

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Innovative Vancouver Art Gallery Exhibition Explores National Identity in Canada and U.S. at the Turn of the 19th Century

VANCOUVER, BC – The **Vancouver Art Gallery** will present the first exhibition to compare the extraordinary work of American and Canadian landscape artists during the formative days of each nation. Beginning with the American Civil War and ending with the conclusion of the First World War, ***Expanding Horizons: Painting and Photography of American and Canadian Landscape 1860-1918*** presents some of North America's greatest artworks from a time when each country was aggressively extending their boundaries westward. On view from **October 17, 2009 to January 17, 2010**, the exhibition, organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, includes more than 175 of the most celebrated examples of landscape painting and photography from this decisive period selected from outstanding international public and private collections.

“The revolutionary approach of *Expanding Horizons* makes a major contribution to the understanding of landscape art in North America,” said **Kathleen Bartels** director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “The Gallery is proud to offer visitors the first opportunity in a major exhibition to compare how Canadian and American artists expressed the enormity of the North American wilderness and its transformation during this dramatic era of change.”

Expanding Horizons focuses on a time when transcontinental ambitions of Canada and the United States set both countries on a trajectory of westward expansion. This period coincided with the emergence of sophisticated communities of artists in both countries. The exhibition explores how these artists fostered and reinforced national identities in their work and how portrayals of landscaped on each side of the boarder differed as a result. As well, the exhibition draws attention to the representation of Indigenous people who were often depicted as existing apart from the sense of nationalism that artists were celebrating. The exhibition concludes with the stylistic innovations of the early 20th century and the new directions artists in each country were taking to communicate changing ideas about the North American landscape.

“From crashing waterfalls and luminous mountain sunsets to Voyageurs shooting the rapids and bustling urban thoroughfares, the exceptional artworks included in *Expanding Horizons* transport viewers to this remarkable period in North American history,” said Vancouver Art Gallery senior curator Ian Thom. “The exhibition provides powerful insight into how some of our nations’ most important artists interpreted the breathtaking beauty of their fledgling nations, and explores how the nationalistic visions of the day played an integral role.”



Thomas Moran
Mountain of the Holy Cross, 1875
oil on canvas,
219.1 x 195.8 cm
Courtesy of the Autry National Center,
Museum of the American West Collection,
Los Angeles
Donated by Mr. and Mrs. Gene Autry

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Through massive sweeping vistas of Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon and the Catskill Mountains and in more intimately scaled paintings of Canada's Eastern townships, the Alberta prairie and Pacific coast, *Expanding Horizons* reveals much about the tendencies of both nations and their artists. Following a chronological flow, the exhibition is divided into six sections exploring stylistic developments and changing subject matter in both countries. **Nature Transcendent** explores how artist imbued their landscapes with a sense of spirituality. **The Stage of History and the Theatre of Myth** explores how artists manipulated the landscape to perpetuate ideals of national identity. **Man versus Nature** investigates how the transformation, exploitation and destruction of nature were presented in the name of progress. The works included in **Nature Domesticated** present nature as a realm for idyllic escapism in reaction to increasing urbanization in each country. **The Urban Landscape** examines how artist endowed their compositions of the city with a similar optimism previously used to express pristine nature. Finally, **Return to Nature** addresses the "rediscovery" of the spiritual qualities of nature by artists representing the landscape with vivid, abstract colour, simplified forms, and minimized human activity to evoke nature's sacred dimensions.

Included in the exhibition are works by many of the most important landscape painters and photographers working around the turn of the 19th century. Outstanding paintings by Canadian artists include works by William Brymner, Emily Carr, Maurice Cullen, Aaron Allan Edson, John Arthur Fraser, Clarence Gagnon, Lawren Stewart Harris, Alexander Young Jackson, Otto Reinhold Jacobi, Ozias Leduc, James Edward Hervey MacDonald, David Milne, James Wilson Morrice, Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, Tom Thomson and Frederick Arthur Verner; and photography by Benjamin Baltzly, Alexander Henderson and William Notman.

American painting is represented by such artists as Albert Bierstadt, William Merritt Chase, Frederic Edwin Church, Jasper Francis Cropsey, Robert S. Duncanson, Thomas Eakins, Marsden Hartley, Frederick Childe Hassam, Martin Johnson Heade, Winslow Homer, George Inness, John Frederick Kensett, Thomas Moran, Georgia O'Keeffe, Frederic Remington, John Singer Sargent and John Henry Twachtman; and photography by Alvin Langdon Coburn, Asahel Curtis, William Henry Jackson, Eadweard James Muybridge, Timothy O'Sullivan, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand and Carleton E. Watkins.

This exhibition is organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and curated by Hilliard Goldfarb, associate chief curator, and has been supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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