

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than a Century of French Masterpieces Examined

Works by Van Gogh, Manet, Cézanne, and more

The first major American exhibition to explore French floral still-life painting in the 19th century, *Van Gogh, Manet, and Matisse: The Art of the Flower*, will be on view in Richmond March 21 – June 21, 2015.

Co-curated by Dr. Mitchell Merling, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Paul Mellon Curator and Head of European Art, and Dr. Heather MacDonald, Dallas Museum of Art's Lillian and James H. Clark Associate Curator of European Art, *The Art of the Flower* provides a thorough reassessment of floral still life painting, a genre that previously has been underexplored. The exhibition will feature masterpieces from international public and private collections—such as the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in the United States, as well as the Musée du Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon in France—and includes three works from VMFA's permanent collection, including a recently acquired van Gogh, *Daisies, Arles* from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon. The diverse range of featured paintings highlights the commitment of artists to the floral still life, and underscores the active exchange of ideas, styles, and modes among artists throughout this time. The exhibition developed from strong partnerships fostered by the French Regional and American Museum Exchange (FRAME).



Vincent Van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890) *Vase with Carnations*, summer 1886, oil on canvas, 181/8 × 143/4 in. Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, purchased with the generous support of the Vereniging van Hadendaagse Kunstaankopen, A2235

“We are excited to announce this landmark exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,” Director Alex Nyerges said. “The exploration of the French floral still life features works from numerous international museums and complements our outstanding European art collection. This collaboration brings new scholarship to a genre that deserves this level of focus.”

The Art of the Flower traces the development of the floral still life from the late 18th century through the early 20th century, emphasizing the tremendous depth and scope of creative engagement with the genre throughout this era. The exhibition will feature 65 paintings by more than 30 artists, including renowned figures such as Paul Cézanne, Gustave Courbet, Eugène Delacroix, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, and Edouard Manet, along with less familiar but equally accomplished contemporaries such as Gérard van Spaendonck, Adèle Riché, and Simon Saint-Jean. *The Art of the Flower* positions floral paintings within a broader art historical and cultural narrative and reveals how the traditional genre was reinvented through artistic experimentation in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The exhibition explores the ways in which artists working in floral still life incorporated and responded to evolutions in approaches to both the arts and sciences, and provides a sense of discovery in the variety of artistic purposes and achievements in this genre. *The Art of the Flower* features landmark developments in the genre across nearly two centuries, and is organized chronologically. Topic areas include:

18th-Century Paintings—The introductory section of the exhibition explores the foundations for the formal experiments of the 19th century, and includes works by early masters such as Anne Vallayer-Coster and Pierre-Joseph Redouté.

The Lyon School—Lyon, a center for French luxury textile production, would serve as an important hub for the development of still-life painting. The section explores the relationships between academic flower painting, decorative applications of still life, and the demands of mass production in textiles. The section features works by seminal Lyonnais painters who responded to these trends, including Antoine Berjon and Simon Saint-Jean, whose success rose with the expanding economy of the region.

Early Impressionist Influences—This area examines the work of Eugène Delacroix and Gustave Courbet within the contemporary productions of artists in the Lyon school and the first stirrings of impressionist still lifes by Frédéric Bazille and Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

Henri Fantin-Latour—This section includes a diverse selection of paintings by specialist Henri Fantin-Latour, exploring the influence of Jean Siméon Chardin's oeuvre on his practice as well as the impact of still life paintings by his contemporaries.

Impressionism—During the 1870s and 1880s, artists began taking greater liberties with color, light and space. The exhibition features works by artists such as Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, as well as the last flower paintings of Édouard Manet.

After Impressionism—The section examines the years between the end of the Impressionist movement and the close of the 19th century, with a particular emphasis on Vincent van Gogh's deep interest in the genre and lasting impact on contemporaries.

20th-Century Explorations—The exhibition concludes with the work of three artists who continued the floral still-life tradition into the 20th-century: Odilon Redon, Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse.

Related programs

Dr. Richard Brettell, Margaret M. McDermott Distinguished Chair of Art and Aesthetic Studies, University of Texas, Dallas will speak on van Gogh and Gauguin at a public event on March 27. A free family event, *Celebrate the Art of Flowers: Paris in Springtime* on April 25 will feature flower-inspired art activities, elaborate puppet shows, plein air painting, a 19th century Paris tent sale of books and prints, and the Zany Umbrella Circus, featuring a tight wire walking elephant, and jugglers and acrobats.

About the exhibition

- TITLE: *Van Gogh, Manet, and Matisse: The Art of the Flower*
- DATES: March 21 –June 21, 2015
- ORGANIZERS: The exhibition is co-organized by VMFA and Dallas Museum of Art
- CURATOR: Co-curated by Dr. Mitchell Merling, Paul Mellon Curator and Head of European Art, VMFA, and Dr. Heather MacDonald, The Lillian and James H. Clark Associate Curator of European Art, Dallas Museum of Art.
- ITINERARY: The Dallas Museum of Art, *Bouquets: French Still-Life Painting From Chardin to Matisse* (through February 8, 2015) and the Denver Art Museum, *In Bloom: Painting Flowers in the Age of Impressionism* (July 19 – October 11, 2015.)
- NUMBER OF WORKS: 65
- TICKETS: \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors and groups
- PROMOTIONAL PARTNER: April 18-25, 2015, the Garden Club of Virginia will offer tours of over 250 private homes and gardens throughout Virginia, and is a partner with *Van Gogh, Manet, and Matisse: The Art of the Flower*.
- CATALOGUE: A fully illustrated catalogue, *Working Among Flowers: Floral Still-Life Painting in Nineteenth-Century France*, is distributed by Yale University Press with contributions by the exhibition's curators and other invited scholars, including Audrey Gay-Mazuel, Curator, Department of the Nineteenth Century at the Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris; Olivier Meslay, Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs and Barbara Thomas Lemmon Curator of European Art at the Dallas Museum of Art; and Sylvie Patry, Chief Curator of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Paintings at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. \$45.
- SPONSORS: The exhibition is generously supported by The Francena T. Harrison Foundation Trust with additional sponsorships from: Mrs. Frances Massey Dulaney, Mr. and Mrs. Fred T. Tattersall, The Robert Lehman Foundation, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Toni A. Ritzenberg, Mr. and Mrs. Read Branch, Jr., Capital One Bank, and the McGue Millhiser Family Trust. The Banner Exhibition Program at VMFA is supported by the Julia Louise Reynolds Fund. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA, a certified Virginia Green attraction, is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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Press Contact:

Suzanne Hall, suzanne.hall@vmfa.museum, 804.204.2704
Pryor Green, pryor.green@vmfa.museum, 804.204.2701
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Boulevard, Richmond VA 23220-4007