

SYDNEYINTERNATIONALARTSERIES

MEDIA RELEASE



America Painting a Nation

ART
GALLERY
NSW

SYDNEY ONLY
8 November 2013 – 9 February 2014
Art Gallery of New South Wales



Edward Hopper

House at dusk 1935
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,
John Barton Payne Fund
© Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

cover detail:

Henry Inman

No-Tin (Wind), a Chippewa chief
1832–33
Los Angeles County Museum
of Art, gift of the 2008 Collectors
Committee M.2008.58

More than
80 iconic works
spanning 200 years
of American art.

Our mission is to foster the exploration, understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States. One way we fulfill this goal is partnering with major institutions across the globe to create and deliver exhibitions that stimulate a robust cross-cultural dialogue. We are very pleased to collaborate with the Art Gallery of New South Wales to bring *America: painting a nation* to audiences in Australia. Seeing works from 200 years of American art in the context of Australia's cultural treasures will be a powerful demonstration of art's potential both to distinguish cultures and unite them.

Elizabeth Glassman
President & CEO
Terra Foundation for
American Art

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is delighted to join with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Terra Foundation for American Art to share their rich collections of American art with Australian audiences. The development of this exhibition has been motivated by the strong belief that the arts are a unique and powerful means for the expression of ideas and the communication of cultural values. We have enjoyed the process of putting it together with our partners and hope that it will provide new insights into the history and artistic achievements of our country.

Timothy Rub
The George D Widener
Director & CEO
Philadelphia Museum of Art

I am especially pleased that the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston will be sending some of its great treasures of American art to Australia, because I know how much they will be appreciated. Australians and Americans share a common heritage, and our nations and national identities emerged on parallel tracks; I feel certain that our Australian friends will recognise kinship in these works of art.

Gary Tinterow
Director
The Museum of Fine Art,
Houston

This initiative is the result of a deep collaboration between four great institutions. We could not present such a grand survey of American art history without each other, and it gives me great pleasure to see the fruits of this labour continue its tour around the world. We are very pleased to lend some of our most important works for this exhibition including Henry Inman's *No-Tin (Wind), a Chippewa chief* 1832–33, Georgia O'Keeffe's *Horse's skull with pink rose* 1931, Thomas Sully's *Portrait of Misses Mary and Emily McEuen* 1823 and *Portrait of a black sailor* 1823, artist unknown.

Michael Govan
CEO & Wallis Annenberg
Director
The Los Angeles County
Museum of Art



Unknown
Portrait of a black sailor
(Paul Cuffe?) 1800
Los Angeles County Museum
of Art, purchased with funds
provided by Cecile Bartman M.2005.2



Thomas Sully
Portrait of Misses Mary and
Emily McEuen 1823
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
purchased with funds provided by
Cecile Bartman M.2008.222



Edward Hicks
Penn's Treaty with the Indians
1830-40
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
The Bayou Bend Collection, gift of
Alice C Simkins in memory of Alice
N Hanszen B.77.46

I am delighted to give our audiences in Sydney greater access to American art and culture and nothing could be more important than this first major survey of American painting to be shown in Australia. We are deeply grateful to our partner institutions in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and Philadelphia for lending such brilliant examples of American painting from the mid-18th century to the 1960s. Jackson Pollock is now a household name in Australia but *America: painting a nation* will highlight many other artists who deserve to be equally well known here, such as Copley, Church, Homer, Sargent, Cassatt, Eakins, Whistler, Sheeler, Hopper and O’Keeffe. While the United States and Australia share a New World heritage and parallel art traditions, the stories told have different inspirations. I know this exhibition will both open a window on the grand narrative of American painting and hold up a mirror against which we can further explore our own art history.

Dr Michael Brand
Director
Art Gallery of New South Wales

This exhibition is a voyage through American history, across the American landscape and into the minds of the American people. It begins in the 18th century, among pious farmers and republican merchants. It traverses the continent, alongside Native Americans and frontiersman. It explores the great cities, and the lives of workers and bohemian artists. Answering the question, ‘What makes Americans American?’ is complex, but these paintings are a guide, revealing the self-reliance and communal beliefs, optimism and anxieties, that makes America tick.

Dr Chris McAuliffe Curatorial consultant

America: painting a nation is the most expansive survey of American painting ever presented in Australia and is the Gallery’s major summer exhibition for 2013. It is part of the Sydney International Art Series which brings the world’s outstanding exhibitions to Australia, exclusive to Sydney, and has been made possible with the support of the NSW Government through Destination NSW. Over 80 works, ranging from 1750 to 1966, cover more than 200 years of American art, history and experience. The exhibition sets a course from New England to the Western frontier, from the Grand Canyon to the burlesque theatres of New York, from the aristocratic elegance of colonial society to the gritty realism of the modern metropolis.

This exhibition will reveal the breadth of American history, the hardy morality of the frontier, the intimacy of family life, the intensity of the 20th-century city, the epic scale of its landscape and the diversity of its people. The works being presented – many by American masters – are the works Americans love and works that represent the stories they have grown up with.



