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Denver Art Museum to Present *Age of Armor: Treasures from the Higgins Collection* at the Worcester Art Museum in Spring 2022

Immersive exhibition featuring more than 100 objects highlighting the artistry, function and societal perceptions of armor throughout time

DENVER—February 15, 2022—The Denver Art Museum (DAM) will present *Age of Armor: Treasures from the Higgins Collection* at the Worcester Art Museum this spring. *Age of Armor* examines the historical context of armor and the pragmatic functions it served, as well as the ideological sentiments about armor throughout time, from the Middle Ages into the modern era.

The exhibition will feature more than 80 objects from the Higgins Collection, supplemented by several pieces from the **DAM's own collections**. Works from numerous departments were selected to explore ideas more deeply and connect the exhibition to the modern era. These works will encourage visitors to consider how the legacy of armor and the cultural meanings it reflects have endured through time, influencing modern artwork, and, in some cases, challenging traditional histories and ideals. On view May 15 through Sept. 5, 2022, the exhibition is included in general admission.

"Armor served a protective function, but it also held—and in many ways still holds—a mythological role," said **Christoph Heinrich**,



Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the DAM. "This exhibition looks closely at these parallel stories, so visitors will get a sense of the historical development of armor alongside the values it signaled, all while appreciating the fine craftsmanship and artistry applied to create these lasting objects."

Age of Armor was organized by Jeffrey Forgeng, Curator of Arms and Armor and Medieval Art at the Worcester Art Museum (WAM) in Massachusetts. The DAM's presentation is curated by Douglas Wagner, Curatorial Associate of Asian Art at the DAM.

The Higgins Armory Collection at the Worcester Art Museum is one of the largest collections of arms and armor in the United States, comprising more than 1,500 objects from the medieval, Renaissance and later periods in Europe. These include full suits and individual pieces of armor, swords and early firearms. The collection also includes important objects from ancient Egypt and Greece, India and Japan.



"We want to show where armor fits in history and in the imagination," Wagner said. **"Many visitors already have an idea in mind when they think of armor—the 'knight in shining armor' is a vivid image and has a powerful ability to fire people's imaginations.** However, the actual context surrounding these objects is equally fascinating and impactful. With this exhibition, we hope

visitors will discover how armor and the people who wore it influenced society and ideals—from status and moral character, to ambition and nostalgia—and how those **threads run throughout history."**

The exhibition will be organized thematically into seven sections, first introducing the parallel roles of armor—the ideal and the pragmatic. **"The Ideal" examines how armor influenced social perceptions and how, in turn, it became a canvas for those perceptions. "The Reality" highlights armor on the battlefield and in tournaments, where armor's protective qualities were crucially important. "Artistry & Craftsmanship" focuses on the beauty of armor and the techniques utilized in crafting the pieces. A related section observes "Armor as Fashion" and as a reflection of trends at the time. "Who Wore Armor?" humanizes the objects, looking at the people who donned armor, and what they represented to their communities and contemporaries. "The Changing Nature of Warfare" examines how new technology and military approaches transformed armor, both on the battlefield and in the social consciousness. "Enduring Legacies" focuses on armor's ability to remain a powerful symbol to the present day.**

Most of the exhibition will focus on European arms and armor from the 1400s to the 1600s. Recognizing this primarily Western European framework, and the often-overlooked issues of idealization, imperialism and gender roles, Wagner and Stefania Van Dyke, Associate Director of Interpretive Engagement at the DAM, questioned who was not included in the narrative and incorporated objects to highlight additional viewpoints. For instance, two ceramic sculptures by Virgil Ortiz (**Cochiti**) from the DAM's **Indigenous Arts of North America** collection included in the exhibition will present how historical

narratives can **be transformed**; Ortiz's *St. Michael* and *Castillian* relate to European objects elsewhere in the exhibition through their depictions of arms and armor and historic events, but Ortiz reinterprets this imagery from a futuristic, indigenous perspective.



Interpretative stations throughout the gallery will encourage visitors, especially families, to dive deeper—they will experience the craftsmanship of armor while given tactile opportunities to feel various pieces of armor, discover how armor was influenced by nature or consider how fictional characters in modern media carry **forward the idea of the “knight in shining armor.”**

Age of Armor will be on view in the Hamilton **Building’s** Martin & McCormick Gallery (and a portion of the Anschutz Gallery) on level 2, and is included in general admission, which is free for members and all visitors 18 and **under every day, thanks to the museum’s** Free for Kids program supported by Scott Reiman and BELLCO. A catalog published by

the Worcester Art Museum will accompany the exhibition.

Exhibition Support

Age of Armor: Treasures from the Higgins Collection at the Worcester Art Museum is organized by the Worcester Art Museum.

Support is provided by the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign and the residents who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). Promotional support is provided by *5280 Magazine* and CBS4.



Planning Your Visit

The most up-to-date information on planning a visit to the Denver Art Museum can be found online under the [Visit](#) tab. This page includes details on where to park, public transit options and access information.

As a thank you to the voters who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), the museum continues to offer discounted general admission to Colorado residents, with \$13 tickets for residents and \$18 for non-residents. General admission for museum members is free every day. Youth ages 18 and under, regardless of residency, are free **thanks to the museum’s Free for Kids** program. Free for Kids includes free admission for school and youth group visits.

COVID-19 Protocols

The safety of DAM's visitors and staff remains a top priority, and the Museum is continually updating its COVID-19 safety and security protocols based on advice from the CDC and federal and local guidelines. Current protocols can be found at the [Plan Your Visit](#) section of the museum's website.

About the Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art. Its mission is to enrich lives by sparking creative thinking and expression. Its holdings reflect the city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world. Metro voters support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), a unique funding source serving hundreds of metro Denver arts, culture and scientific organizations. For museum information, call 720-865-5000 or visit www.denverartmuseum.org.

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Image 1: Pompeo della Cesa, *Field Armor from a Garniture*, about 1595. Steel, iron, brass, gold, silver, leather, fabric; 56.6 × 10.5 cm (22 5/16 × 4 1/8 in.), 47 lb., 15 oz (weight). The John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection, 2014.112. Image ©2021 Worcester Art Museum, all rights reserved.

Image 2: Southern German, from the area of Augsburg, *Close Helmet for the Foot Tourney*, about 1590. Steel, brass and leather fragments, steel formerly blued) with etching and gilding, and brass; 31.8 × 22.9 × 34.3 cm (12 1/2 × 9 × 13 1/2 in.), 11 lb., 15 oz (weight). The John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection, 2014.1113. Image ©2021 Worcester Art Museum, all rights reserved.

Image 3: Virgil Ortiz (Cochiti), *St. Michael*, 2013. Clay, slip, and paint; 16 1/4 × 9 × 7 in. Gift from Vicki and Kent Logan to the Collection of the Denver Art Museum, 2016.111A-D. ©Virgil Ortiz.

Image 4: Nagasone Tojiro Mitsumasa, *Helmet in the form of a Sea Conch Shell*, 1618. Iron with traces of lacquer, textiles; 22.9 × 30.5 × 26.7 cm (9 × 12 × 10 1/2 in.), 3 lb., 13 oz. (weight). The John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection, 2014.89.1.