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**A FIRST!**

**GREENWICH HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES CENTENARY OF 1913 ARMORY SHOW  
WITH UNUSUAL EXHIBITION THAT FOCUSES ON SHOW'S INFLUENCE ON GREENWICH'S  
COS COB ART COLONY ARTISTS**

**Exhibition Also Highlights Critical Role Cos Cob Artists Played in Producing  
the Armory Show**

*Several Accomplished Yet Virtually Unknown Cos Cob Artists Spotlited*

Greenwich, Conn., October 9, 2013—Lauded as one of the most influential events in the history of American art, The International Exhibition of Modern Art in 1913—popularly known as the **Armory Show**—was the first large exhibition of modern art in the United States, and one that introduced astonished Americans to European ‘avant-garde’ artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and Paul Cézanne. Much has been written about the show, yet no exhibition to date has explored the direct effect that the Armory Show had on artists and their artistic production. But the Greenwich Historical Society is about to change that.

Beginning October 9, the Greenwich Historical Society will present *The New Spirit and the Cos Cob Art Colony: Before and After the Armory Show*, which for the first time shows the direct impact of the Armory Show on the Cos Cob art colony artists.

A perfect complement to larger exhibitions in the metropolitan New York area inspired by the centennial of the Armory Show, this small yet critical exhibition at the Greenwich Historical Society highlights the extensive involvement of Cos Cob artists, such as Elmer MacRae and Henry Fitch Taylor, in producing the Armory Show, and brings to public attention several of the accomplished Cos Cob artists whose work has been rarely exhibited until now.

“This is the first exhibition to illustrate the Armory Show’s direct influence on a group of artists, specifically the Cos Cob art colony,” says Valerie Ann Leeds, curator of “The New Spirit.” “Viewers will be able to compare artists’ works from before and after the Armory Show and see to what degree they each embraced modernism as the movement became assimilated into the mainstream of American art.”

The tightly focused exhibition is comprised of 40 works of art by 12 Cos Cob artists, including several works that were shown in the 1913 Armory Show, along with archival material and ephemera from the Greenwich Historical Society and private and museum collections. In addition to MacRae and Taylor, the show features

artists D. Putnam Brinley, Childe Hassam, Ernest Lawson, Carolyn C. Mase, Frank A. Nankivell, Allen Tucker, J. Alden Twachtman and J. Alden Weir. It also includes influential pioneering Impressionist artists, Theodore Robinson and John H. Twachtman, whose work was included in the Armory Show, but who had died years earlier.

One exceptional example of the Armory Show's influence on Cos Cob artists can be seen in the evolving work of Henry Fitch Taylor. Taylor's oil painting, *An Old Pasture* (1893), is typical of his landscapes of the time, which were inspired by the French Impressionism. Contrast this with two of Taylor's post-Armory Show paintings on display in the exhibition, *Untitled Abstraction* (1915) and *Figure with Guitar I* (1915), both of which embrace the modernist spirit. "Clearly, it's no longer about representation, but rather about an exploration of form, color, space and fragmentation," says Dr. Leeds.

The Armory Show also profoundly affected Elmer MacRae's style. Created before the show, MacRae's *Old House, South End* (n.d.) is impressionistic in its treatment of the Bush-Holley House in mid-winter. *Japanese Iris* (1914), painted one year after the show, reveals how MacRae has turned to a much more stylized treatment of his subject matter. Viewers will be able to see how the flowers have been simplified and negative spaces activated with strong shapes, decorative patterning and bold color.

Also in the exhibition in Greenwich are a number of works by Childe Hassam, one of the most well-known and prolific of the American Impressionists. His *Chicken Yard Back of the Holley House* (1902) is a light-dappled pastel depicting fields and ponds behind the Bush-Holley House. Hassam, who had six works on display in the Armory Show, claimed no interest in modernism. However, the exhibition shows it indeed had some effect on him, as evidenced by his late flower still life as well as one of Hassam's rare painted frames on a late figurative composition in the show.

The archival material and ephemera on view include banners, buttons, posters and postcards from the Armory Show as well as photographs of the artists. These materials help bring to life and document the important roles that Cos Cob artists played in the actual production of the Armory Show. MacRae and Taylor were two of the four artists who conceived the idea for the exhibition in 1911, and MacRae served as its treasurer; Brinley, Lawson, Tucker and Weir were charter members of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors (AAPS), the organizing body of the Armory Show; and Brinley, Lawson, MacRae, Nankivell, Taylor and Tucker all served on various committees.

