



Media Only: Taryn Bunger, (860) 838-4081
taryn.bunger@wadsworthatheneum.org

Scandinavian Landscapes at Wadsworth Atheneum

Hartford, Conn. (August 29, 2017) – The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art will present for the first time an exhibition focused on the leading figures behind the advent of Norwegian landscape painting in the 19th century: Johan Christian Dahl (1788-1857), Thomas Fearnley (1802-1842) and Peder Balke (1802-1887). “Sublime North: Romantic Painters Discover Norway” will showcase major works by these artists, set within selections from the museum’s broader collection of American and northern European landscape painting in the Romantic era. More than 20 works are on loan from New York collector Asbjørn Lunde. The exhibition opens Sept. 7, 2017 and will be on view through Jan. 15, 2018.

Dahl, Fearnley and Balke all traveled outside of Norway to study art and practice in cities such as Naples, Copenhagen and Stockholm, with both Fearnley and Balke joining Dahl—one of the first Norwegian artists to achieve international success—as his students in Norway and Dresden. Despite living abroad Dahl traveled to his homeland and remained deeply invested in his country, which struggled to achieve full independence during his lifetime. As Norwegians sought to define and express their collective identity, these artists especially contributed to the national awakening by looking to nature and the people who inhabited it with a sense of pride, and also by exhibiting and selling their work across northern Europe.

Landscape painting during the Romantic era was fueled by the concept of the sublime—renewed reverence for nature and its influence on emotion and the imagination. Together with his pupils, Dahl infused Nordic fjords, craggy mountains and rivers with the established repertoire of Romantic motifs—rocky inlets, misty hills and contemplating wanderers. Fearnley’s powerful scenes are distinguished by sensitive effects of light, while Balke specialized in highly dramatic seascapes that foreshadow, with their radically simplified style, the abstraction of Modern art. Combining the direct study of nature (through open-air oil studies) with dramatic imaginary views, this group produced fresh interpretations of the rough and imposing Norwegian landscape.

Asbjørn Lunde, a leading collector and expert of Romantic landscapes, began collecting Scandinavian art in 1968 and has since formed one of the most complete private collections of 19th-century Norwegian and Swiss paintings. Artworks from Lunde’s collection have been exhibited internationally, including at London’s National Gallery, the Northern Norway Art Museum in Tromsø and The Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh. “We are grateful for the opportunity to exhibit these remarkable landscapes from Norway at the Wadsworth Atheneum,” says Susan Morse Hilles Curator of European Art Oliver Tostmann. “Paired with Romantic masterpieces in our own collection, we have the unique opportunity to explore the compelling evolution of landscape painting in the 19th century.” “Sublime North” will create a dialogue with paintings in the Wadsworth Atheneum’s collection by well-known artists including Thomas

Cole, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot and William Turner. Select artworks will be installed alongside the Norwegian landscapes, with supplemental text guiding visitors throughout the museum to permanent installations including the renowned Hudson River School galleries.

Public Program Highlights

Second Saturdays for Families on Sept. 9 from 10 a.m.–1 p.m. is themed “The Great Outdoors” and will feature art activities exploring landscapes from around the world. A 20-minute “Art in Focus” talk on Oct. 18 at noon will gather in the “Sublime North” exhibition and feature Georg Heinrich Crola’s “A Thunderstorm on Lake Chiemsee” (1833). Curator Oliver Tostmann will give a gallery talk in “Sublime North” on Nov. 19 at 1 p.m., followed by an installment of the Sunday Serenades Chamber Music Series, “Strauss & the Sublime,” at 2 p.m. featuring a program by Grieg, Strauss and Halvorsen. Norwegian Film Weekend is September 23-24, featuring a selection of films from Norway, “Sublime North” exhibition tours, and a Scandinavian-inspired dinner in the Museum Café. Visit thewadsworth.org for more details and a complete calendar of public programs.

Exhibition Support

Support for “Sublime North: Romantic Painters Discover Norway” is provided in part by Jeffrey G. and Marcia Reid Marsted. Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council’s United Arts Campaign.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the United States. The museum’s nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4 – 5 p.m. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

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