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## THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS “WHISTLER AND CASSATT: AMERICANS ABROAD”

*Exhibition commemorates the centennial of Whistler's death*

**BALTIMORE, MD (June 9, 2003)**—Views of Venice, London, and Paris by American artists James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Mary Cassatt recall the romance of Europe in nearly 100 prints and drawings from the BMA's outstanding collection of works on paper. **Whistler and Cassatt: Americans Abroad**, on view from **June 11 through October 12, 2003**, reveals the influence of Europe on these two expatriate artists and commemorates the centennial of the death of Whistler.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler.  
*The Piazzetta* (1879/1880).

“Artists have long traveled to study, see the work of other artists, and absorb the ambience of foreign locales,” said Susan Dackerman, BMA Curator of Prints, Drawings & Photographs. “Whistler and Cassatt were influenced by some of the most important European artists and art critics of their day to illustrate aspects of modern life not previously represented in art.”

Whistler was one of the most innovative artists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, like many great painters of his generation, a dedicated printmaker. On view are some of his best-known prints, drawn from the BMA's collection of works by the artist, one of the finest in the nation. The highlight is 30 beautiful vignettes of Venetian canals and doorways from Whistler's series “Etchings of Venice,” considered his most inspired and influential work. Also included are examples from Whistler's first series of etchings called the “French Set,” which features prints of people and scenes that he observed during his walking tour of France and Germany, as well as selections from his most famous series of etchings, the “Thames Set,” depicting life and work on the river and its wharves.

While many of Whistler's prints represent European locales and their inhabitants, most of Cassatt's prints portray more intimate, domestic scenes. Cassatt is best known for her depictions of mothers and their children, and the exhibition will include numerous examples of these beloved works. She created her most experimental prints in association with Edgar Degas, who invited her to join the Impressionists in 1879. Examples of several of these works, tonal etchings that portray her family members in domestic interiors and women in Parisian settings, will be featured. Also on display will be four impressions of colored prints—*The Bath*, *The Coiffure*, *The Guitar*, and *Maternal Caress*—all part of a popular series



Mary Cassatt. *Maternal Caress*, 1891.

of etchings that portray women engaged in the activities of their daily lives. The BMA is recognized as having one of the most important collections of works by Cassatt in the country.

*Whistler and Cassatt: Americans Abroad* is curated by Susan Dackerman, BMA Curator of Prints, Drawings & Photographs.

### **James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903)**

Whistler's views of France, Britain, and Italy were eagerly collected by art patrons, many of whom were American and interested in depictions of exotic and foreign locations. One of the most ardent collectors of Whistler's prints was Baltimore expatriate George A. Lucas, a family friend of the artist as a youth. The two men attended West Point together for a brief period, and both ended up leaving America at different times to spend the rest of their lives in Europe. The Lucas collection is a remarkable part of the BMA's extensive holdings of works on paper, which includes an exceptionally rich collection of Whistler prints.

Whistler, born in Lowell, Massachusetts, worked as a Navy cartographer and etcher after failing out of West Point Academy in 1854. He then traveled abroad to study painting in Paris and London. In Paris, he encountered artists that would influence his work, including Gustave Courbet and Henri Fantin-Latour, who helped him to hone his Realist style. During the 1860s, he experimented with figure compositions based on Japanese art and Aestheticism, only to turn to landscapes the following decade. In the 1880s he returned to portraiture and acted as an important link to the avant-garde artistic worlds of Europe, Britain, and America. He is recognized for his innovative paintings and drawings that manipulate color and mood for their own sake and for his mastery of etching.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler.  
*The Balcony, Venice* (1879-1880).

### **Mary Cassatt (1844-1926)**

Like Whistler, Cassatt also was acquainted with collector George Lucas, and many of the prints in the BMA's collection are inscribed with personal dedications from the artist to him. The Museum's rich holdings of Cassatt prints was supplemented by acquisitions made by curator, and later Museum director, Adelyn Breeskin, who was the most prominent Cassatt scholar of her time. In 1948, she compiled the first catalogue raisonné of the artist's prints.

Cassatt is best known for her Impressionist paintings and colored etchings that depict domestic scenes. She was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to a family that offered little encouragement to her artistic desires. While studying abroad in Paris, she met artist Edgar Degas, who invited her to exhibit with the Impressionists. In the 1890s she discovered Japanese prints, which influenced bolder color in her works and led her to her experiment with aquatint and drypoint. By 1912, she was almost blind and forced to abandon her work, yet she continued to teach young artists. Cassatt is also known for advising Americans to acquire the work of fellow Impressionists Degas and Manet.

### **The Baltimore Museum of Art**

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is Maryland's largest art museum with more than 85,000 objects. The Museum presents a variety of major exhibitions each year, as well as special installations that showcase the Museum's incomparable collection. The BMA's preeminent holding of post-Impressionist and modern art—The Cone Collection—includes a group of 500 works by Matisse, considered the most comprehensive collection in the world, as well as major examples by Picasso, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and Renoir.

Highlights from the BMA's collection include world-renowned works of modern and contemporary art; grand European paintings and sculpture from Old Masters through the 19<sup>th</sup> century; an extensive collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present; notable American decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; and African, Asian, Native American, and Oceanic art. The BMA's Sculpture Garden—34 works of art on nearly three landscaped acres in the heart of the city—is one of the largest urban sculpture gardens in the United States.

### **Visitor Information**

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and during the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Admission is \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors ages 65 and over and college students; and free for children 18 and under. Admission is free on the first Thursday of every month and for related Free First Thursday activities.

The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31<sup>st</sup> Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 410/396-7100 or visit the BMA's web site at [www.artbma.org](http://www.artbma.org).