

MMFA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS PRESENTS OLD MASTER PAINTINGS FROM THE KRESS COLLECTION

On view October 13, 2023 through January 7, 2024, *European Splendors* will wow visitors with classical works of art from the late Medieval to the Baroque period.



Moretto da Brescia (Italian, about 1498-1554), *Virgin and Child with Saints Stephen and Jerome*, 1550, oil on wood panel, Lent by The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, South Carolina, CMA 1954.33

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
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Montgomery, AL, October 3, 2023 – This fall, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts’ temporary galleries will feature more than 30 exquisite paintings on loan from the Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, South Carolina. On view from October 13, 2023, through January 7, 2024, *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection* contains works from Columbia’s Kress Collection along with two objects from the MMFA’s collection that exemplify historical European painting.

Together, these works demonstrate a renewed emphasis on the human condition during the late Medieval and Baroque periods as realism and individuality emerged from the more abstract and symbolic depictions of religious subjects that characterized the art of the Middle Ages. The exhibition culminates with examples of Dutch portraiture and still life, along with works that illustrate the impulse to bring a piece of history home as a souvenir of the traditional European Grand Tour of famous landmarks and the 18th-century mania for Greek and Roman ruins.

One of America’s premier art collectors and patrons of the early 20th century was Samuel H. Kress (1863–1955), who made his fortune through the chain of popular S. H. Kress & Co. five-and-dime department stores throughout the U.S., including in Alabama. An Egyptian Revival-style building opened in 1929, housed Montgomery’s original Kress store, and is now a revitalized architectural landmark downtown on Dexter Avenue.

Samuel Kress used his fortune to buy primarily European old master paintings, and he wanted to bring the appreciation of these works to everyday Americans amid the Great Depression. The Samuel H. Kress Foundation built on this idea by donating artworks to the permanent collections of regional and university museums nationwide. After a large donation to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the second largest gift of Kress collection works was made to the Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, South Carolina.

Curator Margaret Lynne Ausfeld says, “Samuel Kress and his foundation were responsible for donating more than 3,000 works of art to 96 museums in the United States, the most important single donation of art in the nation’s history. And Montgomery was not forgotten. At that time—a fledgling art school and museum founded in 1930—the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was gifted two early Italian paintings from the Kress Foundation, one in 1936 and another in 1937. This exhibition will feature works that are much earlier in art history than the MMFA’s major holdings of American art, which date beginning in the late 1700’s. The exhibition will also allow our viewers to see paintings created in the same eras, and featuring many of the same subjects, as the works in our Old Master Print Collection.”

MMFA Board President Laurie J. Weil, D.V.M. adds, “The example and tradition of public-spirited philanthropy demonstrated by Samuel Kress significantly impacted our own community. Montgomery’s art museum collection has only expanded over more than its 70 years by gifts and



Giuseppe Maria Crespi (Italian, 1665–1747), *Girl with Black Dove*, 1715–1730, oil on canvas, Columbia Museum of Art, 1962.24

purchases made by donors who valued the educational and civic impact that a museum of art and culture could have in an American democracy of shared goals and values.”

RELATED EXHIBITIONS

“Master” Works

ArtWorks Community Gallery

October 12, 2023 through January 8, 2024

Artwork created by local kindergarten through twelfth grade students reimagined and inspired by famous artworks.

RELATED PROGRAMS

Opening Reception

Thursday, October 12, 2023; 5:30–7 PM

Free | Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

Celebrate the opening of *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection, Present Tense*, and student-inspired exhibition *“Master” Works* with gallery attendants available to discuss the artwork on view and local artist sketching in the galleries. Open bar with light hors d'oeuvres.

Short Course: European Splendors

Friday, October 20, October 27, November 3, 2023; 11 AM

Free | Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

Extend your study of art and examine works in the *European Splendors* exhibition that survey European painting representing the arc of Italian art from the late Medieval to the Baroque period. This multisession program will focus discussions on the practice of framing art, the Renaissance period, and the Baroque period.

Portrait Painting Class with Tessa Tallakson

Saturday, October 21, 2023, 10:30–2:30 PM

\$35 | Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

Learn to paint like the Masters in this teen and adult painting class with Tessa Tallakson, local artist. Participants will learn painting techniques with a live model using water soluble oil paints on canvas. This workshop is limited to 15 students and advance registration is required.

SUPPORT + ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Annual support for exhibitions is made possible by the following sponsors and grantors. Lead sponsors and grantors Alabama Power Foundation, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Carr, Riggs & Ingram, LLC, The Ford Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Barrie H. Harmon, III, Lamar, Medical Properties Trust, Inc., Poarch Band of Creek Indians and Mrs. Helen Till with additional support from sponsors Mr. Owen Aronov, Mr. and Mrs. C. Lee Ellis, III, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Ives, Dr. and Mrs. Mark H. LeQuire, PowerSouth, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Runkle, Sabel Steel, The S. Adam Schloss Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Weil, III, Laurie J. Weil, D.V.M. and Dr. Tommy Wool, Ms. Helen Wells, and Mr.

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MMFA BACKGROUND

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1930 by a group of local artists as a place for both exhibiting art and space for art education. The original intentions of our founders—to exhibit and teach—continue to inspire and inform every action and activity here at the Museum which, since 1988, has shared the 277-acre Blount Cultural Park with our partners across the lake at the celebrated Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Today’s MMFA visitors stroll through art-studded grounds and permanent collection galleries. They see compelling changing exhibitions and learn about art by playing in our interactive gallery, ArtWorks, making art in its bustling studios, or by participating in other engaging events and programs. And, as of late September 2018, MMFA visitors can now relax and recharge in the serenity of our stunning new three-acre sculpture garden.

While the Museum’s collection is still home to the art of many of the regional artists who first established it, over time it has become known for its strength in American art and Old Master Prints. Recent, important acquisitions of art made by African American and Asian artists and works inspired by images and themes related to the experiences of these groups represent the breadth and depth of the lives and concerns of those who now call Montgomery and the River Region home. Through the exhibition of this work as well as the programs and events that help connect our communities with it, the MMFA is recognized as a leading arts and cultural resource here in the state and Southeastern region.

The MMFA is a department of the City of Montgomery and is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery, with additional funds from the Montgomery County Commission and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT: *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection*

WHEN: October 13, 2023 through January 7, 2024

WHERE: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
One Museum Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

INFORMATION: mmfa.org
334.625.4333
@MontgomeryMFA

HOURS: Galleries, ArtWorks, Sculpture Garden, Terrace, and Shop
Mondays, Closed
Tuesdays–Sunday, 10 AM–5 PM
Last entry at 4:45 PM

ADMISSION: Free! With ample, free parking.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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