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Paul Cézanne comes to MAM with his American heirs

BY ELIZABETH OGUSS
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The Montclair Art Museum is going all out for its 95th birthday with a show that's bigger than anything in its history.

In the works for close to a decade, "Cézanne and American Modernism" opens at MAM on Sunday and stays only until January, when it moves to the Baltimore Museum of Art.

The exhibition is presented in collaboration with that museum, and travels also to the Phoenix Art Museum next summer.

Paul Cézanne, who lived from 1839 to 1906, is "the father of modern art," said Gail Stavitsky, a scholar of American modernism who is MAM's chief curator.

Stavitsky curated the show in collaboration with Katherine Rothkopf, senior curator and department head of European painting and sculpture at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Stavitsky acknowledged that she won't get much sleep the night before Sunday's opening.

"It is by far the most ambitious show that the museum has ever done," she said. "I am very excited and hope every detail's going to fall into place ... but also calm because the show's coming together well."

FRENCH ARTIST, AMERICAN ARTISTS

Paul Cézanne may have been French, but an exhibition dedicated to his influence is entirely true to MAM's mission to collect and present American and Native American art.

"Basically all the most important modern art movements of the early 20th century – cubism, fauvism – come out of artists' study and appreciation of Cézanne," Stavitsky said.

The show encompasses 131 works — including 18 by Cézanne, and works by 34 American artists — and archival material such as gallery brochures and contemporary magazine articles about Cézanne.

Seven of the works come from MAM's collection.

Go and See

"Cézanne and American Modernism," the first exhibition to examine fully the influence of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) upon modern American artists from 1907 to 1930, will be on view Sept. 13 through Jan. 3, 2010, at the Montclair Art Museum (MAM), 3 South Mountain Ave.

As the largest, most ambitious exhibition in the 95-year history of the Museum, "Cézanne and American Modernism" comprises 131 works, including 18 works by Cézanne and paintings, works on paper, photographs and archival documents representing 34 American artists, as well as critics. Works in the exhibitions are drawn from a wide range of museum collections, including MAM's, and from important private collections.

Museum admission is free for members and children under age 12. Admission is \$12 for nonmember adults, and \$10 for senior citizens and students with ID. For more information, call 973-746-5555, or visit online at montclairartmuseum.org.

The Cézanne paintings serve as an introduction to the work of the American artists he influenced.

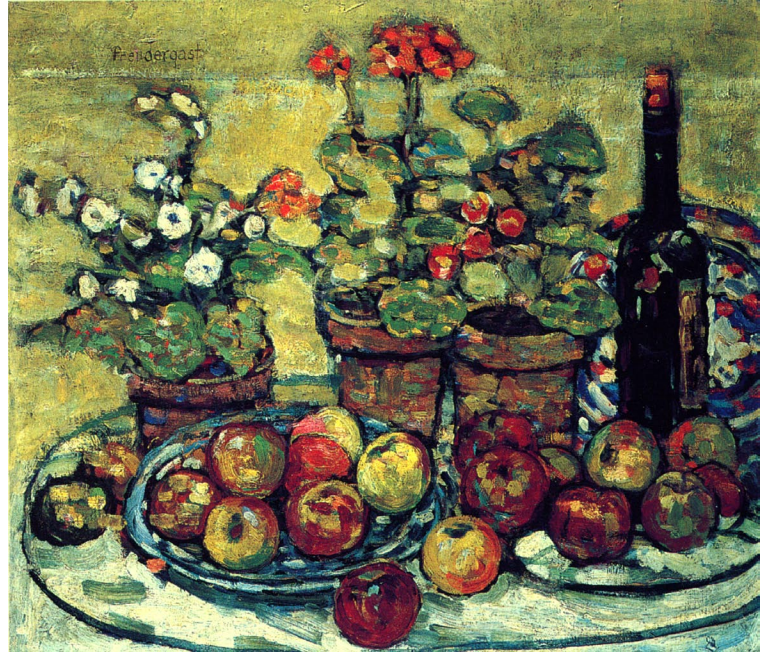
As a young artist, Cézanne was a late Impressionist. But by the end of his career, Stavitsky said, "he is really not an Impressionist. He goes beyond trying to capture a fleeting impression of nature to trying to capture something solid, substantial, eternal."

Stavitsky said Cézanne has always been "looked at in relation to Matisse and Picasso, but not in relationship to American artists."

Michael Gillespie, MAM's director of communications, told The Times, "It was Americans who collected, exhibited, and were influenced by him. Not only were they influenced by him, but they essentially established and created his reputation. By [1930] he was coming to be known as the crucial bridge between post-Impressionism and the modern art movements of the 20th century."

Artists in the exhibition include Anne Brigman, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, Man Ray, and the photographers Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz and Paul Strand.

Morgan Russell, an artist familiar to regular visitors at MAM, also appears in the exhibition. Russell literally borrowed "Five Apples," a Cézanne



"Cézanne and American Modernism" is MAM's first exhibition that examines fully the influence of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) on modern American artists from 1907 to 1930. The artwork of the French artist bridged the interval between 19th-century Impressionism and the modern art movements of the 20th century, and influenced many American artists. Above: "Still Life: Fruit and Flowers" (c. 1910-1913), by Maurice Prendergast, a MAM purchase through the Lang Acquisition Fund, shows the influence of Paul Cézanne's "Five Apples" (1877-1878), below, from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene V. Thaw.



painting owned by Gertrude and Leo Stein, Stavitsky said.

"He borrowed that exact painting, and made one called "Three Apples" based on it. When you look, you see the differences. Russell's is more abstract, feels more modern, but you can see Cézanne."

This exhibition will mark the first time the Russell and Cézanne paintings have been shown together.

The watercolor artist Maurice Prendergast was born in 1861, making him one of the earlier artists in the show.


"His earlier watercolors really are older," Stavitsky said. "The period we're looking at, around 1910, is when he's already traveled to Europe. He

went and saw Cézanne ... and that's when the influence enters his work," she said.

Stavitsky said "What we're hoping is that people not feel intimidated because this is a show that's so visually appealing. It's such a beautiful show, with such a range of subject matter: still lifes, landscapes, lots of portraits."

"There's a lot going on," Gillespie said. "People will find it lively. It's a good time to visit MAM if it's your first time."

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