Ernest Martin Hennings
Passing by 1924
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
 gift of the Ranger Fund, National
 Academy of Design 26.11
 © Estate of Ernest Martin Hennings/
 Bridgeman Art Library



Jackson Pollock
No 22 1950
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, The
 Albert M Greenfield and Elizabeth
 M Greenfield Collection 1974-78-41
 © Pollock Krasner Foundation, ARS, licensed
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America: painting a nation features well-known names – Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Georgia O’Keeffe and James Whistler among them. But most are less familiar; the ‘household names’ of American art are rarely seen in Australia. The exhibition will introduce Copley, Peale and Sully, the great portraitists of the Revolutionary era; Church, Cole and Moran, masters of the sublime landscape; Homer and Remington, lyric poets of the frontier; Cassatt, Sargent and Hassam, celebrators of the 19th-century Gilded Age; Sloan, Shinn and Henri, humanist observers of the early 20th century city; Demuth, Marin and Davis, the voices of a uniquely American vision of dynamic modern life.

Selected in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Terra Foundation, Chicago, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, *America: painting a nation* brings to Sydney both national and regional perspectives on American art. Diversity is a key theme in the exhibition. The cultural diversity of a continent inhabited first by Native American Indians; colonised by the Spanish, French and English; and developing through mass migration into a cultural melting pot. The physical diversity of a landscape encompassing the dense forests of the northeast, the endless plains of the Midwest, the awe-inspiring geography of the Grand Canyon and the stillness of the desert.

‘This exhibition signals a significant direction for the AGNSW by building relationships with major American museums and further developing our visitors’ engagement with American art and culture. While we have a fair share of American culture in Australia, especially through the media, we need to be better connected with American history and American vision. What we see in this exhibition is how America came to be America. The artists reveal America’s foundation narratives: the Pilgrims, the Founding Fathers, the frontiersman, the migrant. They explore the ideas, places and people that made America exceptional but equally there are works that don’t shy away from the darker chapters of American history either. Some of the paintings are very challenging’, said Michael Brand.

America: painting a nation

- The most expansive survey of American painting ever presented in Australia.
- Over 80 works, ranging from 1750 to 1966, cover more than 200 years of American art, history and experience.
- This exhibition features artists including Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Georgia O’Keeffe, James McNeil Whistler, Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent.
- Works have come from four major institutions in the USA: The Terra Foundation, Chicago; The Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has lent its major work, Edward Hopper’s *House at dusk 1935*.
- Most of the works have never been seen in Australia.
- Sydney is the only Australian venue for this exhibition.



Charles Willson Peale

Portrait of John and Elizabeth Lloyd Cadwalader and their daughter Anne 1772

A measure of the wealth, ambition and unique cultural circumstances in pre-Revolutionary America. The Cadwaladers were art patrons in Philadelphia, then the fourth largest city in the British Empire and soon to be the site for the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. This is a modern family; their wealth derives from business, their values are those of the Enlightenment, and their relations are casual. Peale reinvents the family portrait, setting aside the rigidity of English aristocratic conventions and revealing the informal spirit of an emerging American character.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased for the Cadwalader Collection 1983-90-3

Henry Inman

No-Tin (Wind), a Chippewa chief 1832-33

A portrait of a Native American leader reveals the moral and political complexities of American history. Bridging two worlds, No-Tin adapts imported clothing and feathers into formal regalia worn during territorial negotiations in Washington DC. One of a series of official portraits, coinciding with the federal government policy of forced removal and relocation, the image speaks of heritage, nobility and loss simultaneously.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the 2008 Collectors Committee M.2008.58

Winslow Homer

A temperance meeting 1874

The grand idea of frontier life as a hallmark of American character, condensed into a modest anecdote from everyday life. A folksy tale – boy meets girl over a shared drink of well water – expands into a gentle reflection on youth, rural labour and the Puritan legacy. A reminder that morality pervades American art: honest work, sound community values and a foundation of piety shape the 19th-century frontier.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the John Howard McFadden Jr Fund 1956-118-1



Thomas Moran

Grand Canyon of the Colorado River 1892-1908

A hymn to the awe-inspiring scale of American space. Immersing the viewer in a space so deep that all sense of scale is lost, the painting pushes the idea of the sublime to an almost hallucinatory level. Moran's huge landscape reveals why big is so important; wide-open spaces represent not only the might of the Creator but the seemingly boundless opportunities of the New World.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, gift of Graeme Lorimer 1975-182-1



Georgia O'Keeffe

Horse's skull with pink rose 1931

A remarkable example of art's passage from personal experience to national symbolism. O'Keeffe abandons New York for the open spaces of New Mexico. In a horse's skull, found in the desert, she finds a symbol of the frontier, history and mortality. In a moment of improvisation, she adds a flower, adding a grace note of commemoration, fecundity and beauty to a symbol of death. A deliberate attempt to invent an American symbol, the painting also marks the artist's embrace of a new life in the west.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation AC1994.159.1

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Stuart Davis

Something on the eight ball 1953-54

A distinctive characteristic of American abstract art is that it always stayed connected with the realities of American experience. Davis finds abstract values – colour, energy, vitality – in American street life. Neon lights, advertising hoardings, petrol stations and jazz music inspire a painting to appeal to the avant-garde and the hipster alike.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the Adele Haas Turner and Beatrice Pastorius Turner Memorial Fund 1954-30-1

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The exhibition is organised by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Terra Foundation for American Art in collaboration with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and has been made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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SYDNEY ONLY
8 November 2013 –
9 February 2014

**Art Gallery of
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artgallery.nsw.gov.au

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Book

America: painting a nation
A comprehensive full-colour
book with over 90 images
will be published in conjunction
with the exhibition.
RRP \$55; only \$45 from the
AGNSW Gallery Shop

America: painting a nation

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Adolph Gottlieb
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Miki Hayakawa
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