

LACMA HOSTS FIRST EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO RENOIR'S LATE WORK

Features paintings and sculptures that mark the artist's transition from impressionism to modernism



Two Girls Reading, c.1890-91



Jean as a Huntsman, 1910

Los Angeles—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Renoir in the 20th Century*, an exhibition focusing on the last three decades of Pierre-Auguste Renoir's career, until his death in 1919. The exhibition presents approximately 80 paintings, sculptures, and drawings by Renoir, interspersed with select works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Aristide Maillol, and Pierre Bonnard, to illustrate the developing avant-garde's debt to the older master. Curated by LACMA curator Claudia Einecke and Chief Curator of European Art J. Patrice Marandel, the show offers an unprecedented look at Renoir through the lens of modernism, bridging the perceived divide between the art of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Co-organized by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, the Musée d'Orsay, and LACMA, in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the exhibition will be on view from February 14 to May 9, 2010.

"*Renoir in the 20th Century* is unlike any other Renoir exhibition," says Einecke. "By focusing solely on his later works, it reveals a Renoir who is largely unknown, in a completely new and unexpected context. The juxtapositions with Picasso and his modernist peers are astonishing."

During the last thirty years of his career, Renoir moved on from impressionism to an art aiming to be decorative, continue the great tradition of European painting, and be modern, all at once. The resulting paintings and sculptures became an enduring source of inspiration to a generation of younger artists who were feeling their way into modernism in the early twentieth century.

Renoir was acclaimed as an emblematic figure of impressionism in the 1870s, but even as that movement was winning wider acceptance, he embarked on new paths of experimentation and innovation. He challenged the basic principles of impressionism and, in an overt reference to the past, turned to traditional drawing and studio work. This period of crisis and research ended in the early 1890s, a decade that brought Renoir public and institutional recognition as well as commercial success. Without rejecting impressionist techniques, Renoir invented a style he described as classical and decorative. As a declared figure painter, he concentrated on the female nude, portraits, and studies from the model, in the studio or outdoors, and experimented with new techniques.

Like his contemporaries and friends Paul Cézanne and Claude Monet, Renoir became a point of reference for a new generation of artists. Picasso, Matisse, Bonnard, and Maurice Denis, among many others, expressed their admiration for the master, and in particular for his "last manner," referring to his work at the turn of the century. Great champions of modern art, such as Leo and Gertrude Stein, Albert Barnes, Louise and Walter Arensberg, and Paul Guillaume, collected Renoir alongside Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse.

As an artist who was forever exploring and keen to take up challenges, Renoir wanted to test himself against the great masters from the past, notably Titian and Rubens, but also Fragonard and Watteau, whom he admired in the Louvre and during his travels. His research was driven by his rejection of the modern world and a preference for a timeless Arcadia peopled by sensual bathers and inspired by the south of France, where he stayed often from the 1890s onward. Renoir saw the Mediterranean landscape as an antique land, at once the cradle and last refuge of a living, familiar, and topical mythology.

In his last years, Renoir persistently returned to a narrow group of themes which he explored even in unaccustomed media, such as sculpture. At the same time, in the first decade of the twentieth century, his work from life and from models yielded new compositions, of which his odalisques and, above all, the *Large Bathers* of 1918-1919 (Musée d'Orsay) were the crowning glory. Renoir himself considered *Large Bathers* an achievement and a springboard for future research. This was, indeed, how the painting was seen by many artists in the early twentieth century, especially in the controversies surrounding the development of cubism and abstraction: it offered a working balance between objectivity and subjectivity, between tradition and innovation, which pointed the way to the classical modernity of the 1920s.

Since then, appreciation of "the late Renoir" has changed somewhat, and his paintings from this period are now little known. Although his landscapes and portraits have given rise to major exhibitions in recent years, there have been no studies or exhibitions focusing specifically on Renoir's last years, as has been the case for Monet or Cézanne. *Renoir in the 20th Century* is designed to remedy this and explore this very fertile period in Renoir's career.

Curators and Catalogue

Along with LACMA curators Claudia Einecke and J. Patrice Marandel, Sylvie Patry, of the Musée d'Orsay, and Joseph J. Rishel and Jennifer A. Thompson, of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, also serve as curators on the exhibition. The fully illustrated catalogue for *Renoir in the 20th Century* will be published in French by Réunion des Musées Nationaux and in English by Hatje Cantz.

Credit: This exhibition was organized by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, the Musée d'Orsay, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Los Angeles presentation is made possible by the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography—and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a new contemporary museum on its campus, BCAM. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations

with artists, and an ongoing transformation project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

General Information: LACMA is located at 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. For more information about LACMA and its programming, call 323 857-6000 or visit lacma.org.

Museum Hours and Admission: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, noon-8 pm; Friday, noon-9 pm; Saturday and Sunday, 11 am-8 pm; closed Wednesday. Adults \$12; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+ \$8; children 17 and under are admitted free. Admission (except to specially ticketed exhibitions) is free the second Tuesday of every month and on Target Free Holiday Mondays. After 5 pm, every day the museum is open, LACMA's "Pay What You Wish" program encourages visitors to support the museum with an admission fee of their choosing.

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(Left)

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Two Girls Reading*, c.1890-91, oil on canvas, 22 5/16 x 19 in. (56.5 x 48.3 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Frances and Armand Hammer Purchase Fund, Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

(Right)

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Jean as a Huntsman*, 1910, oil on canvas, 68 x 35 in. (172.7 x 88.9 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift through the generosity of the late Mr. Jean Renoir and Madame Dido Renoir, Photo © 2009 Museum Associates/LACMA

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