



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM
MUSEUM OF ART

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**Paul Manship Exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum
Examines the Artist's Conversation with Antiquity**

Hartford, Conn. (December 9, 2020)—One of the most celebrated American sculptors of the early-twentieth century, Paul Manship (1885–1966) blended ancient motifs to fit modern sensibilities. After studying at the American Academy in Rome (1909–12), Manship returned to New York City, where his dramatic, energetic works in bronze reinterpreted forms, stories, and styles of the past for the modern American age. His streamlined, Art Deco style, and ability to represent his subjects at peak moments of drama attracted critical acclaim, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. Seen together in this exhibition, his signature bronzes and associated sketches paired with ancient artifacts illuminate how Manship became a master of sampling imagery and melding disparate visual elements from multiple cultural traditions. “Today we call this a mash-up,” says Erin Monroe, Robert H. Schutz, Jr., Associate Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Wadsworth. “It’s a practice that has permeated popular culture, in music, fashion, and the visual arts, for example.” *Paul Manship: Ancient Made Modern*, the first museum exhibition in 30 years and novel in its examination of this aspect of the artist’s work, will be on view February 11 to July 3, 2021 at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.

Organized into three themes, the exhibition examines the influence of the art of the past, on Manship’s twentieth-century modern style. *Breaking Through in Bronze*, looks at Manship’s foundational years studying in Italy after winning a prestigious Rome Prize. His artistic path can be rooted in this significant time in his life.

Several important loans from the Minnesota Museum of American Art in St. Paul, MN (the artist's hometown), tell the story of his early mastery of bronze, a medium that would define his career. One of the loans, a 1912 sketch of a frieze from the Treasury of Siphnians, in Delphi, reveals an interest in pattern and ornament evident in one of his first fully realized bronzes, the Wadsworth's *Centaur and Dryad* (1913). This sculpture shows mythological figures mounted atop a base carved in low-relief on all four sides. Along the bands of the base are ornamental details similar to those in the sketch. The dryad's almond-shaped eyes and stylized hair reveal elements Manship adapted from ancient art that would become hallmarks of his work. Early sculptures and drawings by Manship are interspersed with ancient artifacts representative of those he closely studied during his 3-years in Rome and on later travels throughout the Mediterranean, Europe, and Egypt. The form of a Cypriote statue of a standing man, the narrative and ornamental details from Greek vessels such as an *Oil Flask* (c. 475-460 BCE), and low-relief carving style inspired by an Assyrian relief fragment from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), all found their way into Manship's sculptures.

Modernizing Mythology explores Manship's affinity for mythological subjects, and his unique way of illuminating age-old storylines. Examples of Manship's captivating bronze sculptures are displayed adjacent to large-scale architectural designs, representing his ability to work on projects of varying scale. Statuettes such as the beautifully silhouetted *Flight of Night* (1916) possess a sense of movement. An allegory of the goddess Diana, her body appears to stretch across the evening sky, poised atop the mystical moon. A series of panels from the American Telephone and Telegraph Building in Lower Manhattan (commissioned in 1914; installed in 1921) feature voluptuous, muscular male and female figures that blend elements of Asian and Ancient art. Floating in dreamlike realms, the accents of gold and carved ornamentation fuse a multicultural aesthetic into a glitzy, modern Art Deco design.

Art for the Public presents works Manship made at the height of his career connecting them to today's conversations about urban design and beautification of public spaces. Widely known for two major projects of the 1930s—*Prometheus* in Rockefeller Center and the Paul Rainey Memorial Gates at the Bronx Zoo—this is the point in Manship's career when he took on civic projects of grand ambition. The legacy of the iconic *Prometheus* sculpture is explored through archival photographs and a petite 7-inch gilded maquette (1933), a rare surviving model for the heroic scale work. The Wadsworth's *Great Horned Owl* represents Manship's animalier work as seen in his design of the Rainey Memorial Gates.

