

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Philanthropists Marica and Jan Vilcek endow a curatorial position at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Art historian and curator John Byck has been named the Marica F. and Jan T. Vilcek Associate Curator in the Department of Arms and Armor

NEW YORK—August 13, 2024—Philanthropists Marica F. and Jan T. Vilcek have endowed a curatorial position in the Department of Arms and Armor at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The position, “The Marica F. and Jan. T. Vilcek Associate Curator,” follows in the philanthropists’ tradition of supporting the work of art historians at The Met and other institutions through fellowships, scholarships, and endowments.

Marica Vilcek is a cofounder and vice chair of the Vilcek Foundation. An art historian, she began her career at the Slovak National Gallery in 1960. In spring 1965, she began her career in New York, first as a volunteer in the library of the Brooklyn Museum before joining the Watson Library at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in September of that year. Vilcek’s appointment at The Met would be the start of a 32-year career at the Museum. In 2012, she was elected an honorary trustee there, a title she has held since.

Vilcek’s career and legacy with The Met has been a driving force behind the Vilcek Foundation and the Vilceks’ own philanthropic work to support young artists and arts professionals.

Art historian and curator John Byck was named the Marica F. and Jan T. Vilcek Associate Curator in the Department of Arms and Armor at The Met in February 2024. He joined the Department of Arms and Armor at The Met in September 2015.

Since 2015, Byck has established himself as a leading authority in the art and history of antique American and European firearms and edged weapons, publishing and lecturing extensively on those topics and curating multiple exhibitions, including *The Art of London Firearms*, and *Japanese Arms and Armor from the Collection of John and Etsuko Morris*, and co-curated *Emperors, Artists & Inventors: Transformative Gifts of Fine Arms and Armor*. His contributions to other exhibitions and catalogs, installations in the permanent galleries, and over 20 acquisitions have had a transformative impact on the presentation of arms at The Met and to the boundaries of the Arms and Armor permanent collection.

Most recently, in May 2024, Byck delivered an invited lecture at the Royal Armouries in Leeds, England, detailing new discoveries made about the Department’s exceptional group of firearms decorated by Tiffany & Co. in the 1880s–90s, reflecting on new research he developed as part of his work on The Met’s exhibition, [Collecting Inspiration: Edward C. Moore at Tiffany & Co.](#) (June 9–October 20, 2024). While abroad, he also led a travel program for the Friends of Arms and Armor in the United Kingdom centering upon behind-the-scenes visits to preeminent public and private arms and armor collections. He recently installed three important objects newly loaned from two private collections in the Robert M. Lee Gallery of American Arms.

Byck completed his undergraduate degree in American history and classical studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 2006. While pursuing his studies, he began taking art history courses, which ignited a passion for the subject. He subsequently interned at Christie's auction house, and enrolled at the Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) at New York University, earning his master's and PhD degrees from the IFA in 2010 and 2015, respectively.

While at the IFA, his research focused on Medieval and Renaissance prints and drawings. He began his career at The Met in 2009 as an intern in the Department of Drawings and Prints before taking on roles as a research assistant under several curators in that department, positions he held from September 2009 through August 2015.

Byck's scholarship and broad range of research interests attracted the attention of Pierre Terjanian, then the Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Curator in Charge of Arms and Armor, who hired Byck in 2015. Pivoting into the arms and armor field, Byck was inspired by the Department's diverse collection. He quickly applied his expertise in design, metalwork, decorative arts, and history to undertake new interdisciplinary research projects; he has since developed important projects, scholarship, and publications for the Department of Arms and Armor in collaboration with colleagues across the Museum as well as with external partners.

Byck's passionate exploration and in-depth scholarship align with Marica Vilcek's own career in the arts and art history; this is in parallel with the lineage of many of the curators and art historians Vilcek has supported through her mentorship and patronage. The Vilcek Foundation is delighted at his appointment as the Marica F. and Jan T. Vilcek Associate Curator, and we look forward to what comes next for this promising young museum professional.

The Vilcek Foundation

The Vilcek Foundation raises awareness of immigrant contributions in the United States and fosters appreciation for the arts and sciences. The foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history. Since 2000, the foundation has awarded over \$7 million in prizes to foreign-born individuals and has supported organizations with over \$6 million in grants.

The Vilcek Foundation is a private operating foundation, a federally tax-exempt nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). To learn more, please visit vilcek.org.