

PRESS RELEASE
DR. SARAH MESCHUTT TO LECTURE AT SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY
ON THE ART OF PORTRAITURE

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Sarah Bevan Meschutt will present a public lecture titled "How Portraiture Evolved in Europe and America, 1500-1900" on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2006, at 7 p.m. in Hester Auditorium, Henkel Hall, on Shenandoah University's main campus. Her overview of this fascinating field will show how identities were crafted and how fashion pervades portraiture. Dr Meschutt will examine the functions and forms that portraits have taken, and how styles of dress and formal poses have evolved. Particular attention will be given to portraiture in Britain and America in the century before 1850.

Meschutt is curator of collections at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester, Va. Her areas of specialty are European and American painting, decorative arts and architecture; European sculpture; European arms and armor; and historic art collections.

The portrait has been the most popular category of representational art in domestic settings in Europe and America since the late 1600s. A portrait speaks to a family's pride and sense of self-identity. It often reveals a person's status and ambitions. Sometimes a family commissions a portrait to mark a particular moment. Portraits often celebrate college graduations, marriages, professional appointments or the birth of children. Portraits have also been commissioned to honor and record official images of presidents, national heroes, dignitaries and celebrities. More often than not, they have been exchanged between individuals as a token of love or friendship.

A portrait shows what is in front of the artist's eye and what is in his or her mind. A portrait is both a picture of a person and a work of art that is formed by the artist's imagination, experiences and formal training. For example, look around the portraits at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley and Historic Glen Burnie House and observe the variety of poses and styles of dress. What do these aspects of portraiture tell us about the artists as well as the sitters? Dr Meschutt will provide some answers in the course of her talk. Meschutt's lecture at Shenandoah, a component of Dr. Geraldine Kiefer's course "Art 216: American Art," is generously supported by a gift from Virginia-Wojno Forney. Admission is free and open to the public.
