

NEWS RELEASE



Montclair Art Museum

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MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM PRESENTS FIRST EXHIBITION TO EXPLORE THE INFLUENCE OF CÉZANNE ON EARLY 20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN ART

***Cézanne and American Modernism* Highlights the French Master's Impact upon the Development of American Modernism**

MONTCLAIR, NJ, June 20, 2009—The Montclair Art Museum (MAM) presents *Cézanne and American Modernism*, the first exhibition to examine fully the influence of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) upon modern American artists from 1907 to 1930. From September 13, 2009 – January 3, 2010, the exhibition will explore the critical function American artists and others played in establishing the reputation of Cézanne, who has been universally acclaimed as the definitive bridge between late 19th-century Impressionism and the modern art movements of the 20th century.

As the largest, most ambitious exhibition in the 95-year history of the Museum, *Cézanne and American Modernism* comprises 131 works, including 18 works by Cézanne and paintings, works on paper, photographs, and archival documents representing 34 American artists, as well as critics. Works in the exhibition are drawn from a wide range of museum collections, including MAM's, and from important private collections. As a testament to its commitment to the community, MAM will not charge extra for this special exhibition but instead will retain its existing price structure.

The exhibition, curated by Dr. Gail Stavitsky, Chief Curator, Montclair Art Museum, will be presented in collaboration with The Baltimore Museum of Art. It will be on view at The Baltimore Museum of Art from February 14 through May 23, 2010, and will then travel to the Phoenix Art Museum, where it will be on view from July 3 through September 26, 2010. Stavitsky is organizing the exhibition in collaboration with Katherine Rothkopf, Senior Curator and Department Head of European Painting and Sculpture, The Baltimore Museum of Art.

This traveling exhibition will be accompanied by a major scholarly publication, published in association with Yale University Press, which will include a range of diverse scholarly perspectives provided by a team of 23 scholars. The ongoing influence of Cézanne is extended beyond the timeframe of this project into the era of Abstract Expressionism and the 1960s.

“American modernists played seminal roles in disseminating Cézanne’s influence and expanding access to his work through their artwork, dialogues, and writings, as well as through their organizing of exhibitions,” said Stavitsky. “A number of these artists were also advisors to the first American collectors of Cézanne’s work and even acquired examples themselves. Thus they played critical roles in the canonization of Cézanne, paving the way for his evolution from neglect and obscurity to universal prominence. Many of the French master’s works are in American private and public collections today, and since the mid-20th century, this country has taken the international lead in the scholarly discourse on Cézanne and his popularization.”

Stavitsky continued: “Cézanne’s varied oeuvre offered a variety of liberating options for American artists and others who regarded him both as a formalist and a mystic, who submitted nature to an intellectual/analytic process of organization, penetrating beneath the veil of appearances to capture the inner essence or soul of his subjects, as well as their fundamental forms. Shifts in Cézanne’s influence, as reflected in the work of many American modernists, reveal a gradual turning away from the explosion of radical modern art movements opening paths to abstraction prior to WWI. Previously regarded as instrumental for breaking through the academic barriers of mimetic representation through his innovative pictorial techniques, Cézanne became appreciated for the timeless, architectonic stability of his harmonious compositions during the postwar era of classical values that would rebuild society in the 1920s.”

The American artists featured in this exhibition were chosen for the intensity and high quality of their aesthetic and intellectual engagements with Cézanne’s artwork and philosophy. Cézanne’s transformative effect on their works is revealed not only by the artists’ adaptations of his stylistic hallmarks but also through their choice and serial approach to subject matter—still lifes, landscapes, figurative works, and portraits. These themes form the foundation for the organization of this exhibition, which opens with groundbreaking comparisons between the work of Cézanne and his American admirers. For the first time, Morgan Russell’s *Three Apples* (1910, Museum of Modern Art) will be paired with the painting that directly inspired it, Cézanne’s seminal *Five Apples* (1877–78, private collection of Eugene Thaw), which was lent to Russell by American collector Leo Stein. This unique juxtaposition reflects the profound influence that Stein had upon American artists, who visited Stein’s Parisian apartment to view his pioneering collection of modern art.

The introductory section of the show also serves as an orientation to the history of the dissemination of Cézanne’s influence as documented in key articles, books, reproductions, exhibition catalogues, and other archival documents. A rare group of black-and-white photographs by Parisian photographer–gallery owner Eugène Druet of Cézanne’s paintings will be exhibited for the first time since they were lent by their owner, the leading American modernist Max Weber, and displayed at Alfred Stieglitz’s gallery 291 in 1910. Other early reproductions are presented in the June 1913 issue of Stieglitz’s magazine *Camera Work*, as well as in the American Cubist Oscar Bluemner’s heavily annotated copy of Julius Meier-Graefe’s *Paul Cézanne* (1910) and Maurice Prendergast’s copy of the portfolio of 15 illustrations, *Cézanne Mappe* (1912).

Cézanne’s first one-man show in America at 291 is represented by the loan of the October 1911 issue of *Camera Work*, with reprints of reviews. This exhibition and a show at the Montross Gallery in 1916 (represented by a rare catalogue annotated by Bluemner) were composed of watercolors by Cézanne. Therefore, this first section of the show will feature examples of Cézanne’s works in this medium, which introduced his art to America. Works from these shows will be juxtaposed with examples by American artists, such as Charles Demuth and Max Weber; the latter wrote an introduction to the Montross catalogue on the topic of Cézanne’s watercolors.

