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Norton
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Museum

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Norton Simon Museum and Musée d'Orsay Announce an Exchange of Masterpieces

Three paintings from each institution will be on view this spring

Pasadena and Paris—The Norton Simon Museum and the Musée d'Orsay are pleased to announce an exchange of six paintings (three from each museum) in the spring of 2015 (March 27 – June 22, 2015), with simultaneous exhibitions in Pasadena and Paris. The exhibition held at the Simon will comprise Édouard Manet's *Emile Zola*, 1868, James Abbott McNeill Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, 1871 (also known as *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*), and Paul Cézanne's *The Card Players*, c. 1892–96. The exhibition at the Orsay will comprise Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *The Pont des Arts, Paris*, 1867–68, Vincent van Gogh's *Portrait of a Peasant (Patience Escalier)*, 1888, and Édouard Vuillard's *First Fruits*, 1899. A small, bilingual publication with in-depth essays on the six paintings will accompany the installations.

“We are extremely honored to forge this special exchange with the esteemed Musée d'Orsay, the preeminent institution in the world for 19th- and early 20th-century art,” says Norton Simon Museum President Walter W. Timoshuk. “Visitors to the Norton Simon will come face to face with three of the most beloved works from the Orsay's peerless collection—in particular Whistler's iconic portrait of his mother, which has visited Los Angeles only once before, very briefly, in the early 1930s. And we are delighted that this exchange will allow us to share with the Orsay's visitors three highlights from our own 19th-century collection, works by Renoir, Van Gogh and Vuillard, that rarely leave Pasadena.”

“The Norton Simon Museum is legendary as the repository for many masterpieces rarely shown outside Pasadena,” says Guy Cogeval, President of the Orsay and Orangerie Museums. “The Musée d'Orsay visitors will therefore be given a unique occasion to make marvelous discoveries as some of these will be shown alongside a selection of paintings from its own collection. *The First Fruit* by Vuillard will be a climax, as it once belonged to Léon Blum, one of the great 20th-century French

political leaders. I am delighted that in return Manet, Cézanne and above all Whistler, so much loved by the American public, should be loaned as ambassadors of the Musée d'Orsay in California.”

About the Norton Simon Museum Exhibition

Tête-à-Tête: Three Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay

March 27 – June 22, 2015

This spring, the Norton Simon Museum presents an installation of three paintings from the Musée d'Orsay's renowned collection of Impressionist art. Organized by Chief Curator Carol Togneri with Associate Curator Emily Beeny, the installation features Édouard Manet's *Emile Zola*, 1868, James Abbott McNeill Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, 1871 (also known as *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*), and Paul Cézanne's *Card Players*, 1892–96. The Orsay paintings will hang together in the Norton Simon Museum's 19th-century wing, alongside paintings from the Simon collection by Manet, Cézanne and their peers. A series of lectures, tours, films, and family programs will be offered in conjunction with the installation. Timed tickets will be available for sale beginning in January 2015.

Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, 1871



It is perhaps the single most recognizable image in the history of American painting: the spare interior of an artist's studio, a gray wall, a Japanese curtain, an aging subject soberly dressed and seated in profile. Whistler's portrait of his mother, painted in the fall of 1871, marks the high point of his career. "It is rare," wrote Whistler's friend, the painter Jacques-Émile Blanche, "that one can judge an artist by a single work." *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, also known as *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, is that single work. Endlessly reproduced, imitated and parodied, the picture nonetheless resists any fixed interpretation. Given the painting's iconic status in American culture, the fact that *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1* resides not in the United States but in France may come as a surprise. Acquired by the French state in 1891 after a vigorous campaign by admirers including the painter Claude Monet and the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, *Arrangement* hung first at the Louvre, and then moved to the Musée d'Orsay when it opened in 1986.

Manet's *Emile Zola*, 1868



Like Whistler's portrait of his mother, Manet's portrait of Zola depicts a sitter intimately known to the artist. But while Whistler's painting remains an "arrangement" somewhat remote in its treatment of its subject, Manet's portrait of Zola is literally overflowing with tokens of friendship. Zola was still making a name for himself as a journalist in 1866 when he published a glowing newspaper article on Manet. In his article, Zola praised the frank modernity of Manet's style, which had made the painter a divisive figure—and, indeed, a frequent object of ridicule—on the Paris art scene. One year later, when jury members for the Paris World's Fair deemed Manet's submissions too radical, the painter erected a pavilion on the edge of the fairgrounds where visitors could judge his work for themselves. His co-conspirator in this guerilla exhibition was none other than Zola, who re-published his article as a booklet titled *Une nouvelle manière en peinture* (A New Manner in Painting) on the occasion. To show his gratitude, Manet painted the writer's portrait in January 1868. Depicting Zola as a connoisseur and scholar, Manet surrounded him with both art (a Japanese print, an engraving after Velázquez and an etching of Manet's own *Olympia*) and books (including, of course, Zola's own *Une nouvelle manière en peinture*).

