

NEWS RELEASE



Montclair Art Museum

For Immediate Release

Media Contacts

Michael Gillespie, 973-259-5134

mgillespie@montclairartmuseum.org

Raechel Lutz, 973-259-5119

rlutz@montclairartmuseum.org

**MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM PRESENTS A NEW EXHIBITION
EXPLORING ITS PERMANENT COLLECTION**

***ENGAGING WITH NATURE: AMERICAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN ARTISTS
(A.D. 1200–2004)
OPENS MAY 16***

—Opening Marks the Launch of Museum’s Ambitious Exhibition Program—

MONTCLAIR, NJ, April 23, 2010—The Montclair Art Museum (MAM) is pleased to present *Engaging with Nature: American and Native American Artists (A.D. 1200–2004)*, a new exhibition that explores a vast range of the Museum’s permanent collection. It is the first exhibition ever presented by the Museum to integrate American and Native American art from the collection from all time periods and around a central theme. More than half of the nearly 40 works have never or rarely been displayed. The show opens May 16, 2010, and will remain on view through September 25, 2011.

The works in the exhibition encompass an astonishing variety of art and artifacts, from prehistoric Native American ceramics to historical 19th-century landscape paintings to contemporary staged photographs, suggesting various conceptions of landscape and nature.

America’s diverse geography is evoked in western landscapes by Thomas Moran, Philip Pearlstein, Charles Simonds, and Albert Lorey Groll, while New Jersey and the East are subjects of works by Charles Warren Eaton, Charles Burchfield, Dennis

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Oppenheim, and Montclair-born Lois Dodd. Also included are Native American works created from the land and plants that are often depicted in landscapes. Ancient vessels from the Puebloan cultures in the Southwest offer fine examples of prehistoric ceramics made for everyday use.

Imaginary landscapes are prevalent in the show, beginning with the expressive, dreamlike works of Ralph Albert Blakelock and James Lavadour, who, like George Inness, believed that nature was imbued with the mystical presence of divine forces. Imaginative, spiritual interpretations of nature are also evident in the work of Oscar Bluemner, Charles Burchfield, Dan Namingha, Kenzo Okada, Steve Grapber, and Emmi Whitehorse. Nature as a vehicle for exploring ancient, universal themes of ritual, magic, myth, and the origins of life fascinated Mark Rothko, Harry Fonseca, Tony Abeyta, and Kay WalkingStick.

Contemporary landscapes often challenge earlier, more literal or romanticized concepts of nature. In the 1970s, pioneering Earthwork artist Oppenheim created ephemeral manipulations of nature that exist only in the form of photo-documentations. More recently, Louise Lawler, Hiroshige Sugimoto, and Justine Kurland use photography as a medium to explore ideas of reality and illusion.

The exhibition, co-curated by MAM's Twig Johnson, senior curator of Native American art, and Gail Stavitsky, chief curator, marks the beginning for the Museum not only of a new, thematic approach to its permanent collection but also of an ambitious exhibition program designed to appeal to a broad range of audiences. Upcoming exhibitions include *Living for Art: The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection* (September 24, 2010–January 2, 2011), featuring 50 gifts of minimal and conceptual art MAM recently received as the one museum in New Jersey selected to be part of the National Gallery of Art's "Fifty Works for Fifty States" initiative; and *Warhol and Cars: American Icons* (February 4–July 17, 2011), a first-time look at Warhol's longtime fascination with automotive vehicles as products of consumer society in this survey of drawings, paintings, prints, photographs, and related archival

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documents spanning his career from 1946 to 1985, including MAM's pivotal but little known silk screen painting *Twelve Cadillacs* (1962).

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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