



Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts News Release

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MMFA and Fitzgerald Museum to celebrate Zelda Exhibition Opening

For Immediate Release

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts will partner with the Fitzgerald Museum to host a “Tea and Talk” at MMFA marking the opening of *Zelda: Watercolors* by Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald from the Permanent Collection

Montgomery, AL, June 5, 2015 — On Saturday, June 20 at 10:30 a.m., the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, in collaboration with the Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum of Montgomery, will host an educational “Tea and Talk” at the MMFA in honor of Montgomery-native Zelda Sayre (1900-1948). Wife of famed novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, Zelda struggled to find her creative niche during the Roaring Twenties. After suffering the critical failure of her early paintings, and unable to match her husband’s success as a writer, Zelda turned to ballet in 1927, but to no avail. The strain of her ballet regime on her aging body eventually led to a mental collapse, an event which became recurrent in her life, and led to her hospitalization through much of the 1930s.

But Zelda’s creative intuition was stronger than most had guessed, and through the ‘30s and into the ‘40s she transformed herself into a talented and critically successful painter. Art therapy, only in its infancy during the time period, became one of the most helpful treatments for her condition—diagnosed as schizophrenia during her lifetime, but now thought to have been a manifestation of bipolar disorder. It is believed Zelda completed well over 500 paintings, though her mother and sisters destroyed many after her tragic death in a hospital fire in 1948. Today, about 200 of her works of art remain. The MMFA’s collection of 25 is one of the largest collections, second only to those held by the Fitzgerald Estate.

The “Tea and Talk” will feature an introduction to Zelda’s life and times by Willie Thompson, Executive Director of the Fitzgerald Museum, followed by an examination of the works themselves by the MMFA’s Curator of Art, Margaret Lynne Ausfeld. Zelda created a number of watercolor paintings throughout her career and, beginning in the 1920s, these included paper dolls. The original dolls were painted for her daughter, but she continued the practice in the 1940s, and twenty-one of these later examples are a part of this exhibition. The paper dolls, each of which includes two sets of clothes for each character, are Zelda’s interpretations of figures from Arthurian legend and characters from fairy tales recorded by the Brothers Grimm. Four other watercolor compositions, including two landscapes of the countryside surrounding her primary hospital—Highland Hospital in Asheville, NC—will also be on display.

The Museum’s collection was donated by Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, the Fitzgerald’s only child, who lived in Montgomery from 1970 until her death in 1986. Although it is often difficult to date Zelda’s works, Scottie believed that the collection she donated to the Museum was completed in the 1940s. The exhibition, which will run from June 20-August 23, will be hosted in the MMFA’s Weil Print Room.

Attendees of the “Tea and Talk” will be served “peaches and biscuits,” a Southern delicacy that Fitzgerald claimed once prompted him to drive Zelda all the way from New York to Montgomery in the summer of 1920. Coffee and tea will also be available. The event will end at 12:00 p.m.

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, a department of the City of Montgomery, is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Exhibition programs are supported by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.