Visitors will have the opportunity to learn about Manship's artistic process and materials, through a drawing prompt highlighting how the act of drawing was fundamental in Manship's training as a sculptor. Plaster casts such as *Euthydikos' Kore (maiden)*, ca. 490 BCE (after the marble original in the Acropolis Museum in Athens) exemplify the works Manship sketched in person, as shown in his drawing of a similar archaic statue *Peplos Kore, from the Acropolis*, 1924. These sketches and studies also underscore the influence of Manship's travels to classical and ancient sites in Italy, Greece, and Egypt. In addition, archival views of Manship in his studio are displayed alongside his sculpting tools borrowed from the Manship Artists Residency + Studios, in Gloucester, MA.

Digital Initiatives

The exhibition will be accompanied by a multi-media mobile tour, a virtual tour, and supplemented by additional digital features. In the digital realm, the iconography and design of three Manship sculptures are highlighted with text and detailed images, richly illustrated by the artist's sketches, travel logs, and photographs drawn from the Manship Archive. These rarely seen diaries offer an in-depth visual experience to be enjoyed from afar or within the exhibition.

The Manship Archive is overseen by Rebecca Reynolds, Founder and Director of Manship Artists Residency + Studios. "We are delighted to collaborate on projects that introduce new audiences to Manship's life and work and celebrate his legacy," says Reynolds. "Manship Artists Residency + Studios is especially grateful for this opportunity to share valuable insight into the formation of Manship's style and his influence on popular culture in the twentieth century through the rich Manship Family Archives. As an institution devoted to supporting artists on their artistic-realization journey, we welcome the chance to expose the critical role artists can play in society by helping us look to the past as we examine where we are today and where we want to go from here."

About Paul Manship

Paul Manship (1885–1966) was one of the most celebrated American artists of the first half of the 20th century. He was the youngest fellow ever awarded a Rome Prize in 1909—the highest honor accorded artists at the time and an opportunity to connect with a cornucopia of artistic legacies, including Mediterranean antiquities. Manship returned from his fellowship at the American Academy in Rome to become one of the most sought-after sculptors in the US, a defining figure in the American Art Deco world for over two decades.

Public Programs

The below virtual programs are free and open to the public. Check thewadsworth.org/events for the full schedule of related programs.

Curator Talk: Paul Manship: Ancient Made Modern

Friday, February 26; noon

Explore how Manship became a master craftsman on this virtual tour of the exhibition led by curator Erin Monroe.

Conservation Behind-the-Scenes: Bronze

Thursday, March 18; noon

Conservator Casey Mallinckrodt offers an overview of the challenges faced in conserving sculpture and other three-dimensional objects cast in bronze, focusing on the works on view in *Paul Manship: Ancient Made Modern*.

Excavating the Archaic: Paul Manship

Thursday, March 25; 6pm

Why were early twentieth century artists so attracted to Greek archaic sculpture and why weren't others before them? Susan Rather, a professor of art history at the University of Texas, explores the phenomenon of modern archaism with particular attention to Paul Manship, a sculptor who skillfully negotiated the yawning gap between tradition and modernity in the United States around 1913.

Docent-led tours of the exhibition will be held on Wednesdays at 1pm and Sundays at 11am beginning March 3, 2021. Register via thewadsworth.org.

Exhibition and Program Support

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About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Friday, noon–8pm; Saturday and Sunday, noon–5pm Admission: \$5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Hours and fees subject to change. Phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

Image captions (left to right): Paul Manship, *Flight of Night*, 1916. Bronze on a veined black marble base. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Gift of Philip L. Goodwin. © Estate of Paul Manship; Hermonax Painter (Greek, 5th century BCE), *Oil flask (Lekythos)*, made Attica, Greece c. 470–460 BCE. Terracotta. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, purchased through the gift of Henry and Walter Keney; Paul Manship, *Lapith Woman from the West Pediment of the Temple of Zeus, Olympia*, 1924. Graphite on paper. Minnesota Museum of American Art, Bequest of Paul H. Manship. © Estate of Paul Manship.

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