

## **DR. THELMA K. THOMAS APPOINTED ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EARLY CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE ART**

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The Institute of Fine Arts has appointed Dr. Thelma K. Thomas as Associate Professor of Early Christian and Byzantine Art. Professor Thomas will complete her current academic commitments at the University of Michigan this academic year, and join the Institute faculty in September 2007.

Professor Thomas earned her Ph.D. at the Institute of Fine Arts in 1989, with a dissertation on “Niche Decorations from the Tombs of Byzantine Egypt (Heracleopolis Magna and Oxyrhynchus, A.D. 300-500): Visions of the Afterlife,” written under the supervision of her predecessor, Professor Thomas Mathews. Since that time Professor Thomas has gained a worldwide reputation as a key scholar in a new generation of Byzantine specialists who are redefining the field through interdisciplinary work in art history, archaeology, anthropology, philology, and cultural and material history. Her work has expanded the boundaries of the field as she has shown the nuanced and complex character of the relations of the metropolis of Constantinople to regional centers of artistic production.

Professor Thomas’s publications include *Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture: Images for this World and the Next* (Princeton University Press, 2000), major catalogue essays for the Metropolitan Museum’s landmark exhibitions of Byzantine art in 1997 and 2004, and a host of articles. With Elizabeth Sears, she edited *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object* (University of Michigan Press, 2002). At the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, she has curated several important scholarly exhibitions, including one on the ancient kingdom of Nubia and another on Byzantine art and Coptic textiles.

Professor Thomas joined the University of Michigan as an Assistant Professor in 1989, earning promotion to the Associate Professorship in 1994. Since then, she has also served as Associate Curator at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. In 1999 the University appointed her Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies.

Professor Thomas’s current research addresses late antique textile production in Egypt, throwing fresh light on a vibrant, voluminous, and varied quantity of surviving material. Her analysis of it is breaking new ground for the interpretation of early monastic communities in late antique Egypt and is yielding significant new methodological insight into the history of the applied arts. This new work is fundamental to an exhibition project Professor Thomas is developing with colleagues at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Mariët Westermann, the Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director of the Institute of Fine Arts, states, “All of us at the Institute of Fine Arts are delighted that Thelma

Thomas will continue to expand our great tradition in the history of Early Christian and Byzantine art. Her work in the field has already been transformative, and we look forward to having a scholar of such distinction on our faculty.”

The Institute of Fine Arts is one of the world’s leading graduate schools and research centers in art history, archaeology, and conservation. The Institute has a permanent faculty unrivalled in the breadth and depth of its expertise and unparalleled in the range of its adjunct lecturers from top museums, research institutes, and conservation studios. Since the Institute awarded its first PhD in 1933, more than 1600 degrees have been conferred. A high proportion of alumni hold international leadership roles as professors, curators, museum directors, archaeologists, conservators, critics, and institutional administrators.