Prendergast to Pollock: American Modernism from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute

February 7, 2014 – May 10, 2015

Through these paintings visitors will explore three kinds of traditional artistic subject matter—landscape, still life and figurative work. Other works in the exhibition embody different manifestations of the mid-20th century art movement known as Abstract Expressionism—the first American art movement to receive international recognition and influence. In addition to the iconic beauty of the works in the exhibition, visitors will have an opportunity to observe how leading modern American artists depicted similar representational and abstract subject matter.

Many of the paintings in Prendergast to Pollock were originally owned by Edward W. Root (1884-1956) of Clinton, N.Y., a pioneering collector of modern American art who, over the course of nearly five decades, kept current with the contemporary art of his lifetime. In 1953 The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City displayed a large selection of works from his collection. This was the first private collection of contemporary art to be so recognized.
American art ever exhibited at that institution. MWPAI Museum of Art Director D’Ambrosio noted, “Edward Wales Root is among the most important collectors of modern art of his generation. His personal relationships with artists and his keen eye resulted in an exceptionally strong representation of the transformation of the visual arts in the first half of the 20th century.”

In 1957 Root bequeathed his large collection of 227 American modernist pictures ranging in date from 1902 to 1953 by eighty different American artists to the Utica museum. Root’s bequest was one of the most important donations of American modernist art in its time. It brought national attention to the fledgling Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, and profoundly influenced its subsequent collecting activity, its exhibition program, and the Institute’s decision to commission architect Philip Johnson (1906-2005) to design his first art museum, which opened to international acclaim in 1960.

This traveling exhibition was organized by the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica, New York. The Henry Luce Foundation provided funding for the conservation of artworks in the exhibition.


VOCABULARY

Abstract: An abstract art work does not contain easily recognizable people, objects or places. What we do see are colors, shapes, forms, lines and sometimes the feeling of movement. Abstract art is more about what it makes you feel than creating a specific narrative or story.

Cityscape: A cityscape is similar to a landscape except it is set in an urban or city environment. The artist will focus on buildings, streets, cars and other common things one sees in a city.

Landscape: A painting, drawing or other art form that typically shows a view of the natural world including elements of the land such as mountains, trees, rivers etc., although
people and animals can be in the landscape as well.

**Portrait:** A likeness of a person as it appears in a painting, drawing, sculpture and any art form. Artists can choose to make a realistic or representational portrait where s/he tries to make the image look as much like their subject (the person) as possible. Artists can also decide to make the portrait stylized or inspired by their subject. In this case instead of trying to reproduce what their subject looks like, artists can use different colors or shapes to exaggerate a person’s features or to express a mood or feeling.

**Rural landscape:** A landscape featuring fields, hay bales, barns and other things often found on a farm.

**Self-portrait:** A portrait that the artist makes using him or herself as the subject.

**Still life:** A still life is a group of objects assembled together often in a painting or drawing. Some still-life art has a theme such as all food items or all objects found in the artist’s studio or workspace. Others are random objects chosen by the artist for any number of reasons.

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**IN THE MUSEUM**

**Activity 1: Looking & Thinking**
Find the landscape, portrait, still life and abstract images in the exhibition. Try to answer the following questions as you come upon each different kind of image.

**Landscapes:**
*What is the weather like?*
*What time of day is it?*
*Are there people in the landscape, if so what are they doing?*

**Portraits:**
*How old do you think this person is?*
*Is s/he inside or outside?*
*Can you tell what clothes s/he is wearing?*
*Who is this person and do you think this is a self-portrait?*

**Still life:**
*What are the objects in this still life?*
*Why do you think the artist chose these objects?*
*Do you notice a theme?*
Abstract:
What are some of the shapes and colors you see?
How do these artworks make you feel?
Is there one you like more than the others? If so, why do think that is?

IN THE CLASSROOM
OR AT HOME
Activity 2: Portraits

Partner with a friend or family member and make portraits of each other!

What materials will you use?

Will you make a collage or drawing or painting or something completely different?
Do you want to make your portrait as realistic as you can or will you be inspired by your portrait partner to make a more stylized, expressive or even abstract portrait?

Activity 3: Still life

Choose objects from your classroom, home or outside and assemble them on a table or on the floor to create your own still life. Decide where you want to sit and then draw your still life. When you are done, get up and sit somewhere else, then draw your still life again.

Think about your position in relation to your still life. Are you above it? Below? Far away? Close up?

How does your perspective, or where you are sitting, change how you see and think about your still life?

