FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Greenville, SC (May 23, 2013)—From the majestic grandeur of Niagara Falls to the sweeping vistas of Yosemite, the exhibition Masterpieces of American Landscape from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston offers viewers more than 60 works on loan from one of America’s most prestigious art museums, and all will be on exhibit in Greenville this summer. Previously on view in Japan, the exhibition will open June 19 at the Greenville County Museum of Art, the show’s only Southern venue.

Breathtaking 19th-century masterpieces by Hudson River Valley School painters Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, and Albert Bierstadt evoke the splendor of America’s vast wilderness while later works by Childe Hassam, Marsden Hartley, and Stuart Davis depict the American landscape through more modern eyes. The exhibition also includes a selection of 20 spectacular black-and-white landscape photographs by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston.

The first American landscapes were made by European explorers seeking to document their findings. Early maps often feature small drawings of trees or details of mountain scenes. Landscapes also served as backdrops for colonial portraits, but it wasn’t until after the American Revolution founded a new country that landscape came into its own. The earliest American landscape painters, including Joshua Shaw and Thomas Doughty, were well versed in European landscapes. When these artists...
arrived in America, they traveled throughout New England primarily, making sketches of scenic vistas and landmarks. Using these preliminary drawings as guidelines, the artists developed finished paintings that depicted the scenery in idealized and romantic ways, often rearranging topographical elements to suit their compositions.

Artists working in the early 19th century viewed America’s unspoiled wilderness as a paradise, a land filled with hope and promise. In 1825 the English-born Thomas Cole arrived in New York City and set out on a sketching trip up the Hudson River. Upon his return he began painting the American landscape filtered through the influences of 17th-century works by Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa.

Today, these dramatic and majestic paintings capture and inspire the imagination. Nevertheless, Americans at the time were reluctant to embrace landscape painting as a legitimate art form. Cole became the unofficial leader of a group of artists later named Hudson River School painters. Although Cole died in 1848, his colleagues, including Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Edwin Church, and Asher B. Durand, continued to paint from the Atlantic coastline to the southern swamps and forests to the Great Plains, the Rockies, and beyond.
As the country expanded during the 19th-century, many painters traveled westward to paint frontier life. Some, including Albert Bierstadt and Worthington Whittredge, joined expeditions that were formed to explore and map new territories. New technologies and scientific discoveries also offered painters new territory to explore. New theories about evolution influenced the work of Martin Johnson Heade and Frederic Church, for example, while other painters like Fitz Henry Lane began to employ the latest inventions, such as the camera lucida, a mechanical drawing instrument.

![Valley of the Yosemite](image1.jpg)

Albert Bierstadt (1830 -1902)
*Valley of the Yosemite*

Toward the end of the 19th century, American painters began to focus less on specific locations in their work, instead turning their attention to new painting styles and techniques. Influenced by French Barbizon works he had seen in Europe, George Inness began to emphasize mood by working with light and color. Similarly, painters Frank Benson, Childe Hassam, and Willard Metcalf studied the works of the French Impressionists. By combining the vibrant color and loose brushstrokes of the French with traditional training in figure drawing, these artists and others devised a distinct style of American Impressionism that captivated painters well into the 20th century.

![Bathing Pool, Appledore](image2.jpg)

Childe Hassam (1859 – 1935)
*Bathing Pool, Appledore*
Soon, however, American painters began to experiment with other styles, including Modernism. Emphasizing pattern, color, and line, such artists as Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Stuart Davis, and Marsden Hartley created subjective, and at times romanticized, responses to landscape subjects.

The advent of photography further challenged and inspired artists to capture and express the essence of the American landscape. Drawn from the Lane Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, twenty images by photographers Ansel Adams and Edward Weston complete the exhibition. Iconic images of the southwest include those of the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and the Sierra Nevadas.

Masterpieces of American Landscape from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston opens on Wednesday, June 19 and continues on view through Sunday, September 15, 2013. 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.

Related events include:

Saturday, July 20 – Certus Saturday. Enjoy a variety of fun activities for the whole family, including storytelling and outdoor landscape painting. The event is free.

Sunday, July 21 – Sundays at 2. MFA, Boston curator Karen Quinn will offer an informative tour of the exhibition.