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**EXHIBITION
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
CONTACT: Lynn Collins, information director
781.283-2034
lcollins@wellesley.edu
or Dabney Hailey, associate curator
781.283-2353
dhailey@wellesley.edu

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Women Who Ruled: Queens, Goddesses, Amazons 1500 – 1650
Opens at the Davis Museum September 19

Wellesley, Mass.— *Women Who Ruled: Queens, Goddesses, Amazons 1500 – 1650*, an exhibition organized and circulated by the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA), opens Thursday, September 19 at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center on the campus of Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass. An opening reception will be held at 6pm on September 19. The reception and related events, including a gallery talk, concert, and film series, are free and open to the public. The exhibition continues through December 8.

The exhibition focuses on the visual representation of powerful women in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Europe, an exceptional period of history filled with an unusual number of states and kingdoms led by women.

More than 80 images of Old Master paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures and decorative arts objects depicting powerful women are brought together for the first time to reveal much about the context in which they were created. Looking at these representations from the vantage point of women's societal roles at the time, the exhibition examines the visual strategies used to convey female power and to communicate points of view toward it—ranging from anxiety to endorsement, and often showing ambivalence.

“Today women are breaking gender boundaries on many fronts yet they are still struggling for recognition and equal treatment,” notes exhibition organizer, UMMA Curator of Western Art, Annette Dixon. “Powerful women have always been controversial. Today’s women were preceded by these rulers of 400 years ago who fought against confining ideas about their place in society.”

This was an age fascinated by the sight of women in power, in which depictions of real queens, Olympian goddesses, female warriors, heroines and seductresses from the Bible, and mythology, were part of the everyday visual vocabulary.

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Queen Elizabeth I, Catherine de' Medici, Marie de' Medici, Anne of Austria, and Christina, Queen of Sweden were some of the most famous rulers of the era.

The objects in *Women Who Ruled* are drawn from nearly 50 major American, Canadian, and European collections. Lenders to the exhibition include the British Museum; the Bibliothèque Nationale and Musée du Louvre; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Highlights from the exhibition include: George Gower (or associate), *Portrait of Elizabeth I*, ca. 1588, oil on canvas, (Leicester Galleries, London); Paris Bordone, *Athena Scorning the Advances of Hephaestus*, ca. 1555-60, oil on canvas, (Columbia, Museum of Art and Archeology, University of Missouri-Columbia); Hans Sebald Behan, *Judith Seated in an Arch*, 1547, engraving, (University of Michigan Museum of Art); Israhel van Meckenem, *The Angry Wife*, from the series *Scenes of Daily Life*, ca. 1495/1503, engraving, (Ackland Art Museum, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).

The exhibition is accompanied by a beautifully illustrated, 200-page catalogue published by Merrell Publishers, London. The catalogue features essays by noted scholars including Mieke Bal of the University of Amsterdam; Merry Wiesner-Hanks of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Bettina Baumgärtell of the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf; and Annette Dixon.

This exhibition is made possible by the Ford Motor Company. Additional support has been provided by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, The University of Michigan Office of the Provost, the Friends of the Museum of Art, the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and other generous donors. The presentation of *Women Who Ruled* is funded by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Museum Arts and Cultural Program Fund, Wellesley College Friends of Art, Wellesley Centers for Women, and AAA Southern New England.

Museum Hours

The DMCC is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11am to 5pm and Sunday 1-5. Please note the museum will not be open evenings during the fall semester with the exception of times when evening programs are scheduled. Admission and parking are free. Recorded information about DMCC exhibitions, events, and driving directions is available at 781-283-2051 or on our web site at:

<http://www.wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum/davismenu.html>. For tour information, please call 781-283-3382. The Collins Cafe, adjacent to the Museum, features a new menu daily and is open to the public weekdays until 3:00pm.

The Museum Welcomes Visitors with Disabilities

The Museum, Collins Café and Collins Cinema are wheelchair accessible and wheelchairs (2) are available for use in the Museum without charge. Special needs may be accommodated by contacting the Director of Disability Services, Jim Wice at 781-283-2434 or at jwice@wellesley.edu.

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Programs Related to the Exhibition

September

18 September, 7:00, Collins Cinema. Film Series. *La Reine Margot (Queen Margot)*

Patrice Chéreau, France/Italy/Germany, 1994, 144 min. (French with English subtitles)

Based on a novel by Alexandre Dumas, *Queen Margot* concerns the turbulent events of 16th-century France, a time when Protestants and Catholics were vying for political control.

19 Thursday, 12 noon, Chandler Gallery. Gallery Talk: *Women Who Ruled*

Exhibition Curator Annette Dixon, curator of Western Art, University of Michigan Museum of Art, shares her insights on the exhibition she created.

19 Thursday, 2:50–5:00 p.m., Chandler Gallery. Open Class Session:

Women Who Ruled Exhibition Curator Annette Dixon, ARTH 331 Seminar: The Art of Northern Europe, Professor Margaret Carroll, Art Department.

25 Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Collins Cinema. Film Series: *Bandit Queen*

Shekhar Kapur, UK/India, 1994, 121 min. Based on the true story of legendary female warrior Phoolan Devi, *Bandit Queen* is an epic that painfully exposes a controversial aspect of Indian culture, while providing a triumphant portrait of female empowerment.

October

2 Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Collins Cinema. Film Series: *Elizabeth*. Shekhar Kapur, UK, 1998, 124 min./

Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth* serves up religious tension, political conspiracy, sex, violence, and war. With lines such as, "There will be only one mistress here and *no master!*" *Elizabeth* fully immerses you into its compelling chronicle of pioneering feminism.

3 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., Towne Gallery. Concert: *The Music of Shakespeare's Women: Heroines and Harlots, Crowns and Crones.* Ensemble Chaconne performs Renaissance and Elizabethan music on period instruments with Chris Henriksen--lute; Carol Lewis--viola da gamba; Peter Bloom, historical flute; and renowned guest mezzo-soprano Pamela Dellal.

16 Wednesday, 6:00pm, Towne Gallery. Open Discussion (Group Think)

Sumru Erkut, Senior Research Scientist, Wellesley Centers for Women, will discuss the results of her study *Women Leaders*. Participants will learn from the experiences of women leaders how to rise to the top. The presentation will be followed by an open discussion on how more women can attain positions of public power in the 21st century.

November

13 Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Collins Cinema. Film Series: *Queen Christina*. Rouben Mamoulian, US, 1933, b/w, 97 min. In what is considered one of her finest films, Greta Garbo stars as the Swedish Queen, who feels that she can best function in a male-dominated world by adopting men's clothes and attitudes.

December

4 Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Collins Cinema. Film Series: *Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.* Stephan Elliott, Australia, 1994, 104 min. This Australian road-trip comedy follows two drag queens and a transsexual as they travel through the Outback. In a bus christened Priscilla, they encounter both new fans and vitriolic homophobes, giving a realistic glimpse at the defenses those on society's fringe must develop to survive.

For a complete and updated listing of public programs offered please visit the Davis Museum web site at <http://www.wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum/davismenu.html> or telephone 781.283-2051

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