

NEWS RELEASE



Montclair Art Museum

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MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM PRESENTS THE FIRST EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY LEADING AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS SUPPORTED BY GROUNDBREAKING ROSENWALD FUND

A FORCE FOR CHANGE: AFRICAN AMERICAN ART AND THE JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND ON DISPLAY FEBRUARY 7–JULY 25, 2010

Related Exhibitions from the Museum’s Permanent Collection and the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection

MONTCLAIR, NJ, January 4, 2010— The Montclair Art Museum proudly presents *A Force for Change: African American Art and the Julius Rosenwald Fund*, the first exhibition to explore the artistic legacy of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, created in 1917 by Chicago businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald (1862–1932), who made his fortune as CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Company. Designed to spend itself out of existence after its founder’s death, the Rosenwald Fund supported issues that affected the lives of African Americans in the first half of the 20th century. From 1928 to 1948, the Rosenwald Fund’s Fellowship Program awarded stipends to hundreds of African American artists, writers, teachers, and scholars, as well as white southerners with an interest in race relations. The exhibition explores the artistic products of that support, featuring over 60 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by 22 Rosenwald Fellows. The show runs from February 7 through July 25, 2010. It will be complemented by two related exhibitions, one examining the works of contemporary African American artists

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from the Montclair Art Museum's permanent collection, and the other a selection of prints by Martin Puryear from the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection.

During a time when segregation was a fact of American life, Julius Rosenwald saw racism as an indictment of our entire society. The work encouraged by his philanthropy promoted new images of African Americans, boldly helping to pave the way for equal participation by African Americans in American life. *A Force for Change* showcases this vital work.

Among the impressive list of Rosenwald Fellows were some of the leading artists of the decades between the two world wars, and the work they produced with Rosenwald support was made under conditions of exceptional artistic security and freedom. The work of these artists, such as **Elizabeth Catlett, Eldzier Cortor, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, Gordon Parks, Marion Perkins, Rose Piper, Augusta Savage,** and **Charles White**, is the focus of *A Force for Change*.

The exhibition also presents archival footage of performances by two world-renowned dancers who were Rosenwald Fellows, **Katherine Dunham** and **Pearl Primus**, as well as an original short documentary film about Julius Rosenwald and the Fellowship Program. The list of Rosenwald Fellows includes some of the most influential writers and intellectuals in 20th-century America—including James Baldwin, Allison Davis, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, E. Franklin Frazier, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston—and the film provides background about the foundation's support of their endeavors.

A Force for Change is accompanied by a 175-page catalogue that is co-published by Spertus Museum and Northwestern University Press. A collection of essays by leading scholars in their fields, with illustrations and annotated color plates of the works in the exhibition, the book explores the process by which hundreds of promising and important African American artists, writers, academics, and researchers received financial support for their work through the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Essayists include **Peter M. Ascoli**, grandson and biographer of Julius Rosenwald and a faculty member at Spertus College; **Kinshasha Holman Conwill**, deputy director of the National Museum of African

American Art and Culture, Smithsonian Institution; **Julia Foulkes**, historian of dance, The New School, New York; **Alfred Perkins**, biographer of Rosenwald Fund president Edwin Embree; **Darryl Pinckney**, novelist and literary critic; and **Daniel Schulman**, guest curator and scholar of African American art.

Related Exhibitions

Exploring Identities: African American Works from the Collection examines some of the ways that contemporary African American artists have explored issues of individual and culturally determined identity in their varied works. Drawn from MAM's permanent collection, works are by **Elizabeth Catlett**, **Willie Cole**, **Melvin Edwards**, **Whitfield Lovell**, **Janet Taylor Pickett**, **Lorna Simpson**, and **Carrie Mae Weems**.

Martin Puryear Prints: Selections from the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection presents 13 works by the internationally renowned sculptor and printmaker. Martin Puryear (b. 1941) has worked with Arion Press in San Francisco on a suite of woodcuts made in 2000 to accompany a limited edition of Jean Toomer's 1922 novel, *Cane*, regarded as the highest literary achievement of the Harlem Renaissance. The majority of the works in this exhibition are from the *Cane* project and typify Puryear's original sense of organic forms resonating with mysteriously evocative, yet unspecified symbolism. These exhibitions are organized by MAM Chief Curator Gail Stavitsky.

Education and Public Programs

MAM is offering a wide variety of education and public programs for all ages in connection with the exhibition. Please consult the calendar on the home page of montclairartmuseum.org for complete information.

Exhibition Website

The Museum will maintain a site dedicated to the exhibition for journalists seeking further information, including a checklist, backgrounders, images, and related events and programs. Please visit montclairartmuseum.org/press and click on For the Media.

Sponsorship

A Force for Change: African American Art and the Julius Rosenwald Fund was organized by guest curator Daniel Schulman for the Spertus Museum, Chicago.

The exhibition was made possible by a generous grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Major project support was also provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Righteous Persons Foundation, and The Judith Rothschild Foundation.

A Force for Change: African American Art and the Julius Rosenwald Fund is presented at the Montclair Art Museum with major support from JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Additional funding is provided through a Building Arts Participation grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as Annie Sez, Mandee, and Exhibition Angels Bob and Bobbie Constable.

About the Museum

The Montclair Art Museum, a notable, community-based institution with an international reputation, boasts a renowned collection of American and Native American art that uniquely highlights art making in the United States over the last three hundred years. The collection includes more than 12,000 objects: paintings, prints, original works on paper, photographs, and sculpture by American artists from the 18th century to the present, as well as traditional and contemporary Native American art and artifacts representing the cultural developments of peoples from all of the major American Indian regions. MAM's Yard School of Art is the leading regional art school, offering a multitude of comprehensive courses for children, youth, adults, seniors, and professional artists.

The Montclair Art Museum is located at 3 South Mountain Avenue in Montclair, N.J. Information and directions are available on the Museum website, montclairartmuseum.org, or by calling (973) 746-5555. MAM is open Wednesdays through Sundays, Noon – 5 p.m., and closed on Mondays, Tuesdays, and major holidays. Museum admission is \$12 for nonmember adults, \$10 for senior citizens and students with I.D., and free for members and children under 12.

All Museum programs are made possible, in part, by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Vance Wall Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and Museum Members.

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