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CONTACT: Thea M. Page, 626-405-2260 or [tpage@huntington.org](mailto:tpage@huntington.org)

**HUNTINGTON NAMES ITS FIRST CURATOR OF  
AMERICAN DECORATIVE ARTS**

*Appointment of Harold B. “Hal” Nelson signals institution’s  
increasing commitment to the field*

SAN MARINO, Calif.—Harold B. “Hal” Nelson has been named the first curator of American decorative arts at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. A specialist in decorative art and contemporary craft for more than 30 years, Nelson has written numerous publications and organized a variety of exhibitions. As guest curator at The Huntington beginning in January 2008, he contributed to the comprehensive reinstallation of the newly expanded Virginia Steele Scott Galleries of American Art, which opened in May.

“We have become increasingly committed to the collection, display, and interpretation of American decorative art in recent years,” says John Murdoch, Hannah and Russel Kully Director of the Art Collections at The Huntington. “And we are absolutely ecstatic that we now can celebrate not only a new curatorial position but also our ability to attract a specialist of Mr. Nelson’s caliber.”

The Huntington’s collection of American decorative art spans a great range of styles, functions, and media, with examples from the colonial period through the 20th century. It is composed of furniture; silver; ceramics; glass; and metalwork, including jewelry, desk implements, and architectural ornaments. The collection has grown significantly in recent years. When The Huntington’s first American art galleries opened in 1984, it held 152 such objects. Twenty-five years later, there are approximately 950 pieces in the collection, many of which are displayed in the new galleries.

Nelson worked closely on the new installation with Jessica Todd Smith, Virginia Steele Scott Curator of American Art. “Hal was absolutely integral to the research and preparation behind the new installation,” said Smith. “A key part of the vision for the display of decorative arts was to fully integrate them with paintings and sculpture. Hal embraced that approach and took it to the ultimate creative and professional level. As a permanent curator, he will no doubt impress us again and again with his prowess in collections management, exhibitions, and interpretation.”

As curator of American decorative arts at The Huntington, Nelson will be responsible for a prominent portion of the collections, with highlights spanning the history of art made in the United States, such as a prime example of a high chest of drawers made in Salem, Mass., in 1755–75; a rare cabinet from Ralph Whitehead’s Byrdcliffe Arts Colony (1904); a recently acquired library table made by designer Charles Rohlf’s (1853–1936); and an extraordinary stained glass window designed by George Washington Maher (1864–1926). There is also a strong silver collection from the colonial period and a nascent but growing group of metal works and ceramics.

Nelson served as director of the Long Beach Museum of Art from 1989 to 2006 and as chief administrator for exhibitions at the American Federation of the Arts in New York from 1983 to 1989. He is also a former Smithsonian Research Fellow at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. He has written numerous publications exploring decorative arts and contemporary craft. In 2007 he co-authored with Bernard Jassar *Painting with Fire: Masters of Enameling in America, 1930–1980*, the definitive text on its subject. He also has written on such topics as Wedgwood Fairyland lusterware, contemporary wood sculpture, postwar ceramics, and 18th-century American furniture.

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### **About The Huntington**

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public. More information about The Huntington can be found online at [www.huntington.org](http://www.huntington.org).

### **Visitor information**

The Huntington is located at 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, Calif., 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles. It is open to the public Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from noon to 4:30 p.m.; and Saturday, Sunday, and Monday holidays from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Summer hours

(Memorial Day through Labor Day) are 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Tuesdays and major holidays. **Admission on weekdays:** \$15 adults, \$12 seniors (65+), \$10 students (ages 12–18 or with full-time student I.D.), \$6 youth (ages 5–11), free for children under 5. Group rate \$11 per person for groups of 15 or more. Members are admitted free. **Admission on weekends and Monday holidays:** \$20 adults, \$15 seniors, \$10 students, \$6 youth, free for children under 5. Group rate \$14 per person for groups of 15 or more. Members are admitted free. Admission is free to all visitors on the first Thursday of each month with advance tickets. Information: 626-405-2100 or [www.huntington.org](http://www.huntington.org).