

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS FINAL INSTALLATION
IN MULTI-YEAR AMERICAN ART COLLABORATION**

American Encounters: The Simple Pleasures of Still Life *brings together paintings from four institutions to illuminate American artists' unique approaches to European still-life tradition*

ATLANTA, Sept. 21, 2015 – The High Museum of Art presents the final installation in its four-year collaboration with the Musée du Louvre, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and the Terra Foundation for American Art focusing on the history of American art.

American Encounters: The Simple Pleasures of Still Life explores how late 18th- and early 19th-century American artists adapted European still-life tradition to American taste, character and experience. The culminating presentation of the *American Encounters* series—which has aimed to broaden appreciation for and dialogue about American art both within the U.S. and abroad—*The Simple Pleasures of Still Life* follows previous installations examining important genres in American art, including portraiture, landscape and genre paintings.

The exhibition is on view at the High from Sept. 26, 2015, through Jan. 31, 2016, following its previous presentations at the Louvre (Feb. 5 – April 27, 2015) and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark. (May 16 – Sept. 14, 2015).

Though a centuries-old tradition in Europe, still-life painting was slow to take hold in the U.S., increasing in popularity over the course of the 19th century, an era of remarkable political, economic and social transformation. The subjects depicted in American still lifes evolved throughout these decades, drawing on and expanding the traditions of Dutch-style tabletops laden with fruits and vegetables and ornate French bouquet arrangements in the selection, arrangement and depiction of objects imbued with New World symbolism. As the country became more cosmopolitan, a result of its growing industrial and economic power, art patronage in the Gilded Age increasingly focused on the representation of wealth in pictures of exotic objects popular among the upper classes. The subjects of still-life painting during this period served as evocative emblems—whether of regional identity, moral values or eclectic collecting—and reflect the story of an evolving nation.

“This focused presentation could not be a more fitting conclusion to the *American Encounters* series,” said Stephanie Mayer Heydt, Margaret and Terry Stent curator of American art at the High. “Each individual painting, intimately scaled and packed with lush imagery rife with symbolic and historical meaning, invites close observation and tells the story of a young nation finding its voice. We’re thrilled to share this distinctly American experience and educate audiences about the history of American art both at home and abroad.”

Added Guillaume Faroult, curator, department of paintings, Musée du Louvre: “Our partnership over the past four years has allowed for unprecedented opportunities for scholarship, engagement and creative exchange. Collectively, we have been able to provide a much richer, holistic narrative of the development of American art than any of the institutions could have presented alone. This collaboration has had a

significant impact on the understanding and appreciation for American art in Paris and beyond, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue fostered by this installation series.”

The masterpieces in the *The Simple Pleasures of Still Life* speak to the diversity of the still-life genre in the U.S. and range from works by artists De Scott Evans, Martin Johnson Heade, Joseph Biays Ord, William Sidney Mount and Raphaelle Peale to *trompe l’oeil* masterworks by John Haberle, William Michael Harnett and George Cope. Two paintings by John-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and Abraham Mignon demonstrate the European examples frequently emulated by American artists first experimenting with still life in the early 1800s. The presentation at the High is supplemented with four additional paintings drawn from the museum’s extensive holdings in American art, including works by William Mason Brown, Joseph Decker and John Frederick Peto.

Highlights include:

- *Pipes and Drinking Pitcher* (1737) by Chardin, the most popular French still-life painter of the 18th century, depicts an unusual subject for the artist that subtly conjures sensory pleasures. (Musée du Louvre)
- *Corn and Cantaloupe* (c. 1813) by Peale demonstrates how American artists adopted the European “tabletop composition” to feature distinctly American horticulture: the ear of corn and a Maryland-specific variety of cantaloupe grown on the plantation of the painting’s original owner. (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art)
- Civil War-era *Apples on a Tin Cup* (1864) by Mount juxtaposes opposing symbols of the apple—the iconic American fruit and a common gift from children to Union soldiers during the Civil War—atop an empty, battled-worn army-issued cup to create a poignant contrast between sustenance and absence in a nation weary from war. (Terra Foundation for American Art)
- *Still Life with Bust of Dante* (1883) by Harnett is a *trompe l’oeil* painting illustrating the late 19th-century trend towards collecting eclectic and exotic objects made available through rapidly expanding international commerce. (High Museum of Art)

Catalogue and Programs

The partners have collaborated to produce a small catalogue for each installation in the series. The illustrated book for *American Encounters: The Simple Pleasures of Still Life* features an essay by Heydt that charts the rise of the still-life tradition in the 19th century and infusion of American symbolism into a traditionally European genre. The book is published by the High, produced by Marquand Books, and distributed by the University of Washington Press.

