

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 2015

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The Norton Simon Museum Presents *Tête-à-tête: Three Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay*

March 27 – June 22, 2015

*A highlight will be the installation of Whistler's iconic portrait of his mother,
last on view in Southern California in 1933*

A press preview is on Wednesday, March 25, 11:00 a.m. RSVP to media@nortonsimon.org

Pasadena, CA— This spring, the Norton Simon Museum presents an installation of three paintings from the Musée d'Orsay's renowned art collection: Édouard Manet's *Émile Zola*, 1868, James Abbott McNeill Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, 1871 (also known as *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*), and Paul Cézanne's *The Card Players*, 1892–96. These paintings will hang together in the Norton Simon Museum's 19th-century wing, alongside paintings from the Simon collection by Manet, Cézanne and their contemporaries. A small, bilingual publication and a series of lectures, tours, and films will be offered in conjunction with the installation. Entrance to the exhibition is included with general admission, but timed tickets are available for sale at tickets.nortonsimon.org.

About the Paintings

Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1, 1871



It is perhaps the single most recognizable image in the history of American painting: the spare interior of an artist's studio, a gray wall, a Japanese curtain, an aging subject soberly dressed and seated in profile. Whistler's portrait of his mother, painted in the fall of 1871, marks the high point of his career. "It is rare," wrote Whistler's friend, the painter Jacques-Émile Blanche, "that one can judge an artist by a single work." *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, also known as *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, is such a work. Endlessly reproduced, imitated and parodied, the picture nonetheless resists any fixed interpretation. Given the painting's iconic status in American

culture, the fact that *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1* resides not in the United States but in France may come as a surprise. Acquired by the French state in 1891 after a vigorous campaign by admirers including the painter Claude Monet and the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, *Arrangement* became the first American painting to enter the Louvre in 1925 and moved to the Musée d'Orsay with other 19th-century paintings when it opened in 1986. The painting last visited Southern California eighty-two years ago as part of a whirlwind tour of the United States, organized to promote Franco-American friendship. Heralded by the *Los Angeles Times* in February of that year as “a world symbol for the ideal of mother,” the painting attracted some 80,000 visitors to the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art in Exposition Park (predecessor to both LACMA and the Natural History Museum) between March 18 and April 5, 1933.

Manet's *Émile Zola*, 1868



Like Whistler's portrait of his mother, Manet's portrait of Zola depicts a sitter intimately known to the artist. But while Whistler's painting remains an “arrangement” somewhat remote in its treatment of its subject, Manet's portrait of Zola is literally overflowing with tokens of friendship. Zola was still making a name for himself as a journalist in 1866 when he published a glowing newspaper article on Manet. In his article, Zola praised the frank modernity of Manet's style, which had made the painter a divisive figure—and, indeed, a frequent object of ridicule—on the Paris art scene. One year later, when jury members for the Paris World's Fair deemed Manet's submissions too radical, the painter erected a pavilion on the edge of the fairgrounds where visitors could judge his work for themselves. His co-conspirator in this guerilla exhibition was none other than Zola, who re-published his latest article as a booklet titled *Une nouvelle manière en peinture* (A New Manner in Painting) on the occasion. To show his gratitude, Manet painted the writer's portrait in January 1868. Depicting Zola as a connoisseur and scholar, Manet surrounded him with both art (a Japanese print, a print after Velázquez and a reproduction of Manet's own *Olympia*) and books (including, of course, Zola's own *Une nouvelle manière en peinture*).

Cézanne's *The Card Players*, c. 1892–96



Of the whole Impressionist group, Cézanne was the least understood by his contemporaries. Stung by the unusually harsh criticism that greeted his work at the third Impressionist exhibition in 1877, Cézanne effectively withdrew from public exhibition for nearly 20 years, reemerging in a series of shows mounted by the progressive dealer Ambroise Vollard, when Cézanne came to be appreciated at last as the father of modern art. After his withdrawal from the public eye, Cézanne began to spend more time in the South of France, on his family's

property outside of Aix. There he focused on local landscapes, kitchen still lifes and a narrow cast of domestic models. *The Card Players*, painted between about 1892 and 1896, belongs to this last category, representing two workers seated at a table playing cards. The deceptive simplicity of the scene, the pyramidal composition and the network of short, hatch-like brushstrokes are all characteristics of Cézanne's mature style. The painting is the first of three versions of the same composition that Cézanne made in the early 1890s (the others belong to the Courtauld Gallery in London and the Royal Family of Qatar). Cézanne's sometimes agonized perfectionism drove him back to the same themes again and again, struggling to understand and convey not only what he saw but how he saw it.

Simultaneous to the installation at the Norton Simon Museum, the Musée d'Orsay will exhibit three 19th-century masterpieces from the Simon collection: Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *The Pont des Arts, Paris*, 1867–68, Vincent van Gogh's *Portrait of a Peasant (Patience Escalier)*, 1888, and Édouard Vuillard's *First Fruits*, 1899. While these three works were all created in France, none of them has been exhibited there since being purchased by Norton Simon in the 1960s and '70s. The installation will present the paintings in three different galleries, hung alongside works by each artist.

Tête-à-tête: Three Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay is organized by Chief Curator Carol Togneri and Associate Curator Emily A. Beeny. Entrance to the exhibition is included with general admission, but timed tickets are available for sale at tickets.nortonsimon.org.

