Scott Wilcox, Deputy Director for Collections, to Retire after More Than Thirty Years at the Center

Longtime curator and administrator to begin new research role

NEW HAVEN, CT (March 31, 2020)—The Yale Center for British Art announces that Scott Wilcox, Deputy Director for Collections, will begin a two-year phased retirement starting April 1, 2020. Wilcox, who has worked for the Center for his entire career, will immediately take on a new position as Senior Research Scholar. His full retirement will begin on March 1, 2022, concluding a career that spans more than three decades. A search for his successor is forthcoming.

“Scott has shaped the curatorial ambitions of the Center over the past 30 years by enriching our knowledge of and appreciation for works on paper and by bringing significant examples of photography into the collection,” Director Courtney J. Martin said. “As a student at Yale in the early 2000s, I knew of Scott’s great achievements as a curator and scholar. When I returned to the Center as director, I learned that he was also a stellar colleague. Over the next two years, we will have the opportunity to learn more from him as he turns to a research role that will certainly benefit staff, visiting scholars, and visitors to our exhibitions.”

Wilcox received his PhD in the history of art from Yale University in 1985, completing his doctoral dissertation on the nineteenth-century watercolor painter David Cox. He joined the Center as Assistant Curator of Prints and Drawings in 1982 and later held the positions of Associate Curator (1991), Curator (1998), Chief Curator of Art Collections, and Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings (2009).

“As I look back on nearly 38 years at the Center, I feel tremendously grateful that I’ve had such a long run in an institution with such great collections, great programs, and great colleagues,” Wilcox said. “I hope I’ve been able to make a positive contribution to what makes the Center special. At different moments I considered moving on, but I always concluded that there was no other place I’d rather be.”

From 1987 to 2014, Wilcox served as the Center’s in-house curator for photographic exhibitions and was instrumental in establishing a collection of photography within the Department of Prints and Drawings through the purchase or gift of works from Charles Isaacs and Carol Nigro and the gift of works from the Joy of Giving Something, Inc.
In 2014, Wilcox was promoted to Deputy Director for Collections, expanding his curatorial role to include all the Center’s collections. In this role, one of five senior leadership positions at the Center, he has overseen the intellectual framework in which the Center’s art is interpreted, as well as the care of the art and growth of the collections. Between 2009 and 2010, Wilcox directed the creation and development of the new Department for Collections Information and Access, which catalogues the Center’s collections electronically and serves as their online platform. Wilcox co-led a team of curators to develop Britain in the World, the reinstallation of the Center’s collections that coincided with its reopening in 2016, following a major building conservation project. This ongoing exhibition offers a new interpretation of the collections that focuses on British art, history, and culture in a global context.

Wilcox’s deep knowledge of works on paper has resulted in many significant exhibitions at the Center: Victorian Landscape Watercolors (also at the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) in 1992–93; Lucian Freud Etchings from the Paine Webber Art Collection (Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Seattle Art Museum; Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston; Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University; and Carnegie Museum of Art) in 1999–2000; Sun, Wind, and Rain: The Art of David Cox (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) in 2008–9; and The English Prize: The Capture of the “Westmorland,” an Episode of the Grand Tour (Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Oxford) in 2012–13. These exhibitions were accompanied by major publications with scholarly essays and illustrated catalogues.

“I have known Scott Wilcox throughout his illustrious career at Yale,” said Jules D. Prown, Founding Director of the Yale Center for British Art and Professor Emeritus in the History of Art at Yale University. “Our initial acquaintance began when, as Scott’s professor, I directed his dissertation on the English artist David Cox. Since he knew a great deal about the artist and I did not, it did not require much effort on my part. When Scott applied for a position in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Center, he distinguished himself quickly from the other candidates by the accuracy of his eye in making attributions and aesthetic judgments. Scott is deeply respected by his colleagues, not only for his curatorial and administrative ability but also for his intelligent analysis, conclusions, and leadership.”

In his new role as Senior Research Scholar, Wilcox will assist in the transition to his successor and will cocurate (with Antonella Pelizzari) Photographs of Italy and the British Imagination, 1840–1914, scheduled to open at the Center in fall 2021. The exhibition
will showcase the work of British photographers in Italy and consider the ways in which photography shaped the British appreciation and understanding of Italian art, culture, and politics.

ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART
The Center houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom, encompassing works in a range of media from the Elizabethan period to the present day. It offers exhibitions and programs year-round, including lectures, concerts, films, symposia, tours, and family events. Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu, and connect on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube @yalebritishart. #YCBA

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