How are your two drawings different?
How are they the similar?
William Baziotes, Toy
Harry Bertoia, Quadrilaterals
Ilya Bolotowsky, Marine Variation no. 2
Alexander Brook, The Yellow Fan
Charles Burchfield, Dead Sunflower
Arthur B. Davies, Inland Tempest
Preston Dickinson, Fort George Hill
Arthur Dove, No Feather Pillow
Arthur Dove, Summer Orchard
Arthur Dove, Tree Composition
Jimmy Ernst, Honky Tonk
Lee Gatch, High Tension Tower
Arshile Gorky, Making the Calendar
Edward Hopper, The Camel’s Hump
Charles Howard, Wild Park
Morris Kantor, Ode to the Antique
Yasuo Kuniyoshi, By the Sea
Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Empty Town in Desert
George B. Luks, Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, no. 3
George B. Luks, Closing the Café
George B. Luks, Mexican Boy
Peppino Mangravite, Young Couple Drinking
Reginald Marsh, Lower Manhattan
Reginald Marsh, Texas Guinan and Her Gang
Henry McFee, Boy
Jackson Pollock, No. 34
Maurice Prendergast, Landscape with Figures
Charles Seliger, Cross-Section Plant Life
Charles Seliger, Untitled no. 1
Raphael Soyer, Study for “Sentimental Girl”
Eugene Speicher, Brigham’s Yard, Kingston
Theodoros Stamos, Conversation Piece
Theodoros Stamos, Cosmological Battle
Mark Tobey, Awakening Night
Mark Tobey, Partitions of the City

Exhibition Catalog: Auspicious Vision: Edward Wales Root and American Modernism available for sale in the Everson Museum Gift Shop for $49.95
Hour long docent led tours are available Wednesday through Friday 10.00am – Noon, free of charge for school groups K-12. To book a tour, please contact Qiana Williams, qwilliams@everson.org or (315) 474 6064 x 303. Please call at least three weeks in advance as tour dates book quickly.

Daily Tours
2pm, Free with exhibition admission

Explore the exhibition Prendergast to Pollock: American Modernism from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute with a Docent. Let the artwork come to life and join in lively conversation. Check in at the Visitors Service desk.

Audio Tour
Take a self-guided tour of Prendergast to Pollock. Borrow an
iPod from the Visitors Service Desk to learn even more about this extraordinary collection.

**Gallery Walk: Edward Root, Patron of Moderns**
March 5th, 6.30pm
Free with exhibition admission

Join us for an evening exploring Prendergast to Pollock: American Modernism from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute with Mary Murray, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute. Mary will discuss the remarkable life and legacy of collector Edward W. Root. Root supported progressive American painting from 1913, when he bought a Maurice Prendergast composition at the Armory Show, until the 1950s, when he acquired works by Pollock, Rothko, de Kooning, and other members of the New York School.

Join us afterward to chat and enjoy light refreshments in the Rosamond Gifford Sculpture Court.

**Artful Tales**
February 7, March 7, April 11 1.00pm, Free

For children ages 3 and up and their caregivers. Younger siblings welcome! Look, listen and explore! Join us for an afternoon of storytelling and gallery exploration with a Museum docent. Each afternoon focuses on a special theme, making connections between the picture books and artwork in the Museum. Meet in the Art Zone on the lower level of the Museum. Space is limited, first come first served. To register, contact Kimberly Griffiths, kgriffiths@everson.org, (315) 474 6064 x308

**February 7:** *Action Jackson* by Jan Greenberg & Sandra Jordan, Illustrated by Robert Andrew Parker

**March 7:** *Art Dog*, by Thacher Hurd

**April 11:** *The Pot that Juan Built* by Nancy Andrews-Goebel pictures by David Diaz

**Family Day**
March 28th, Noon-3pm, Free
Rosamond Gifford Sculpture Court

Explore the galleries and join in art making for the entire family! Drip and splat paint to create an action painting just like Jackson Pollock. Use your imagination to build a curious creature using colorful clay. Make your own 3D still life using tissue paper, pipe cleaners and more. Grab a brush to take part in creating a huge collaborative Paint-by-Numbers mural.

**Family Tours**
March 28th, Noon, Free
For families with children ages 5-12

Fun for the entire family! Learn all about the Everson in a family friendly
tour with a museum docent. Check out what’s new in the galleries and engage in lively conversation about what you see. Check in at the Visitors Service Desk, space limited.

Compiled by the Education Department
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**Educator Resource Center**
Visit the ERC to explore a variety of materials available to borrow for classroom use. Browse art objects, games, thematic lessons, DVDs and more as you brainstorm new ideas for the coming year.

Available Wednesday – Friday, Noon – 5.00pm, by appointment only. Call the Education Department (315) 474 6064 or education@everson.org

**Look, Think, Share!**
*Look, Think, Share* is an online space for young and old to look at images from our permanent collection and write about what’s going on. Visit everson.org, click on education, then *Look, Think, Share!*

On cover:
William Baziotes (1912 – 61)
*Toy*, 1949
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in.
Edward W. Root Bequest, 57.72