



Please join us for a **Museums at Noon** presentation!

Speaker: Alison Rittershaus (PhD candidate, Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology)

When: 12:00 pm on Friday, March 29

Where: UM Museum of Art Multi-Purpose Room (125)

Enhancing Access to Roman Ceramics at the Harvard Art Museums

This talk discusses the tensions revealed between the shifting mission of a university museum and the complicated history of its collections during my internship in the curatorial department of Asian and Mediterranean Art at the Harvard Art Museums. In addition to shadowing department faculty and staff throughout ongoing strategizing about publications, exhibitions, and teaching accessibility with the goal of broadening the museum's audience, I worked on researching its substantial collection of Roman ceramic lamps, fleshing out their entries in the online catalogue and proposing methods to integrate them into classroom teaching and gallery displays.

Just as the institution is an agglomeration of multiple museums searching for a cohesive brand identity, the lamp collection presents an accumulation of objects that resists neat categorization. They arrived over the course of more than a century, residing in a variety of Harvard-affiliated collections before finding a permanent home in the art museum. Though they are archaeological objects, with very few interesting primarily for their aesthetic value, many lack information about their origin and many can be easily identified as modern forgeries or reproductions. This talk explores the process of trying to use the constraints to put the lamp collection to use in service of the larger museum's goals.