

DENVER ART MUSEUM SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON IMPRESSIONISM IN GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBITION

Inspiring Impressionism Explores Influence of Old Masters on the Impressionists

Exhibition on view at DAM February 23–May 25, 2008

(Denver, Colo.) January 25, 2008—*Inspiring Impressionism* will shed new light on one of art history's most important movements when it opens in Denver on February 23, 2008. Featuring masterpieces by artists including Manet, Degas, Monet, and Renoir, alongside those by Raphael, Titian, El Greco, and Velázquez, this groundbreaking exhibition explores the European Old Masters' influence on 19th-century Impressionism. *Inspiring Impressionism* features more than 100 works drawn from nearly 70 museums and private collections, including paintings and works on paper, some of which have never traveled to the United States.

Organized by the Denver Art Museum (DAM), in collaboration with the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and the Seattle Art Museum, the show debuted in Atlanta in October 2007, and will be on view in Denver from February 23–May 25, 2008, before traveling in June to Seattle, which will be its final venue. The national tour of *Inspiring Impressionism* is made possible by Northern Trust.

"This is the first exhibition to focus specifically on the important relationship between the Impressionists and Old Masters," said Timothy J. Standring, Gates Foundation Curator of Painting and Sculpture. "The story of this relationship, while accepted by many art historians, has never been explored as an exhibition on such a broad scale and provides our own visitors, as well as those in Atlanta and Seattle, with an intriguing new way to think about the history of art."

Inspiring Impressionism explores the similarities between works by Impressionist artists and their predecessors, the Old Masters. Although the Impressionist painters are known for creating an innovative new style and depiction of modern life, there is much in their technique and composition that echoes the work of their predecessors.

Exhibition highlights include traditional landscapes, still lifes and portraits by Old Masters such as Claude Lorrain, Jean-Siméon Chardin, and Frans Hals that are paired with Impressionist works. Pairings, such as Mary Cassatt's *Mrs. Duffee Seated on a Striped Sofa, Reading* (1876) and Jean Honoré Fragonard's *Reader* (1776) will explore connections through use of similar artistic technique, composition, and subject matter. The examination of Manet's *The Little Cavaliers*, (c. 1859-1860, a copy after the original by the workshop of Velázquez in the Louvre), and Degas' *Visit to a Museum* (c. 1879-90) will present a direct working dialogue between Impressionists and Old Masters—a relationship often developed through artists' study at the Musée du Louvre.

Other highlights include Paul Cézanne's large-scale *Still Life with Statuette* (1894-95), a painting whose focal point is a reproduction of an early *putto* plaster sculpture. The original sculpture will also be on view along with Cézanne drawings featuring the same subject. Several works by Degas, such as *Studies after two Italian Madonnas* and *Portrait of a Man* (1868-70), were copied from Old Masters paintings, reinforcing



In the Garden at Maurecourt, c. 1884, by Berthe Morisot. Oil on canvas. Toledo Museum of Art; purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1930.9

Degas' assertion that "No art is less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and the study of the Old Masters."

Exhibition Organization, Publication, and Support

Organized by the Denver Art Museum and co-curated by Standring and Ann Dumas, a London-based independent scholar, *Inspiring Impressionism* is the first Impressionist-focused exhibition to come to the DAM in nearly a decade.

An illustrated exhibition catalog distributed by Yale University Press includes an introductory essay by Ann Dumas and eight essays by Impressionist and Old Master scholars such as John House, Walter H. Annenberg Professor, Courtauld Institute of Art; Michael Clarke, Director, National Gallery of Scotland and Frances Suzman Jowell, independent art historian. The compilation of these essays will provide a more detailed evaluation of the relationship between Impressionism and the art of the past.



Still Life with Apples and Oranges, c. 1895-1900, by Paul Cézanne. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. Photo by H. Lewandowski; Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

Inspiring Impressionism will be on view in the Museum's new Frederic C. Hamilton Building. The recent expansion provides much needed space for the Museum to be able to host major exhibitions from around the world and to showcase significant special exhibitions that the DAM has organized.

Northern Trust is the National Tour Sponsor of *Inspiring Impressionism*. "We are honored to support this one-of-a-kind exhibition and we commend the Denver Art Museum for providing local audiences and visitors from around the world the opportunity to experience such a fascinating exploration into the history of Impressionism," stated Frederick H. Waddell, Northern Trust president and chief executive officer.

Additional support is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities and an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities.

Local support is provided by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Macy's Foundation, the Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado, Friends of Painting and Sculpture, Ms. Betty Weiss, the citizens who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, and the generous donors to the Annual Leadership Campaign. Promotional support is provided by *The Denver Post*, The Integer Group, and 5280 Magazine.

Denver Art Museum

Founded in 1893, the Denver Art Museum is one of the largest art museums between Chicago and the West Coast, with a collection of more than 60,000 works of art from around the world. The Museum's holdings include an internationally renowned American Indian art collection, outstanding architecture, graphics and design galleries, and Asian, Pre-Columbian, and Spanish Colonial galleries. The Denver Art Museum nearly doubled the size of its facility on October 7, 2006, with the opening of the 146,000-square-foot addition of the Frederic C. Hamilton Building, designed by architect Daniel Libeskind.

For further information on the Denver Art Museum and the presentation of *Inspiring Impressionism*, please visit www.denverartmuseum.org/press.

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