

HARVARD'S FOGG ART MUSEUM TO EXHIBIT AMERICAN WATERCOLORS AND PASTELS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 70 YEARS

Showcases the Fogg's outstanding collection of works by John Singer Sargent, Winslow Homer, John La Farge, J.A.M. Whistler, Edward Hopper, John Marin, and Charles Demuth



Edward Hopper, *Highland Light*, 1930. Watercolor over graphite on rough white wove paper, 42.3 x 65.3 cm. Fogg Art Museum, HUAM. Louise E. Bettens Fund, 1930.462. Photo: David Mathews © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (March 1, 2006)—
The Harvard University Art Museums will present *American Watercolors and Pastels, 1875–1950*, at the Fogg Art Museum from April 8 to June 25, 2006. The exhibition features 52 watercolors and pastels primarily drawn from the extensive holdings of the Fogg, as well as significant works lent by friends of the Art Museums.

This will be the first showing of these

treasures of American art since 1936, when the Fogg presented *American Watercolors from the Museum's Collection*, and will give the public an opportunity to examine a selection of works that are rarely put on display because of their sensitivity to light. The exhibition focuses on works created during what scholars consider the medium's "golden age" of experimentation and development.

The period from 1875 to 1950 saw the status of the watercolor shift dramatically. Works on paper until that time usually served only as studies or preparatory works for finished oil paintings, but beginning in the late 19th century, drawings and watercolors were exhibited more regularly in their own right. Artists such as Winslow Homer began painting complete scenes in watercolor and exhibiting them as finished works in commercial galleries. Homer pushed the medium formally, scratching into the surface of the paper to create highlights and

experimenting with washes, opaque applications of paint. John Singer Sargent also helped to establish the merits of the medium, preferring watercolor for its portability, and utilizing it on his travels to make informal sketches that stood on their own and did not necessarily serve preparatory ends.

By the early 20th century, gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz introduced modernism to a skeptical New York audience with exhibitions of watercolors by John Marin and Charles Demuth, drawings and watercolors by Georgia O’Keeffe, and pastels by Arthur G. Dove. American modernism contributed significantly to the evolution of the watercolor and helped to establish its status as an important American medium. O’Keeffe developed her signature style by exploring abstraction in watercolor and pastel, inexpensive and quick materials that lent themselves to experimentation. She and her contemporaries like Marin and Stuart Davis took advantage of this ease of experimentation to develop formal innovations, resulting in unique pieces that were displayed as finished works. Today, these watercolors are among the most highly valued objects of the American modernist period.

The exhibition was organized by Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., Curator of American Art, and Virginia Anderson, Assistant Curator of American Art. “The exhibition came out of our work on a comprehensive collections catalogue of American painting, watercolor, pastel, and stained glass at the Harvard University Art Museums,” said Stebbins. “As we compiled the list of objects for that catalogue project, it became clear that the Fogg’s collection from this period and in these media was particularly strong and deserving of an exhibition.” Anderson adds, “This is an opportunity to present to the public a wonderful selection of important American works, the majority of which are unpublished. Through this exhibition, we can bring these works to light so that they can receive critical and scholarly attention.”

The Fogg Art Museum has long been known for its collection of works on paper and a significant portion of the collection includes some six thousand American drawings, watercolors, and pastels dating from the 18th through the early 21st century. This serious interest in American watercolors stems from the period of the 1910s and 1920s, a time when the medium was winning new levels of recognition in the U.S. The Fogg’s collection was driven by

two former directors and by the generous gift of an important collector. The Fogg's second director, Edward E. Forbes, who served from 1909 to 1944, was himself an amateur watercolorist of some ability, and his assistant director from 1915 to 1944 was the legendary drawings collector Paul Sachs. Together, Forbes and Sachs energetically built the collection, pursuing works by Homer, Marin, Demuth, and Hopper, and they exemplified the Fogg's commitment to depth and strength in a specific area by acquiring several pieces by each artist.

The Fogg's holdings of 19th century American watercolors and pastels were greatly enhanced with the bequest of the Winthrop Collection in 1943. Grenville L. Winthrop is best remembered for his magnificent collection of Asian art and for his superb holdings of French and British paintings and drawings, but he also collected extensively the work of a quartet of American masters of the late 19th century: Homer, LaFarge, Whistler, and Sargent. Winthrop's gift of 136 American drawings, watercolors, and pastels, along with 57 paintings and 35 sculptures, makes him Harvard's most important donor in this field to date.

“Our collection of American watercolors and pastels is extraordinary, and it's a pleasure for us to bring them to a new generation of students, scholars, and the public,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. “I am also particularly grateful to the private collectors who generously lent us some of their most treasured objects, which allow us to present this rich view of American art.”

Works

The exhibition features a comprehensive presentation of American artists in this field and includes a number of outstanding examples from the Fogg's collection. Homer's *Mink Pond* (1891), and *Hunter in the Adirondacks* (1892), Sargent's *Group in the Simplon* (1911), and La Farge's *Chinese Pi-tong* (1879) are significant works from the 19th century. From the 20th century, de Kooning's *Reclining Woman* (c. 1948–49), Demuth's *Fruit and Sunflowers* (c. 1925), Hopper's *Highland Light* (1930), two versions of *Mt. Chocorua* by John Marin from 1926, and Rothko's *untitled* (1944–46) are all notable works. In addition to presenting these highlights from the Fogg's collection, there are a number of significant works on loan from private collections, including Chase's *Self-Portrait* (c. 1884), Stuart Davis's *Study for*

Eggbeater #3 (1928), Georgia O’Keeffe’s *Portrait – Black* (1918), and Helen Torr’s *Zinnias* (c. 1929-35).

Brochure

The exhibition will be accompanied by a brochure with 12 color reproductions, a checklist, and a short essay by curator Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. The brochure is made possible by the Bolton Fund for American Art, Gift of the Payne Fund.

Exhibition Programming

Gallery Talks

Fogg Art Museum
Free admission

Saturday, May 20, 11:30 a.m.

Virginia Anderson, Assistant Curator of American Art, Fogg Art Museum

Saturday, June 3, 11:30 a.m.

Melissa Renn, Intern, American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts, Fogg Art Museum

M. Victor Leventritt Lectures on American Art

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, lecture hall
Free admission

Tuesday, April 11, 6:00 p.m.

Insanity, Undue Influence, and the Origins of the Fogg Art Museum
Kimberly Orcutt, Assistant Curator, Bruce Museum

Tuesday, May 2, 6:00 p.m.

Taking Watercolor Seriously: A New Look at American Watercolors from Homer to Hopper
Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., Curator of American Art, Fogg Art Museum

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, with the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg art museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the HUAM Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, in Turkey.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museums are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. The Arthur M. Sackler Museum is located next door at 485 Broadway. Each museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.; closed on national holidays. Admission is \$7.50; \$6 for seniors; \$6 for students; and free for those under 18 years of age. The Art Museums are free to everyone on Saturday mornings, 10:00 a.m.–noon. The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

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For more information on this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

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