The landmark Armory Show of modern art (1913), which first featured Cézanne's oil paintings (as well as his prints and watercolors), will be represented by rare postcards and a relatively unknown but seminal booklet on the artist by Elie Faure that was made available during the exhibition. Furthermore, the first Cézanne ever purchased by an American museum, *View of the Domaine Saint-Joseph* (1888-90, the Metropolitan Museum of Art) will be on view.

The first major museum exhibitions featuring Cézanne are documented by catalogues for shows at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1920), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1921), and the Museum of Modern Art (1929). Leading critics such as Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and Willard Huntington Wright are represented by various publications. Wright's *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning* (1915), the first lucid study of Cézanne's achievements and legacy, is complemented by a Cézannesque portrait of the critic by his brother Stanton Macdonald-Wright (1913-14, National Portrait Gallery).

Cézanne's influence upon American photographers of the early 20th century is examined for the first time, in recognition of the exceptional importance that Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Paul Strand, and others played in introducing modernism to America. The sudden prevalence of still-life subjects in avant-garde photography and a corresponding tendency toward destabilization of form are explored in relation to Cézanne. Also, the proliferation of heroic, coldly eroticized nudes and a predilection for serial approaches to landscape are examined as analogues to Cézanne's approach to his subjects.

Sections of the exhibition will be devoted to chronological, thematic approaches to Cézanne's renowned subjects. The pioneering generation of artists from 1907 to 1912 will be on view, accompanied by artists of the mid-teens and early 1920s. The final section of the show will feature artists active in the late 1920s. Key comparisons of works by Cézanne and American artists will be followed by singular presentations. Still-life compositions by Max Weber, Morgan Russell, Charles Demuth, Arshile Gorky, Man Ray, and many others are included, followed by landscapes by several painters, notably Marsden Hartley, one of a number of American artists who traveled to Aix-en-Provence to experience firsthand Cézanne's native environment. Thus Cézanne's monumental view of Mont Sainte-Victoire, seen from the Bibémus Quarry (c. 1897, The Baltimore Museum of Art) will be juxtaposed with Hartley's views in 1927 of this beloved natural landmark. Others such as John Marin, Andrew Dasburg, Willard Nash, and also Hartley found native counterparts to Cézanne's landscape motifs in New England, the West, and elsewhere. Portraits by Stanton-Macdonald Wright, Alfred Maurer, Weber, and others reveal American artists' admiration for the innovative portraiture of Cézanne, which transcended individuality in an attempt to achieve a perfect fusion of figure and pictorial space. Cézanne's many variations on the theme of bathers in landscape settings—among his earliest works exhibited in America—were highly influential for Arthur B. Davies, B.J.O. Nordfeldt, Abraham Walkowitz, Man Ray, Maurice Prendergast, and many others as modern incarnations of this classical, idyllic subject.

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Additional support is provided by Exhibition Angels Carol and Terry Wall, David and Susan Bershad Foundation, Inc., Rose and John Cali, Bob and Bobbie Constable, Patti and Jimmy Elliott, Jacqueline and Herb Klein, Lyn and Glenn Reiter, Newton B. Schott, Jr., and Toni LeQuire Schott, Adrian A. Shelby, and Margo and Frank Walter, as well as Education Angels Angela and Michael Frasco, Lynn and Stephen Glasser, and Karen and Larry Mandelbaum. Marketing assistance has been provided by Ed Moed of Peppercom in New York City.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue, published in association with Yale University Press. The catalogue includes a range of diverse scholarly perspectives provided by a team of 23 scholars. The ongoing influence of Cézanne is extended beyond the timeframe of this project into the era of Abstract Expressionism and the 1960s. It will be available in the Museum Store.

Hardcover and paperback: 10 x 11 inches; 376 pages; 190 color images.

ADMISSION

In light of the difficult economic climate, MAM will not charge extra for this special exhibition but instead will retain its existing price structure: \$12 for nonmember adults, \$10 for seniors and students with I.D. Free admission to members and children under 12.

SPECIAL NOTE ON HOURS

Beginning with the *Cézanne and American Modernism* exhibition on September 13, 2009, the Museum will expand its gallery hours. MAM will be open Tuesdays through Sundays, Noon–5 p.m., with Thursdays late night 5–9 p.m. Closed Mondays and major holidays.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Montclair Art Museum, a notable, community-based institution with an international reputation, boasts a renowned collection of American and Native American art that uniquely highlights art making in the United States over the last three hundred years. The collection includes more than 12,000 objects: paintings, prints, original works on paper, photographs, and sculpture by American artists from the 18th century to the present, as well as traditional and contemporary Native American art and artifacts representing the cultural developments of peoples from all of the major American Indian regions. MAM's Yard School of Art is the leading regional art school, offering a multitude of comprehensive courses for children, youth, adults, seniors, and professional artists.

The Montclair Art Museum is located at 3 South Mountain Avenue in Montclair, N.J. Information and directions are available on the Museum website, montclairartmuseum.org, or by calling (973) 746-5555.

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