Among her publications are “A Brief History of the Art Collection at Amherst College” (2011), scholarly articles and essays on William Blake, Samuel Palmer, Joseph Wright of Derby, and George Romney, and contributions to numerous exhibition catalogues for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tate Britain, London, and the Yale Center for British Art.

About the Boston Athenæum

Founded in 1807, the Boston Athenæum is one of the oldest cultural institutions in North America. Among the many distinguished writers, poets, scholars, politicians, and jurists who have been part of its membership are Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Amy Lowell, Francis Parkman, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. and Jr., U.S. Presidents John Quincy Adams and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Boston Mayor John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, and U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy. The Athenæum is located in a beloved National Historic Landmark building at 10 1/2 Beacon Street, Boston. Today, it combines an art museum with a public exhibition gallery and collections of paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, photographs, and decorative arts; a leading scholarly research and membership library with more than 480,000 volumes, including more than 100,000 rare and historical editions; and a civic forum including lectures, book talks, readings, panel discussions, concerts, and other events. For membership information, please visit www.bostonathenaeum.org or call 617-720-7604.

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