FIRST OF TWO HENRY OSSAWA TANNER EXHIBITIONS DEBUTS AT THE BMA

Baltimore (December 6, 2005)—The Baltimore Museum of Art presents the first of two exhibitions on the work and influence of Henry Ossawa Tanner, one of the most important African-American painters of the 20th century and the first to achieve international acclaim. Henry Ossawa Tanner and the Lure of Paris, on view December 7, 2005, through May 28, 2006, brings together works by Tanner—including major paintings on loan and works recently acquired by the Museum—with more than 40 paintings, prints, and drawings from the BMA’s renowned collection of 19th-century French art, including works by Camille Pissarro, Eugène Delacroix, and Camille Baptiste Corot.

“This is an exciting opportunity to showcase these well-known paintings by Henry Ossawa Tanner alongside works from the BMA’s outstanding collection,” said BMA Director Doreen Bolger.

Tanner spent most of his career as an expatriate in Paris, where he focused on Biblical and religious subjects, Orientalism, and the French landscape tradition. He visited Egypt and Palestine, where he was inspired to paint religious and Orientalist subjects that fused the exotic, the everyday, and the spiritual. He also spent time with artists in France’s Barbizon region, the center of the famous school of plein-air landscape painting, and later painted landscapes near the fishing village of Pont-Aven in Brittany. The exhibition features examples of these paintings and prints alongside works by French artists who likely influenced Tanner during his long and successful career.

In addition to the BMA’s Tanner masterpiece Portrait of Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner (1897)—a partial and promised gift presented to the Museum by Baltimore philanthropists Eddie and Sylvia Brown and their daughters in 2002—the BMA has added two other works by Tanner to the collection. The Museum has secured a loan of four paintings from the Des Moines Art Center for this exhibition series: The Disciples See Christ Walking on the Water (c. 1907), Christ Learning to Read (c. 1911), Near East Scene (c. 1910), and Le Tonquet (c. 1910), and a loan of The Good Shepherd from Morgan State University’s James E. Lewis Museum of Art.

The second exhibition in this series, Henry Ossawa Tanner and his Influence in America, on view June 7–December 3, 2006, features the Des Moines Art Center paintings along with works by 20th-century African-American artists in the BMA’s collection, among them Hale Woodruff, Horace Pippin, and Jacob Lawrence.

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This exhibition is guest curated by Dr. James Smalls, Associate Professor of Art History and Theory at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He teaches art and visual culture of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and America and has written extensively on modern and contemporary black visual culture.

This exhibition is generously sponsored by the Museum Loan Network and M&T Bank.

Additional support is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation and Jackie and Freeman Hrabowski.

HENRY OSSAWA TANNER

Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937) was the country's most celebrated African-American artist at the turn of the 20th century. He was born in Pittsburgh to Sarah Tanner, a former slave who had escaped on the Underground Railroad, and Reverend Benjamin Tucker Tanner, one of the most renowned intellectual figures in the African-American community in the 19th century. The family had important ties to Maryland where Bishop Tanner was principal of the A.M.E. Conference School for Freedman in Frederick and pastor of the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Baltimore. The family later moved to Philadelphia, where Tanner enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and became the pupil of progressive American artist Thomas Eakins.

Tanner traveled to Paris in 1892 and studied under the French academic painters Jean-Joseph Benjamin Constant and Jean-Paul Laurens at the Académie Julian. He exhibited at the annual Salons and won prizes and recognition for his work. Tanner traveled extensively in Egypt, Palestine, and Italy in 1896 and soon began producing the religious genre and Orientalist subjects for which he is best known. In the last two decades of his life, he achieved international recognition and the admiration of his peers. He achieved one of his greatest distinctions in 1923 when the French government named him chevalier of the Legion of Honor. He died in Paris in 1937.

PROGRAMS

LIVING HISTORY: The Life and Art of Henry Ossawa Tanner
Saturday, February 18 & Sunday, February 19, 2 p.m.
All ages

Join celebrated actor Bob Smith as he brings African-American painter Henry Ossawa Tanner to life in this one-man show commissioned by the BMA. Discover the powerful influence that Tanner’s father, a social activist and prominent bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, had on his son’s artistic identity and vision, and learn about Tanner’s illustrious career as an expatriate artist in turn-of-the-century France. This participatory program includes a question-and-answer session.

TOURS
Thursday, December 22, 2 p.m.
Thursday, January 5, 2 p.m.
Sunday, January 15, 2 p.m.
Thursday, February 9, 2 p.m.

With Museum docent; free with Museum admission.
AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART AT THE BMA

The BMA has a long and distinguished record of collecting African-American art that began more than 60 years ago when the Museum presented one of the first exhibitions of works by African-American artists in the country. In recent years the BMA has added more than 50 works by both historical and contemporary artists. The collection includes contemporary works by David Hammons, Kerry James Marshall, Martin Puryear, Allison Saar, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, and Fred Wilson; important examples of painting and sculpture by Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Beauford Delaney, Sam Gilliam, Joshua Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, Horace Pippin, Alma Thomas, and Hale Woodruff; and works on paper by John Thomas Biggers, Gordon Parks, and James Van Der Zee. Among the Baltimore-based artists represented are Carl Clark, Linda Day Clark, Cary Beth Cryor, Robert Houston, Tom Miller, Kenneth Royster, and Joyce J. Scott. Many of these works can be seen on display in the West Wing for Contemporary Art.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914, the BMA’s outstanding collection encompasses 90,000 works of art, including the largest and most significant holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world, as well as masterpieces by Picasso, Cézanne, and van Gogh. An expanding collection of contemporary art features iconic post-1960 works by Andy Warhol and Sol LeWitt, as well as exciting acquisitions by artists such as Kara Walker and Olafur Eliasson. The BMA is also recognized for an internationally acclaimed collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15th century to the present; grand European painting and sculpture from Old Masters to the 19th century; distinguished American painting, sculpture, and decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; one of the most important African collections in the country, and notable examples of Asian, ancient American, and Oceanic art. The BMA’s sculpture gardens feature a 100-year survey of modern sculpture on nearly three landscaped acres.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; and during the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 11 a.m.–8 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year’s Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA will close at 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 24. Admission is $10 for adults; $8 for seniors ages 65 & over; $6 for college students (full time with ID); and free for ages 18 & 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 31st 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT BMA PUBLIC RELATIONS AT 410-396-6310

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