Related Publication

Pas de deux: An Exchange of Masterpieces provides an in-depth look at six nineteenth-century masterworks, commemorating a historic collaboration between the Norton Simon Museum and the Musée d'Orsay. Co-authored by Stéphane Guégan and Emily A. Beeny, the book contains bilingual essays on three paintings from the Musée d'Orsay collection: Manet's 1868 *Portrait of Émile Zola*, Whistler's 1871 *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1 (Portrait of the Artist's Mother)*, and Cézanne's ca. 1892-96 *The Card Players*—and three paintings from the Norton Simon: Renoir's ca. 1867 *Pont des Arts, Paris*, Van Gogh's 1888 *Portrait of a Peasant (Patience Escalier)*, and Vuillard's 1899 *First Fruits*.

Paperbound, 64 pages, 11 x 8 inches, bilingual in English and French
Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena/Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 2015, \$15.96 plus tax

Related Events

LECTURES

The Musée d'Orsay: Its Architecture, Pedigree and World-Class Art

Alain Lombard, Deputy Director, Musée d'Orsay

Saturday, April 18, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Since its inauguration on December 9, 1986, the Musée d'Orsay has welcomed more than 76 million visitors to its galleries. Located in the very heart of Paris, on the left bank of the Seine, with the Louvre

and the Tuileries Garden directly across the river, this museum is exceptional for its stately building, originally conceived in 1900 as a railway station. It houses one of the most famous collections of French 19th-century paintings, composed of some of the most iconic works ever created by the Impressionists. It also possesses a splendid collection of the Nabi group, sculpture, architecture, decorative arts and photography made during the short period encompassing the years 1848–1914. For the patrimony of French art, this second half of the 1800s has often been compared in importance to the Italian Renaissance. Lombard explores this eminent institution, from the fascinating history of its building to its inception as an art museum, as well as its celebrated collections.

James McNeill Whistler and His Mother

Daniel Sutherland, Distinguished Professor of History, University of Arkansas

Saturday, May 2, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

James McNeill Whistler created over 2,700 paintings, drawings, etchings and lithographs, besides writing several pamphlets about the roles of art and the artist in society. He may legitimately be hailed as the most complete of all American artists. Yet, Whistler is most often remembered for a single painting, a portrait of his mother, Anna. “Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1” or “Whistler’s Mother,” as it is universally known, marked a turning point in his thinking about art and helped, no less than the woman herself, to shape the course of his life.

Revolutions in Technique: Manet, Monet and the Impressionists

David Bomford, Chair of the Department of Conservation and Head of European Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Saturday, May 9, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Although Manet was closely associated with the Impressionists, he remained quite distinct from the formal group of painters that bore the name. He exhibited in none of the eight Impressionist exhibitions and consistently declined invitations to participate. While the Impressionists—and especially Monet—established clearly defined ways of working, Manet’s technical trajectory is more complex and difficult to define. This lecture explores Manet’s working methods in paintings such as *Émile Zola* and compares them with the “classic” Impressionist techniques of Monet. By doing so, we come closer to understanding the differing aims and objectives of both artists.

FILMS

James McNeill Whistler and the Case for Beauty (2014)

A film by Karen Thomas, NR

Friday, April 24, 6:00–7:00 p.m.

James McNeill Whistler and the Case for Beauty takes a close look at how the 19th-century artist pioneered a new way of thinking about art—that beauty, in and of itself, is a work of art’s most essential value. Whistler’s struggle to find his own voice resulted in a breakaway style that moved painting toward abstraction and revolutionized the art world in Whistler’s time—paving the way for what became known

decades later as Modernism. By the time of his death, Whistler had become one of the most celebrated artists in Western tradition.

The Life of Emile Zola (1937)

Directed by William Dieterle, NR

Friday, May 15, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

The story of a great writer, a man who proved that one voice can overcome injustice and change the course of a nation, is immortalized in *The Life of Emile Zola*. This 1937 drama episodically explores the career of the novelist who championed the cause of France's oppressed. Zola (Paul Muni) is a hugely successful French author who risks all his success and comfort to come to the defense of the unjustly jailed Captain Alfred Dreyfus (Oscar winner Joseph Schildkraut). This distinguished film is a must-see portrait of a life that grew into an important voice for art, truth and justice.

Le Cousin Jules (1972)

Directed by Dominique Benicheti, NR

Friday, June 12, 6:00–7:30 p.m.

The documentary *Le Cousin Jules* is a rare combination of sophisticated movie-making technique and a story that is a veritable ode to the beauty of rural France, the simplicity of daily peasant life and the nearly wordless intimacy of a lifelong relationship. Filmed over a five-year period, director Dominique Benicheti captured the rhythms and rituals of blacksmith Jules Guiteaux and his wife Félicie as Jules dons wooden clogs and leather apron to begin work in his shop, while Félicie tends a vegetable garden and prepares their meals. A ravishing and immersive work, viewers not only enter into the subjects' world, but also into the very rhythms of their lives – a record of a time and a way of life that has long ago vanished. Awarded the jury prize at the Locarno Film Festival in 1973 and widely acclaimed around the world, the film was beautifully restored in 2012. In French with English subtitles.

TOURS

Masters of Tomorrow: Manet, Degas, Whistler and Cézanne

Thursdays, April 9, 16, 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21, 28; June 4, 11, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

The celebrated French author Émile Zola described the unrecognized artist Manet as a “master of tomorrow.” View remarkable works of art by acknowledged 19th-century masters, including Manet, Degas, Whistler, Cézanne and others. Free with admission, but advanced registration is required at nortonsimon.org/events (starting in mid-March). Space is limited to 20 visitors per tour.

All events are free with Museum admission. Stickers for ensured seating are distributed in the main entrance gallery one hour prior to the event. Members enjoy early seating. More information can be found at nortonsimon.org/events.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of Indian and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., active military and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.