Exhibition Organization and Support

American Encounters: The Simple Pleasures of Still Life is part of a multi-year collaboration with Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, the Musée du Louvre and the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Support for this exhibition is provided by American Friends of the Louvre.

Previous American Encounters Installations

Launching the collaboration between the Musée du Louvre, the High Museum of Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and the Terra Foundation for American Art was the installation *American Encounters: Thomas Cole and the Narrative Landscape*, which explored the emergence of American landscape painting through the works of Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand. *American Encounters: Genre Painting and Everyday Life* followed with an in-depth examination of five major genre paintings, each of which offered a unique perspective on 19th-century America and exemplified the European influence on American genre painting. The third installation, entitled *American Encounters: Anglo-*

American Portraiture in an Era of Revolution, brought together paintings from all four institutions, as well as Versailles, to examine the evolution of late 18th- and early 19th-century portraiture in a time of strained political relations—but strong artistic influence—between Great Britain and the U.S.

History of Collaborations among the Partners

In 2003, the Terra Foundation supported a major conference on American art at the Louvre, entitled “The Independence of American Art.” The Louvre and the Terra Foundation collaborated again in 2006 on two important projects: the first American art exhibition at the Louvre, in which Samuel F. B. Morse’s monumental *Gallery of the Louvre* (1831–33), from the foundation’s collection, hung in the Louvre’s Salon Carré, the same room featured in the painting; and the Lafayette database, created with the Henry Luce Foundation, which is a comprehensive inventory of works of American art in French collections (<http://musee.louvre.fr/bases/lafayette/?lng=1>).

From 2006 to 2009, the Louvre and the High participated in a collection-sharing initiative called “Louvre Atlanta” that included a series of thematic exhibitions and the development of joint publications and other collaborative scholarship. The Terra Foundation also lent its *Gallery of the Louvre* as part of the Louvre-High collaboration; the painting was on view at the High as part of the *Kings as Collectors* exhibition in 2006.

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High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 15,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; a significant collection of historic and contemporary decorative arts and design; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk and self-taught art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art explores the unfolding story of America through a collection of works that illuminate American heritage and artistic possibilities. Founded in 2005 by the Walton Family Foundation, the Museum opened on November 11, 2011. The Museum takes its name from a nearby natural spring and the bridge construction incorporated in the building design by architect Moshe Safdie. A series of pavilions nestled around two spring-fed ponds house collection and exhibition galleries; meeting and classroom spaces; and a large, glass-enclosed gathering hall. The Museum’s goal of intersecting art and nature is realized not only in the physical buildings, but through sculpture and walking trails, which link the Museum’s 120-acre park and gardens to downtown Bentonville, AR. The Museum’s permanent collection spans five centuries of American paintings, sculpture, and works on paper ranging from the Colonial era to the current day. For more information, visit www.crystalbridges.org.

Musée du Louvre

Heir to the century of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the Louvre was founded in 1793 as a museum for all, celebrating humanity’s long journey with the remarkable scope of a collection that spans thousands of years. Located in central Paris, and once a home to kings, the Louvre is now an internationally recognized cultural icon that strives to uphold a dynamic and ambitious policy of research, exhibitions, education, and acquisition. The world’s most visited museum, the Louvre further highlights its universal reach via the diversity of its 9 million annual visitors and additional 2.5 million viewers of

exhibitions organized by the Louvre around the world. The museum presents 38,000 works of art in over 72,700 square meters of exhibition space. The permanent collection consists of Western art from the Middle Ages to 1848 and the works of ancient civilizations that preceded and influenced it (Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities; Near-Eastern Art; Islamic Art). For more information, visit www.louvre.fr.

Terra Foundation for American Art

Established in 1978, the Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering the exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States. With financial resources of more than \$350 million, an exceptional collection of American art from the colonial era to 1945, and an expansive grant program, it is one of the leading foundations focused on American art, supporting exhibitions, academic programs, and research worldwide. For more information, visit www.terraamericanart.org.

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