



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

THE FRICK ART & HISTORICAL CENTER PRESENTS

SMALL BUT SUBLIME:

INTIMATE 19th-CENTURY AMERICAN LANDSCAPES

Exquisite works illuminate historic view of our country

PITTSBURGH, PA, May 3, 2010—On May 14, 2010, *Small but Sublime: Intimate 19th-Century American Landscapes* opens at the Frick Art & Historical Center. The exhibition features 22 small-scale paintings and drawings by 18 American artists, which range from the realistic style of Hudson River School to the brilliantly colored canvases of the American Impressionists. The works, selected from the superb collection of the Newark Museum, provide an overview of the varied approaches to landscape in the 19th century and illustrate shifts in broader social attitudes towards nature and American identity. *Small but Sublime: Intimate 19th-Century American Landscapes* will remain on view at The Frick Art Museum through September 5, 2010.

Admission is free.

Beginning with the Hudson River School in the 1820s, landscape painting served as a vehicle for expressing national identity and pride in the wonders of the New World. Artists such as Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), Asher B. Durand (1796–1886) and Jasper Cropsey (1823–1900) were intent on creating distinctly American scenes. The term “sublime”—when used to describe art and literature—has been freighted with many associations since the 18th century.

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Its earliest associations (as found in works of Romantic painters like Caspar David Friedrich and Joseph Mallord William Turner) were often linked to works that emphasized the insignificance of man, mortality and the terrifying grandeur of nature. For 19th-century American landscape artists the sublime had somewhat different associations, the awe-inspiring grandeur of the natural world was seen as evidence of the presence of God, and landscapes that attempted to capture this grandeur conveyed sacred and religious sentiments. In relation to the natural world, this resulted in large-scale, operatic views of untamed nature—often of the American West or South America. Hudson River School artists, such as Albert Bierstadt, also painted smaller, more salable works that reflected a 19th-century philosophy of the sublime that was distinctly American. Many of the works in this exhibition portray quiet and tranquil views that were wild—yet familiar—to American viewers. Bierstadt's *Lake at Franconia Notch, White Mountains*, c.1860s, depicts a popular tourist spot. Bierstadt's painting is a closely observed rendering on paper, indicating that he probably painted a considerable portion of the work on the spot.

In their desire to create memorable and marketable works, painters frequently traveled to destinations renowned for their beauty and sublimity. The Catskills, Adirondacks, Niagara Falls, and Natural Bridge in Virginia all were popular sites. They camped in the wilderness and used portable materials such as small wood panels, paper sheets or sketchbooks to record their observations. Two small albums of sketches in the exhibition by Asher B. Durand and Frederic F. Durand (1837–1905) document excursions from 1854 to 1877.

Asher B. Durand was a leading artist of the Hudson River School whose essays titled “Letters on Landscape Painting” were published in 1855 in *Crayon*, a leading art journal of the time. Frederick, Durand's second son, took his father's advice to heart. Frederick's sketches reveal his working process as recommended by his father, “to take pencil and paper, not palette and brushes, and draw with scrupulous fidelity the outline or contour of such objects as you shall select, and . . . choose the most beautiful or characteristic of its kind.”

In Jasper Cropsey's *Greenwood Lake*, 1871, the artist's fluid and free treatment of the foreground trees and foliage is similar in style to a spontaneous outdoor sketch, but the detailed handling of the distant shore, as well as the artist's fully realized composition, reinforces a

contradictory reading that it is, in fact, a finished, studio piece. Greenwood Lake was Cropsey's favorite subject. In this fresh and brilliantly colored view, he combines two signature motifs: the topography of the lake's shoreline and autumnal foliage of dazzling reds, oranges and yellows. Cropsey's infatuation with fall colors made him the premier painter of this season, which is the time of year when intense colors brand the scenery as distinctly American.

In the years following the Civil War, this ardent nationalism waned as French landscape painting and the Barbizon school influenced a younger generation of painters, including George Inness (1825–1894), John Pope (1820–1881) and Mary Moran (1842–1899). George Inness resoundingly rejected what he viewed as the scientific realism of the Hudson River School in his search to create pictures that create a poetic mood. In his *Delaware Valley before the Storm*, ca. 1865, Inness uses compositional elements, such as contrast between light and dark, muted colors, and an active paint surface, to suggest a mood of mystery in the civilized New Jersey landscape. Inness was the most well known of a group of artists, also including Ralph Blakelock (1847–1919) and Alexander Wyant (1836–1892), whose work evoked the spirituality of nature.