Cézanne's *The Card Players*, c. 1892–96



Of the whole Impressionist group, Cézanne was the least understood by his contemporaries. Stung by the unusually harsh criticism that greeted his work at the third Impressionist exhibition in 1877, Cézanne effectively withdrew from public exhibition for nearly 20 years, reemerging in a series of shows mounted by the progressive dealer Ambroise Vollard, when Cézanne came to be appreciated at last as the father of modern art. After his withdrawal from the public eye, Cézanne began to spend more time in the South of France, on his family's property outside of Aix. There he focused on local landscapes, kitchen still lifes and a narrow cast of domestic models. *The Card Players*, painted between about 1892 and 1896, belongs to this last category, representing two workers seated at a table playing cards. The deceptive simplicity of the scene, the pyramidal composition and the network of short, hatch-like brushstrokes are all characteristics of Cézanne's mature style. The painting is the first of three versions of the same composition that Cézanne made in the early 1890s (the others belong to the Courtauld Institute in London and the Royal Family of Qatar). Cézanne's sometimes agonized perfectionism drove him back to the same themes again and again, struggling to understand and convey not only what he saw but how he saw it.

About the Musée D'Orsay Exhibition

Simultaneous to the installation at the Norton Simon Museum, the Musée D'Orsay will exhibit three 19th-century masterpieces from the Simon collection: Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *The Pont des Arts, Paris*, 1867–68, Vincent van Gogh's *Portrait of a Peasant (Patience Escalier)*, 1888, and Édouard Vuillard's *First Fruits*, 1899. While these three works were all created in France, none of them has been exhibited there since being purchased by Norton Simon in the 1960s and '70s. The installation will present the paintings in three different galleries, hung alongside works by each artist.

Renoir's *The Pont des Arts, Paris*, 1867–68



Renoir's picture plants us in the heart of Paris, standing on the Left Bank of the Seine, looking upstream towards the wrought-iron Pont des Arts on a sunny afternoon. A ferry pulls up to the quayside, which is crowded with commuters and idlers from all walks of life seated quietly on the riverbank: leisured ladies in bright dresses and smartly dressed dandies, scrappy street urchins and imperial soldiers, romping dogs and a blue-smocked working man. Up the ramp at right, second-hand booksellers do a brisk trade in the shadow of the Institut de France, a gracious 17th-century building whose dome surveys the bustle below. The picture's crisp shadows and liberally applied black are not what we think of first when we think of Renoir: such features may surprise viewers better acquainted with the feathery touch and opalescent palette of his later Impressionist work. This scene dates to the very beginning of Renoir's career, when the artist and his young friend Claude Monet set out to document the city they loved in a series of brisk urban landscapes, filled with all the verve of the modern metropolis.

Van Gogh's *Portrait of a Peasant (Patience Escalier)*, 1888



In February 1888, after two years in Paris, Van Gogh struck out for the South of France, in search of “blue tones and gay colors,” as well as relief from the low spirits and ill health that had afflicted him in the French art capital. Van Gogh settled in Arles, a small town whose surrounding countryside reminded him of the vividly colored Japanese prints he so admired. It was in Arles that he turned with new dedication to portraiture and forged his unmistakable style, characterized by intense, almost hallucinatory color applied with expressive daring. Painted in the vivid tones of a Japanese print and capturing the weathered features of Patience Escalier, a

local gardener, this portrait marks the flowering of the artist's ambitions and captures what Van Gogh described as the "sun-steeped, sunburnt quality, tanned and air-swept" of both the old man's face and his vision in Arles.

Vuillard's *First Fruits*, 1899



At over 14 feet across, *First Fruits* is the largest canvas Vuillard ever painted and arguably the crowning achievement of his career. It is one of a pair commissioned in 1899 by the banker Adam Natanson to decorate the library of his Parisian townhouse. The picture opens a broad prospect of woods and fields receding in two directions: along a footpath to a distant cluster of houses at left, and down a cart track towards a blue-kerchiefed woman at right. A child facing the landscape in the left foreground serves as a stand-in for the observer. This landscape was likely sketched from the window of a rented villa in the Paris suburb of L'Etang-la-Ville, where Vuillard spent the summer of 1899 with his sister, her husband and their young daughter, a great favorite with her uncle, who may have inspired the sturdy little figure in the foreground. Despite its grand dimensions, this is an intimate scene, more observed than invented, drawing on the ordinary pleasures of a family holiday.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of Indian and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. Hours: The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. Admission: General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., active military and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. Parking: Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. Public Transportation: The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial

Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.

About the Musée d'Orsay

The national museum of the Musée d'Orsay opened to the public on Dec. 9, 1986, to show the great diversity of artistic creation in the Western world between 1848 and 1914. It was formed with the national collections coming mainly from three establishments: from the Louvre museum, with the works of artists born after 1820 or coming to the fore during the Second Republic; from the Musée du Jeu de Paume, which since 1947 had been devoted to Impressionism; and lastly from the National Museum of Modern Art, which, when it moved in 1976 to the Centre Georges Pompidou, only kept works of artists born after 1870. The museum is located in the center of Paris on the banks of the Seine, opposite the Tuileries Gardens. Its name comes from the history of the building, as the museum was installed in the former Orsay railway station, built for the Universal Exhibition of 1900.

Open daily, except Mondays, 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m., Thursdays until 9:45 p.m. Museum entrance ticket: full rate €11; concessions: €8.50. Access through the main entrance, 1, rue de la Légion d'Honneur, 75007 Paris. Information and switchboard: +33 (0)1 40 49 48 14.