



Seven Hundred Years of French Painting on View at the Wadsworth this Fall

Featuring Works by Claude, Boucher, Ingres, Delacroix, Monet, Renoir, and Gauguin from the Museum's Extensive Collection

HARTFORD, Conn., September 5, 2012 – This fall, the Wadsworth Atheneum will showcase its exceptional French paintings with a new exhibition featuring over seventy-five works from the museum's collection. On view from October 19, 2012 through January 27, 2013, *Medieval to Monet: French Paintings in the Wadsworth Atheneum* will provide a survey of over 700 years of French painting—from miniatures of a medieval Apocalypse to twentieth-century Post-Impressionist works by Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, and Bonnard.

Medieval to Monet will tell the story of how the Wadsworth's extensive French painting collection has developed since the museum's founding in 1842. Most recently, under the supervision of exhibition curator Eric M. Zafran, the museum has made a number of significant acquisitions of eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century works, including three recently-acquired paintings by Charles-Antoine Coypel, Jean François de Troy, and Henri Paul Motte.

The museum's French paintings collection began in the late 19th century and was significantly increased by the brilliant acquisitions made by directors A. Everett Austin, Jr. and his successor Charles C. Cunningham from the late 1920s to the mid-1960s. *Medieval to Monet* marks the first time that so many highlights from the collection will be displayed together in an exhibition at the museum, and will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalog documenting over 130 French paintings in the Wadsworth's collection. The exhibition and catalog also represent the culmination of the fifteen-year career of Eric M. Zafran, the Susan Morse Hilles Curator of European Art, who will be retiring at the end of 2012.

"Ranging from Baroque masterpieces by Poussin and Claude to famous Impressionist works by Renoir and Monet, the paintings in *Medieval to Monet* offer a lens through which to view the historic changes in French culture between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries," said Eric M. Zafran, Susan Morse Hilles Curator of European Art at the Wadsworth Atheneum. "Highlighting the Wadsworth's extraordinary holdings of French paintings, this exhibition presents a unique opportunity to trace the development of one of the country's great collections."

"This tremendous exhibition is only possible because of the years of research and acquisitions undertaken by our esteemed Curator of European Art, Dr. Eric Zafran," said Susan Talbott,

Director and CEO of the Wadsworth Atheneum. “We are proud to honor his devoted service to the museum, and the significant impact he has had on the Wadsworth Atheneum over the last fifteen years.”

The earliest pieces in the exhibition are two cuttings from a medieval apocalypse manuscript that date from the late 13th century. A Pietà from the 15th century reflects the distinctive style of painting that developed in southern France in the 14th and 15th centuries. The seventeenth-century is represented by the works of Le Nain, Poussin, Claude, Vouet, Stella, and Le Sueur; the eighteenth-century by Boucher, Robert, Coypel, Chardin, de Troy, Greuze, Trinquesse and Vigée Lebrun. The nineteenth century, the most varied and rich portion of the collection, ranges from works by earlier masters like Ingres, Delacroix, Géricault, Corot and Courbet to academic and realistic works by Bouguereau, Vibert, Ribot, and Bonvin to Impressionist works by Manet, Degas, Monet, Pissarro, Cézanne, and Renoir. A companion exhibition, *Medieval to Modern: French Drawings and Pastels*, will also be on view in the Morgan galleries.

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive catalogue, *Masters of French Painting, 1290-1920: At the Wadsworth Atheneum*, which presents all 138 of the museum’s significant French paintings and pastels. It also includes an introductory essay by exhibition curator Eric M. Zafran, as well as up-to-date references, provenance, exhibition histories and conservation reports on each work.

Public programs include lectures by Alden Gordon, Fine Arts Professor at Trinity College, Caroline Weber, author of *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* and Associate Professor of French at Barnard College, and Richard Brettell, Chair of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas, Dallas and one of the world’s foremost authorities on Impressionism and French painting from 1830 to 1930, as well as gallery talks and exhibition tours.

About The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut. The Museum is open Wednesdays to Fridays, 11 am – 5 pm and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 5 pm, and the first Thursday of every month 11 am – 8 pm. Please visit www.wadsworthatheneum.org for more information.

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