

AUTHENTICATION IN ART

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*although not directly within our goals, this article is still interesting for our development of knowledge.

Harvard / Fogg Museum
Art Museums / Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Mark Rothkos Harvard Murals



[Untitled \(Study for Harvard Murals\) \(recto and verso\)](#)

This new presentation of Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals features innovative, noninvasive digital projection as a conservation approach. The exhibition returns this mural series to public view and scholarship while also encouraging study and debate of the technology.

The technique employs a camera-projector system that includes custom-made software developed and applied by a team of art historians, conservation scientists, conservators, and scientists at the Harvard Art Museums and the MIT Media Lab. The digital projection technology restores the appearance of the murals' original rich colors, which had faded while on display in the 1960s and '70s in a penthouse dining room of Harvard University's Holyoke Center (now the Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center), the space for which they were commissioned. Deemed unsuitable for exhibition, the murals entered storage in 1979 and since then have rarely been seen by the public.

Featuring 38 works from 1961–62, including the murals and many of the artist's related studies on paper and canvas, the exhibition also explores Rothko's creative process. A sixth mural painted for the commission—brought to Cambridge by Rothko but ultimately not installed—will be presented publicly for the first time. Many of the works on paper contain relevant sketches on their reverse, which will be displayed during the second half of the exhibition beginning in March 2015. The studies on canvas provide perspective on Rothko's process as he worked from small to large scale.

The majority of the works exhibited are from the Harvard Art Museums, with loans from Kate Rothko Prizel, Christopher Rothko, Dr. Corinne Flick, the National Gallery of Art, and the Menil Collection.

The exhibition includes multimedia components accessible via interactive screens in the gallery. Those components are all also assembled in a Vimeo channel. The content includes interviews with members of the

project team as well as with Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko, the artist's children, and other individuals who have expert knowledge about Rothko and the Harvard Murals commission.

Each day at 4pm, the projectors are turned off to provide visitors an opportunity to see the murals without projected light.

Curated by Mary Schneider Enriquez, the Houghton Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Harvard Art Museums; in collaboration with Narayan Khandekar, senior conservation scientist, Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard Art Museums; Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, director, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums, and associate director for conservation and research, Whitney Museum of American Art; Christina Rosenberger, research coordinator, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums; and Jens Stenger, conservation scientist, Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Yale University (formerly of the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard Art Museums). The camera-projector system and software were developed with Ramesh Raskar, associate professor of media arts and sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and head, MIT Media Lab's Camera Culture Group. Digital restoration of Ektachrome transparencies was completed together with Rudolf Gschwind, professor and head, Digital Humanities Lab, University of Basel, Switzerland.

Research, technical analysis, and conservation treatment for Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals have been made possible in part through the generous support of the AXA Art Insurance Corporation, the Bowes Family Foundation, InFocus Corporation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Ezra and Lauren Merkin, Novartis International AG, Lief D. Rosenblatt, and the NBT Charitable Trust. Initial exhibition funding was provided by the Graham Gund Exhibition Fund, the Rosenblatt Fund for Post-War American Art, and the Agnes Gund Fund for Modern and Contemporary Art. Modern and

contemporary art programs at the Harvard Art Museums are made possible in part by generous support from the Emily Rauh Pulitzer and Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., Fund for Modern and Contemporary Art.

Related Exhibition

More than Mere Practicality: Modernizing Harvard at Mid-century

November 3, 2014–January 20, 2015

Harvard Graduate School of Design, Frances Loeb Library, 48 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA

Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals, exhibited at the Harvard Art Museums November 16, 2014 through July 26, 2015, were originally installed at Holyoke Center (now the Smith Campus Center) in 1964, in the midst of what Fogg Museum director John Coolidge called "an unprecedented moment for visual arts in America." This companion exhibition at the Graduate School of Design provides an architectural context for the Rothko commission, examining the remarkable synthesis of art and architecture on Harvard's campus at mid-century. It focuses on the university's embrace of second-wave modernism, which expanded the concerns of architecture beyond functionalist pragmatics to address the emotional and spiritual impact of built form. In case studies of three Harvard buildings: the Architects Collaborative's Harkness Graduate Center (1948–50), Josep Lluís Sert's Holyoke Center (1958–66), and Minoru Yamasaki's William James Hall (1961–65), the exhibition explores a dynamic and evolving relationship between art and architecture central to this new, more humanist functionalism.

This exhibition is made possible by the Graham Gund Exhibition Fund, held jointly by the Harvard Graduate School of Design and the Harvard Art Museums.