As American artists became increasingly cosmopolitan after the Civil War and traveled to Europe, sometimes spending years abroad, French art continued to provide inspiration. The Barbizon style was replaced by a strong involvement with Impressionism. Artists such as Theodore Robinson (1852–1896) were among the earliest American practitioners of this new approach to the painting of light and color. His *Moonrise* of 1892 was produced in Giverny, the home of Claude Monet, a leading French Impressionist painter, who was Robinson's friend and mentor. This small, intimate scene conveys the artist's personal reaction to and interpretation of nature.

These small but sublime works were meant to be lived with, seen at close quarters, and enjoyed on a daily basis. For example, at Clayton, Henry Clay Frick's taste encompassed and progressed from pictures by regional western Pennsylvania artists, to works of the Barbizon school; later he purchased paintings by American Impressionists. The painting collection on view at Clayton reflects a wonderful contrast, as well as synergy, between trends in American and European painting. Between 1882 when Frick purchased Pennsylvania artist George Hetzel's *Woodland*

Stream and 1908 when he purchased *June Idyll* by Chylde Hassam, Frick's taste parallels larger trends in collecting.

The Frick Art Museum provides a warm and personal venue for these works, which were meant to be displayed in domestic spaces. This intimacy reflects the belief of Helen Clay Frick, the museum's founder, that works of art are best displayed in surroundings that evoke a comfortable and well-appointed home. The viewer will be able to take their own journey through the development of American landscape painting from the Hudson River School artists to the American Impressionists and forerunners of modernism, such as George Inness. While the paintings and drawings in this exhibition are small, their detail and skill reward close inspection.

“The Frick is privileged to provide Pittsburgh residents with this special opportunity to view a carefully selected group of intimate 19th-century landscapes from the Newark Museum's important collection of American Art, which is one of the finest in the country,” says Frick Art & Historical Center Director Bill Bodine. “This exhibition also complements the Frick's mission of utilizing artworks to engage audiences with the history of our nation, and we look forward to helping our visitors make connections between the works in the exhibition and works by artists in the Frick's permanent collections.”

Small but Sublime: Intimate 19th-Century American Landscapes was organized by the Newark Museum and is drawn from its permanent collection. The American Art collection at the Newark Museum surveys four centuries and includes over 12,000 paintings, sculptures, works on paper and multimedia art. The exhibition has received funding for conservation support from the Henry Luce Foundation and from the Newark Museum Volunteer Organization and from Barbara and Bill Weldon.

The Pittsburgh presentation is made possible through the generous support of the Allegheny Foundation. Additional funding has been provided by First National Bank.

THE FRICK ART MUSEUM

The Frick Art Museum is an intimately-scaled classical structure built in 1969 that contains the

fine and decorative art collection of Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collection on view at The Frick Art Museum concentrates on Italian Renaissance and French 18th-century works. Collection highlights include 14th- and 15th-century paintings by Sassetta, Duccio, and Giovanni di Paolo; a portrait by Rubens; a landscape by Boucher; and a devotional altarpiece by Jean Bellegambe. In addition to exhibiting its permanent collection, the Frick presents an active program of temporary exhibitions at the venues housing its multiple collections. Admission to The Frick Art Museum is free. The museum is open Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Docent-led tours of *Small but Sublime* are available free of charge on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. Groups of five or more and those interested in scheduling a tour of the permanent collection are requested to schedule a private tour at an alternate time. The cost for group tours of the exhibition and permanent collection is \$5 per person, and reservations must be made one to two weeks in advance by calling 412-371-0600, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00p.m., Monday—Sunday.

THE FRICK ART & HISTORICAL CENTER

The Frick Art & Historical Center is the legacy of Helen Clay Frick, daughter of 19th-century industrialist and art collector Henry Clay Frick. Having established The Frick Art Museum in 1969, Miss Frick desired that her family home, Clayton, and the surrounding estate be preserved for, and opened to, the people of Pittsburgh after her death. Her vision was realized in 1990.

Today, the Frick Art & Historical Center houses a galaxy of collections—including fine arts, decorative arts, automobiles and carriages, and historic artifacts— in multiple galleries and venues, many of which are historic objects in and of themselves. These collections, and the programs that interpret them, illuminate the era during which Pittsburgh became one of the nation’s most important cities and also make meaningful connections to contemporary times. Although still a relatively young institution, the Frick ranks among Pittsburgh’s most important cultural and educational assets.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Frick Art & Historical Center is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh’s Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick’s off-street lot or along adjacent

streets. The Frick is open 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday and closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to The Frick Art Museum, Car and Carriage Museum, Greenhouse, and Playhouse is free. The public should call 412-371-0600 for information, or visit the Frick online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

For additional information or images, please contact Greg Langel, Media and Marketing Manager, at 412-371-0600 ext. 524 or GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

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The Frick Art & Historical Center, a museum, historic site and cultural center serves the public through preservation, presentation, and interpretation of the fine and decorative arts and historically significant artifacts for all residents of and visitors to Western Pennsylvania