

Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

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Modernism in Miniature

August 12, 2022–January 9, 2023

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents *Modernism in Miniature*, an exhibition featuring 25 small-scale artworks by some of the most recognized artists of the early to mid-20th century, including Marcel Duchamp, Lyonel Feininger, Vassily Kandinsky, Claes Oldenburg and Pablo Picasso. While revolutionary manifestoes, huge canvases and heroic proclamations have set a standard for monumental works of modern art, this exhibition spotlights artists who have employed the miniature—with its reduction of scale and emphasis on detail—as a witting challenge to the equivalence between ambition and immensity.



Marcel Duchamp (French, 1887–1968)
Boîte-en-valise (*Box in a Suitcase*), 1961 (original 1941)
Cardboard box containing 68 miniature replicas and reproductions, Series D of 1961, Edition of 30
Norton Simon Museum, Museum Purchase
© Succession Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP, Paris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Marcel Duchamp (French, 1887–1968) once remarked, “Everything important that I have done can be put into a little suitcase.” The artist brought this notion to life in his *Boîte-en-valise* (*Box in a Suitcase*), a small “portable museum” comprised of 68 small-scale reproductions of his early paintings and readymades, which he obsessively crafted by hand between 1935 and 1941 (a later edition of this iconic work, created in 1961, is featured in the exhibition). Miniaturizing the museum retrospective to the size of a suitcase, this little survey of the artist’s oeuvre bears resemblance to a salesman’s sample case in a playful gesture that narrows the gap between a work of fine art and a commercial product.

Modernism in Miniature takes Duchamp’s compact exhibition as a model and presents a collection of small objects, all drawn from the Norton Simon collections, to explore the role of dimension in 20th-

century art. Spanning German Expressionism to American Pop, the exhibition reveals the aesthetic and emotional potential of miniature works of art.

Made toward the beginning of the century is a series of toy sculptures by Lyonel Feininger (American, 1871–1956) and his son T. Lux Feininger (American, 1910–2011) that draw viewers in with their dramatized expressions. These tender works, born of Feininger’s relationships with his children, set a playful tone that is carried throughout the exhibition. Flanking Duchamp’s “Boîte” at the gallery’s center is *Hôtel du Nord (Little Dürer)* by Joseph Cornell (American, 1903–1972). This small assemblage features reproductions of works by the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer, most prominently his *Self-Portrait at Age Thirteen*, transforming this intellectual heavyweight into a kind of collectible foible. The exhibition concludes with a comparatively small-scale assemblage by John Chamberlain (American, 1927–2011) that compresses the gestural vigor of his gargantuan scrap-metal sculptures to reveal a subtlety and quietness that is less obvious in his massive, industrial works.

Together, this little collection—presented in the Museum’s most intimate gallery—reveals a counter-history of 20th-century art. Against the demands imposed by increasing monumentality, this is a tradition of whimsy, humor and intimacy at the heart of modernism.

Modernism in Miniature is organized by Frances Lazare, who served as the Museum’s Graduate Intern during the 2021–22 academic year. It is on view in the Museum’s focus gallery on the main level from August 12, 2022 through January 9, 2023. A video tour of the exhibition will be available on the Museum’s website.

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 South 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 temporary 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 nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Thursday through Monday, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. (Saturday to 7 p.m.). It is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free but limited, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> 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. **Covid-19 Protocols and Guidelines:** For up-to-date information on our Covid-19-related protocols, please visit nortonsimon.org/visit.