Coming of Age: American Art 1850s to 1950s

Paintings from the Addison Gallery of American Art, Massachusetts

14 March - 8 June 2008

Marine paintings by Winslow Homer, portraits by Thomas Eakins, genre paintings by Eastman Johnson, landscapes by John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler, and abstract art by Jackson Pollock will be among the famous works in this exhibition about American art. Over the course of the one hundred years from the 1850s to the 1950s, American art and culture came of age, evolving from the provincial to the international and moving from literal depictions of the particular to abstract interpretations of universal ideals. Organised by the American Federation of Arts and the Addison Gallery of American Art, Coming of Age will explore the complex and extended process of maturation that took place throughout this formative century of American art.

The exhibition focuses on the key movements during a period in which American art matured and took its place in the international arena. Drawn from the Addison Gallery of American Art’s renowned collection, the exhibition will begin with mid-nineteenth-century American landscapes, followed by late nineteenth-century and twentieth century paintings. Turn-of-the-century works by American Impressionists such as Childe Hassam and Maurice Prendergast will contrast with Ashcan paintings by artists such as Robert Henri and John Sloan. Twentieth-century modernist masterpieces by Stuart Davis, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Marsden Hartley, among others, transition into mid-century abstract works by artists such as Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, László Moholy-Nagy, and Jackson Pollock. The selection will offer a comprehensive look at the major developments in a period of one hundred years marked by the rise of modernity and by a dramatic change in the physical and social landscape.

The accompanying catalogue featuring essays by the curators is a historic opportunity for scholars of American art to interpret the Addison’s rich collection in depth. Coming of Age is curated by William Agee, Professor of Art History at Hunter College, New York, and Susan Faxon, Associate Director and Curator at the Addison Gallery.

This exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts, New York, and the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, and is made possible, in part, by The Crosby Kemper Foundation and by Frank B. Bennett and William D. Cohan, with additional support from the Philip and Janice Levin Foundation Fund for Collection-Based Exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts.

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