

# WHITNEY

Whitney Museum  
of American Art  
Press Office

99 Gansevoort Street  
New York, NY 10014

pressoffice@whitney.org  
(212) 570-3633

# PRESS RELEASE



Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), *Summer Days*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 36 1/8 × 30 1/8 in. (91.8 × 76.5 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Calvin Klein 94.171. © 2019 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## **THE WHITNEY'S COLLECTION: SELECTIONS FROM 1900 TO 1965, HIGHLIGHTING BOTH BELOVED AND NEW ICONS, OPENS AT THE WHITNEY JUNE 28** **Calder's Circus to Return in New Panoramic Installation**

**NEW YORK, May 8, 2019** – This summer the Whitney debuts a complete re-installation of the Museum's extraordinary holdings of early and mid-twentieth century American art. *The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965* traces major art historical movements and genres, presenting 120 works by more than seventy artists, including Elizabeth Catlett, Elsie Driggs, Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, Jasper Johns, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Marisol, Joan Mitchell, Archibald Motley, Alice Neel, Georgia O'Keeffe, Kay Sage, and Andy Warhol. The exhibition reflects upon the enduring influence of the Museum's history on the institution's current mission, particularly the claim made by curator Hermon More at the opening of the Museum in 1931: "We look to the artist to lead the way."

In addition to well-known masterpieces, *The Whitney's Collection* will highlight major recent acquisitions such as paintings by Norman Lewis and Ed Clark that expand the history of Abstract Expressionism and *Escape* (1937-38) by Mary Ellen Bute, an under-recognized pioneer of abstract filmmaking in America. In this way, *The Whitney's Collection* pays homage to canonical figures while also giving new visibility and focused attention to those who have been overlooked.

"The collection is a constellation of singular artistic visions, and it's our opportunity through exhibitions like this one to make connections that reorient and reimagine American art history. In addition to including beloved works by artists associated with the Whitney, we're thrilled to present new icons of the Whitney's collection," said David Breslin, the DeMartini Family Curator and Director of the Collection.

“This exhibition offers a lively and concise introduction to the Whitney’s collection through a look at the art, artists, and ideas that profoundly shaped modern American culture,” added Scott Rothkopf, Senior Deputy Director and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator. “We’re delighted to welcome home old favorites but seen through a fresh lens, such as our panoramic installation of *Calder’s Circus* that dramatizes its narrative arc while giving attention to Calder’s witty sculptural inventiveness.”

The exhibition begins with a gallery devoted to the Museum’s founding. A selection of 1933 photographs by Charles Sheeler of the Museum’s first building on West 8th Street in Manhattan, just blocks from the Whitney’s current location, will be complemented by a presentation of paintings that were part of the original collection, including works by George Bellows, Katherine Schmidt, and Stuart Davis. Two thematic galleries follow, looking at, respectively, modernity expressed through the built world and approaches to landscape. The former particularly focuses on the Whitney’s strong holdings of Precisionist paintings, including works by Sheeler, Charles Demuth, and Elsie Driggs. Paintings by, among others, Marsden Hartley, Horace Pippin, O’Keeffe, and Andrew Wyeth depict the varieties of the American landscape and the diverse reasons for picturing place.

Monographic presentations of works by Edward Hopper and Jacob Lawrence allow sustained engagement with two of the most important artists of the twentieth century. A gallery dedicated to the fantastic and surreal in works made in the shadow of World War II—by artists including Mary Ellen Bute, Man Ray, Joseph Cornell, Archibald Motley, and Kay Sage—lead to two closing galleries that reframe Abstract Expressionism and Pop. In the new presentation of Abstract Expressionism, Ed Clark, Norman Lewis, Joan Mitchell, and Hedda Sterne are seen alongside peers including Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning. Pop is shown as a dialogue between celebration and critique and features important works by Rosalyn Drexler, Jasper Johns, Marisol, and others.

When the Whitney Museum of American Art was established in 1930 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, museums and collectors in the United States looked mainly to Europe and its art history. Whitney’s seismic contribution was to recognize both the importance of contemporary American art and the need to support overlooked artists by exhibiting and acquiring their work and by creating a community gathering place. The collection Whitney assembled with the Museum’s first director, Juliana Force, was art-historically rigorous and vibrantly idiosyncratic. Embracing disparate artistic approaches, they focused on how artists uniquely can reveal the complexity and beauty of American life. Unconstrained by aesthetic dogma and narrow ideology, the collection has continued to grow with this generous and open-minded legacy at its core.

*The Whitney’s Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965* will open at the Whitney on June 28 in the Museum’s seventh-floor Robert W. Wilson Galleries.

### Curatorial Credit

This exhibition is organized by David Breslin, DeMartini Family Curator and Director of the Collection, with Margaret Kross, senior curatorial assistant, and Roxanne Smith, curatorial assistant.

### About the Whitney

The core of the Whitney’s mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

### Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Where We Are: Selections from the Whitney’s Collection 1900–1960	April 28, 2017 – June 2, 2019
Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960s	March 29 – August 2019
2019 Whitney Biennial	May 17 – September 22, 2019
The Whitney’s Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965	Opens June 28, 2019
Moved by the Motion: Sudden Rise	April 26-27, 2019
Jason Moran	September 20, 2019 – January 5, 2020
Rachel Harrison	October 25, 2019 – January 12, 2020
Alan Michelson: Wolf Nation	October 25, 2019 – January 12, 2020
Pope.L: Instigation, Aspiration, Perspiration	Opens October 2019
Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945	February-May 2020
Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist	Opens Spring 2020
Julie Mehretu	June 26 – September 20, 2020
David Hammons: Day’s End	2020

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday and Saturday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday except in July and August. Adults: \$25. Full-time students, visitors 65 & over, and visitors with disabilities: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).

###