



**American Federation of Arts**

**For Immediate Release**

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**DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM EXAMINED IN EXHIBITION ON FIVE-VENUE U.S. TOUR**

***American Impressionists Abroad and at Home: Paintings from the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art***

(October 2000)—A rich overview of the development of American Impressionism from the late 1880s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, ***American Impressionists Abroad and at Home: Paintings from the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art***, opens on January 27, 2001, at the San Diego Museum of Art, where it remains on view through April 22 (see page 4 for tour itinerary). Drawn from the Metropolitan's distinguished collection, the exhibition highlights the vibrant interpretations of modern life in Europe and the United States created by American artists who embraced French Impressionism.

The exhibition is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Federation of Arts.

***American Impressionists Abroad and at Home*** showcases 39 canvases by 28 artists, including two pioneers of American Impressionism who caught the spirit of the new French painting during the 1870s: Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) and John Singer Sargent (1856–1925). Whereas most of the future American Impressionists intended to return to the United States after studying abroad, Cassatt chose to settle in Paris in June 1874, and Sargent, born in Florence to expatriate American parents and eighteen years old when he arrived in Paris with his family in May 1874, seems never to have envisioned a residence other than Europe. Among the other leading American Impressionists featured are William Merritt Chase (1849–1916), one of the founders of the American Federation of Arts, Childe Hassam (1859–1935), and a group of Americans who worked at various times in Claude Monet's home village, Giverny: Theodore Robinson (1852–1896), Willard L. Metcalf (1858–1925), and Frederick C. Frieseke (1874–1939).

Beginning in the mid-1860s, hundreds of aspiring American painters were attracted to Paris by the quality of its art schools and by the fact that the city had become an artistic epicenter. Although the main purpose of their studies in Paris was the mastery of academic principles, some students became aware of the avant-garde approach of the French Impressionists, who made their debut in a private group exhibition in the spring of 1874. Rejecting academic principles, the French Impressionists espoused familiar modern subjects and rapid, *plein-air* painting. As awareness and appreciation of Impressionism grew among American collectors and critics by the mid-1880s, American painters increasingly experimented in the new style; in the 1890s, American Impressionism reached its apogee.

In describing the artists in the exhibition, guest curator H. Barbara Weinberg, The Alice Pratt Brown Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Metropolitan, remarks, "While some American painters responded to Impressionism only superficially, the most interesting of them grasped its essence, especially the conviction that their works should encode modern life in modern artistic terms." Weinberg and co-curator Susan G. Larkin, former Chester Dale Fellow and research associate at the Metropolitan, arranged the works into four thematic groups to suggest some of the ways in which the American Impressionists abroad and at home—and at home abroad—responded to aspects of the city and suburbs, the countryside, professional life, and the domestic scene during a dynamic period in history.

Included in the first section of the exhibition, "American Impressionists in the City and Suburbs," is Hassam's *Broadway and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1902), which typifies the appeal to the American Impressionists of modern

subjects such as burgeoning urban neighborhoods. Seeking genuine counterparts of French Impressionist themes, the American Impressionists also chose sites that had local or national significance or that manifested national progress. Philip L. Hale's (1865–1931) *Niagara Falls* (1902), for instance, portrays the new Upper Steel Arch Bridge and the Niagara Falls Power Plant, suggesting that modern technology can coexist with an impressive natural setting.

In response to the growing challenges of modern life, there arose a yearning for a simpler, quieter past, as is illustrated in the section, "American Impressionists in the Countryside." Included are nostalgic rural scenes, such as Robinson's *The Old Mill (Vieux moulin)* (ca. 1892), which portrays a mill at Giverny, forty miles northwest of Paris, where Monet had settled in 1883 and Robinson worked for many years, and the view of a remote fishing village portrayed in Walter Elmer Schofield's (1867–1944) *Sand Dunes near Lelant, Cornwall, England* (1905). Depictions of artists' residences and neighborhoods were also common subjects. Gifford Beal's (1879–1956) *The Albany Boat* (1915) is a scene of excursionists on the Hudson River which flowed past his house in Newburgh, NY, and Edward Willis Redfield's (1869–1965) *Overlooking the Valley* (1911) is one of many canvases in which the artist represented the landscape near his Pennsylvania home.

Another important focus of these artists was their familiar workplaces, which inspired images of their studios and portraits of their students, teachers, and friends. Featured in the section "American Impressionists in Their Professional Environments" is *Horseneck Falls* (ca. 1889–1890), a glimpse by John Henry Twachtman (1853–1902) of a brook near his Connecticut farm, and *Venus in Atrium* (1908 or 1910) by William de Leftwich Dodge (1867–1935), which depicts a sculpture of a nude female torso in his Long Island studio.

Some of the most famous American Impressionist depictions of domestic life were by Cassatt, who is appreciated most for her sensitive renderings of mothers and children. *Spring: Margot Standing in a Garden (Fillette dans un jardin)* (1900) is a highlight of the final section, "American Impressionists Paint Domestic Life." Also included is Chase's *For the Little One* (ca. 1896), which portrays the artist's wife sewing in their summer house in the Shinnecock area of Southampton, Long Island.

The American Impressionists belonged to several generations, led varied professional lives, and were among the most thoroughly schooled, widely traveled, cosmopolitan painters in the history of our nation's art. Their canvases are not only enchanting records of light and color, but decipherable reflections of their creators' experiences abroad and at home.

## **PUBLICATION**

A fully illustrated catalogue, published by the American Federation of Arts, accompanies the exhibition. *American Impressionists Abroad and at Home: Paintings from The Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* features an essay by H. Barbara Weinberg on the training the American Impressionists undertook abroad and at home, the significance of the subjects they depicted, and their varied responses to French Impressionism. Also included are entries by Susan G. Larkin for each of the 39 paintings in the exhibition; these entries trace the relationship of each work to the career of its creator and to its general cultural context. 128 pages, 11 ½ x 11 ½ inches, approximately 45 color illustrations; 15 black-and-white comparative illustrations. Softcover \$25.00.

## **NATIONAL TOUR**

### **San Diego Museum of Art**

January 27–April 22, 2001  
San Diego, CA

### **Delaware Art Museum**

May 11–August 5, 2001  
Wilmington, DE

**Cheekwood Museum of Art**

August 24–November 18, 2001  
Nashville, TN

**Orlando Museum of Art**

December 7, 2001–March 3, 2002  
Orlando, FL

**New York State Museum**

March 22–June 16, 2002  
Albany, NY

\*As museum schedules are subject to change, please confirm dates before going to press.

**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS**

Founded by an act of Congress in 1909, the AFA is the nation's oldest and most comprehensive non-profit art museum service organization. The AFA provides its more than 550 member institutions with traveling art exhibitions and educational, professional, and technical support programs developed in collaboration with the museum community. Through these programs, the AFA seeks to strengthen the ability of museums to enrich the public's experience and understanding of art.

**THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is one of the world's largest and finest art museums. Its collections include more than two million works of art spanning 5,000 years of world culture, from prehistory to the present and from every part of the globe. Founded in 1870, the Metropolitan Museum is located in New York City's Central Park along Fifth Avenue. Last year it was visited by 5.2 million people. [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)