Susan G. Larkin, former chair of the Greenwich Historical Society and author of *The Cos Cob Art Colony: Impressionists on the Connecticut Shore*, says that MacRae was much more involved with the Armory Show than he has previously been given credit for. "He was a central figure in the story, but was very modest and didn't trumpet himself. But others did and they wrote the history." Larkin has contributed an essay about MacRae for the catalogue of the coinciding Armory Show retrospective at The New-York Historical Society, which will be on view from October 11, 2013 through February 23, 2014.

"It is especially fitting for the Greenwich Historical Society to organize and mount this anniversary exhibition as it is a key repository for archival material from the Armory Show as well as a major holder of works by MacRae," notes Dr. Larkin. MacRae was among the group of Cos Cob painters who gathered at the Historical Society's Bush-Holley House from the early 1880s until the 1920s, when it was run as a boardinghouse for artists and writers. Josephine and Edward Holley passed the house on to their daughter, Emma Constant Holley, following her marriage to MacRae in 1900.

The exhibition will complement related projects celebrating the Armory Show centennial being organized by other area institutions, such as The New-York Historical Society, the Archives of American Art, the Montclair Art Museum, the Heckscher Museum of Art, and the Phillips Collection, each of which focuses on a different aspect of this watershed event in the history of American art.

### **Pieces in Original Show**

The original Armory Show, held at New York's 69th Regiment Armory on Lexington Avenue between 25th and 26th streets, included approximately 1,250 paintings, sculptures and decorative works by over 300 European and American artists. Three works of art from the show are featured in the Greenwich Historical Society exhibition. Elmer MacRae's *Feeding the Ducks* (1912) is a Post-Impressionist oil of one of his twin daughters on the grounds of the Bush-Holley boardinghouse. Allen Tucker's landscape, *Mount Aberdeen* (1912), depicts the glorious peaks of the imposing Canadian Rockies. The painting was featured on one of the Armory Show's announcement postcards (a number of which are also included in the Greenwich exhibition). The third painting is J. Alden Twachtman's *El Puente de Alcantara, Toledo* [The Singing Bridge], which was painted circa 1912.

### **Pioneering Artists Who Passed Away Before the Armory Show**

Also included in the Greenwich exhibition is artwork by two pioneering Cos Cob artists whose works were exhibited at the Armory Show as predecessors of modern art. Theodore Robinson, who visited Giverny and developed a close relationship with Claude Monet, was one of the first American artists to take up Impressionism in the late 1880s. His work *Autumn Sunlight* (1888) pictures a young woman leaning against a tree at the edge of the woods, and *In the Garden* (c. 1889), features a young woman tending plants in her garden.

John H. Twachtman, who trained in Munich and Paris, was among the forefront of the American avant-garde throughout his career. It is also notable that he taught summer classes at the Bush-Holley House during the heyday of the Cos Cob art colony. Work by Twachtman in the exhibition includes *Horseneck Falls, Greenwich Connecticut* (c. 1890–1900), which depicts a waterfall on his own Greenwich property, and *Beach at Squam* (1900), a tranquil view of the shoreline. Evident in both paintings are Twachtman's heralded experimental technique and innovative compositional style, which anticipated directions in 20th-century abstract painting.

### **Accomplished Cos Cob Artists Who Have Been Virtually Unknown Until Now**

The Greenwich exhibition showcases important Cos Cob artists who have been virtually unknown until now. One example is Carolyn C. Mase, who was a student of John H. Twachtman and also traveled to France to study. Highly influenced by Renoir, Manet and Monet, Mase's *Impressionist Harbor View* (n.d.) masterfully captures a rocky mountain overlooking ships in the harbor. The show also brings attention to Frank A. Nankivell, an Australian-born artist and cartoonist who moved to New York in 1896. His *Children on Rocks by Sea* (c. 1900–20) displays a modernist bent in the handling of color, form and dimension.

*The New Spirit and the Cos Cob Art Colony: Before and After the Armory Show*, runs from October 9, 2013 through January 12, 2014, at the Greenwich Historical Society's Storehouse Gallery, 39 Strickland Road, Cos Cob, CT. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, from noon to 4 pm. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students, and free for members and children ages six and under. Admission is free to the public the first Wednesday of every month. For further information, please call (203) 869-6899 or visit [www.greenwichhistory.org](http://www.greenwichhistory.org).