



Greenville County **Museum of Art**

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# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**--Impressionism, the first bombshell launched against academic tradition, defined light as color, becoming the first modern language of paint. Sun-drenched and spontaneous, the 40 American Impressionist paintings from the GCMA collection found in the exhibition *Legacy of Impressionism: Languages of Light* invite viewers to consider the ideas and techniques that opened the door to modern visual expression.

Ten future Museum acquisitions are featured in the exhibition. These paintings, each with a Southern connection, explore variations on the theme of Impressionistic light. All ten paintings are supported by the Museum's annual fundraising campaign, Art for Greenville, which culminates in a unique celebration of Greenville's generosity: the Antiques, Fine Art and Design Weekend, to be held October 17-19, 2014.

One of the most advanced painters and teachers working at the beginning of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Kentucky born **Frank Duveneck** (1848-1919). After enrolling in the Royal Academy of Munich at the age of 22, the precocious young artist progressed rapidly, and a host of talented American expatriates were drawn to him and his own fledgling Munich school. Future masters of American Impressionism, including William Merritt Chase and John H. Twachtman, joined the "Duveneck Boys," as the group became known, traveling and painting with their mentor in Germany and Italy through the latter half of the 1870s. Duveneck's masterful *Steps of the Riva*, circa 1880, is one of his finest achievements and depicts the watery highway of St. Mark's Basin, the venerable stone facades and grand promenade of the Riva degli Schiavoni.

Another Kentuckian, **Andrew Thomas Schwartz** (1867-1942) took classes with Frank Duveneck at the Cincinnati Art Academy before attending the Art Students League in New York. Schwartz became one of the most acclaimed architectural muralists in the United States, enjoying success with public and private commissions. *Bathers*, circa 1920, conveys his mastery of large-scale compositions and is typical of the artist's panoramic treatment of the landscape imagined from an aerial perspective.

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**Augustus Koopman** (1869-1914), a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts before moving to Europe in 1887. Koopman's grand *Self Portrait*, circa 1907, was probably completed during one of his excursions to Venice or nearby Chioggia, and stands as a summation of his years of portrait painting. Literally larger than life (the artist's passport described him as only 4 feet, 8½ inches tall), it is a tour de force that orchestrates muscular draftsmanship and unusual deep, glowing color combinations.

Having lost his father early in the Civil War, **Gaines Ruger Donoho** (1857-1916) was taken by his mother from the Mississippi cotton plantation where he was born to Vicksburg. After the war the family settled in Washington, DC, and Donoho was educated and later employed as a draftsman in the Office of the United States Architect. Drawn to a career as an artist, Donoho frequented artist communities in the Paris suburbs, such as Barbizon near the Forest of Fontainebleau. Consistently reflecting the distinct influence of the Barbizon painters, Donoho's work of the period is marked by subdued colors and less radically expressive brushwork than typical Impressionist examples.

Mississippi-born **Kate Freeman Clark** (1875-1957) left her native Holly Springs, chaperoned by her mother, to enroll at the Art Students League. Over the next 20 years she studied with some of the most important teachers of the era, including John H. Twachtman and William Merritt Chase. She left the Art Students League for Chase's new school in Manhattan and spent six summers with him at Shinnecock. When Clark began submitting her *plein air* landscapes to competitive exhibitions, she enjoyed significant success, showing at the National Academy of Design, the Carnegie Institute, and other major museums. Some scholars speculate that she exhibited under the gender-neutral name of "Freeman Clark" to avoid a presumed anti-female bias. Most likely, however, she concealed her identity because of pressure from her family, who discouraged her aspirations for an independent career as a professional artist.

While the American South contributed the considerable talents of its native artists, it also inspired visiting painters with its exotic landscape and indigenous culture. Charleston, South Carolina, with its picturesque Lowcountry environs became a popular destination for a number of American Impressionists immediately before and after World War I.

**Alson Skinner Clark** (1876-1949) was one of the earliest Impressionists to visit Charleston. His sojourn there in the spring of 1917 produced radiant treatments of such sacred and profane subjects as *St. Michael's*, *Charleston* and *Philadelphia Alley*. Clark's contemporaneous paintings drew timely attention to Charleston's precious architectural assets.

**Alfred Hutty** (1877-1954) and **Ivan Summers** (1886-1964), two Midwestern-born artists working in the Woodstock, New York art colony, found that Charleston provided gainful seasonal employment and a respite from hard Northeastern winters. Before he began teaching at

Charleston's Gibbes Museum School in 1920, Hutton had already achieved acclaim for his sun-drenched Impressionist landscapes, typified by *Snow, Woodstock*, circa 1920. After finishing the 1924 session, Hutton relinquished the Gibbes position to Summers, who taught during the winters of 1925 and 1926. During his short tenure in Charleston he finished a few small oils of colorful gardens and modest rural settings, such as *Plantation Cabin, Charleston*, circa 1925, that were richly rendered with classic Impressionist brushwork.

Another art colony denizen, **Wilson Irvine** (1869-1936), visited Charleston around 1930. By the time he visited Charleston, Irvine had developed an unusual technique that mimicked the effects of light refracted through a prism. He applied this method to Charleston street subjects found in the historic district as well as to Lowcountry genre scenes he observed at the Cheeha-Combahee Plantation, a parcel of 10,000 acres that was assembled and purchased in 1929 by industrialist Frederic B. Pratt, President of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

The natural beauty of the Lowcountry's rivers, lagoons, ancient live oaks, and brilliant azalea gardens repeatedly drew **William P. Silva** (1859-1948), a native of nearby Savannah, Georgia. Silva dedicated himself to painting at the age of 48. He studied French Impressionism firsthand in Paris, exhibited there, and, although he settled permanently in the Carmel, California art colony in 1913, he was active throughout his career in the Southern States Art League and often returned to paint in the picturesque coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia. Reminiscent of Monet's famed studies of haystacks and cathedral facades, Silva's *Sunrise Through the Fog, Runnymede*, 1931, was one of a series of Lowcountry plantation paintings that explored in endless variations the atmospheric effects of heat and humidity on color and form.

*Legacy of Impressionism* is on view through September 21, 2014. The Greenville County Museum of Art is located in the center of downtown Greenville's cultural campus, Heritage Green, at 420 College Street. The GCMA is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 am until 6 pm and on Sundays from 1 pm until 5 pm. Admission is free.

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