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## **ALFRED MAURER: THE FIRST AMERICAN MODERN**

FEBRUARY 5 THROUGH APRIL 24, 2005

PREVIEW PARTY: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2005

THE FREDERICK R. WEISMAN ART MUSEUM'S EXHIBITION, **ALFRED MAURER: THE FIRST AMERICAN MODERN**, SURVEYS THE ARTIST'S WORK FROM HIS EARLY DAYS AS A LATE 19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY, NEW YORK-BASED TRADITIONALIST THROUGH HIS ENGAGEMENT WITH RADICAL MODERN PAINTING IN PARIS AND FINALLY TO HIS INWARD TURNING LAST YEARS IN NEW YORK. THE WEISMAN EXHIBITION DRAWS FROM ITS EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF MAURER'S WORK—THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD—FOR THIS REVEALING LOOK AT THE PAINTER'S ENGAGEMENT WITH AND ADVANCEMENT OF THE NEW MODERN STYLE OF PAINTING THAT WAS TAKING HOLD IN EUROPE AT THE DAWN OF THE NEW CENTURY.

SCHOLARS HAVE REFERRED TO MAURER AS "THE FIRST AMERICAN MODERN" BECAUSE OF THIS EARLY AND ENTHUSIASTIC COMMITMENT TO THE IDEALS OF THE NEW MODERN STYLES BEING DEVELOPED IN EUROPE, AND HIS ROLE IN BRINGING THEM TO THE UNITED STATES. IN PARIS, MAURER INTERACTED WITH KEY FIGURES OF THE BOOMING MODERN SCENE INCLUDING THE AMERICAN EXPATRIATE, GERTRUDE STEIN, AND THE AMERICAN PAINTER, ROBERT HENRI AND HIS STUDENTS.

HIS STORY, HOWEVER, IS NOT ONE OF UNMITIGATED SUCCESS. MAURER LEFT PARIS ABRUPTLY AT THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I, ABANDONING WORK THAT HE WAS FORCED TO SELL WHEN HIS FATHER—AN ILLUSTRATOR FOR CURRIER AND IVES WHO STRONGLY DISAPPROVED OF ALFRED'S NEW WORK—REFUSED TO ASSIST WITH THE SHIPPING COSTS. MAURER NEVER RETURNED TO FRANCE.

BACK IN NEW YORK AND AGAIN IN THE PROXIMITY OF HIS DISAPPROVING FATHER MAURER CONTINUED TO ATTEMPT HIS DEVELOPMENT OF A THOROUGHLY MODERN FIGURE PAINTING THAT DREW FROM AND COMBINED FAUVIST COLOR, CUBIST SPACE, AND EXPRESSIONIST LANGUAGE.

IN HIS LATER YEARS, HOWEVER, MAURER RETREATED FROM MOST OF HIS NETWORK OF FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES AND GREW INCREASINGLY ISOLATED. MAURER LIVED AND WORKED IN HIS FATHER'S NEW YORK RESIDENCE UNTIL 1932 WHEN HE COMMITTED SUICIDE. MAURER SCHOLARSHIP INCLUDES SEVERAL THEORIES REGARDING MAURER'S UNTIMELY DEATH, BUT THE LACK OF ANY EXTANT DIARY, VERY FEW LETTERS, AND THE RESISTANCE HIS FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES SHOWED ABOUT SPEAKING OF MAURER'S LATE LIFE HAVE BLOCKED A FULL ACCOUNT OF THIS PAINTER'S LIFE AND WORK.

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## WEISMAN/MAURER

SURVEYING MAURER'S WORK, HOWEVER, GIVES A RARE GLIMPSE INTO THE PRACTICE OF AN EARLY MODERN ARTIST—A FIGURE WHO, THROUGH HIS COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPERIMENTATION AND THE EXPRESSION OF HIS OWN TIME, WAS CONSTANTLY BOMBARDED WITH THE NEW AND CHALLENGED TO TAKE ON AND MAKE HIS OWN THE EVER-OCCURRING INNOVATIONS AROUND HIM.

**ALFRED MAURER: THE FIRST AMERICAN MODERN** PRESENTS 52 WORKS, CONSISTING OF 21 OIL OR CASEIN PAINTINGS ON CANVAS OR BOARD, 10 LARGE GOUACHE, TEMPERA OR WATERCOLORS ON PAPER OR BOARD, 21 PEN AND INK, CONTÉ CRAYON, GRAPHITE OR PASTEL DRAWINGS ON PAPER. THIS IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF MAURER'S BREADTH AND DEPTH FOCUSES ON THE ARTIST NOT AS A DESPONDENT MAN OR A "FOLLOWER," AS GERTRUDE STEIN ONCE LABELED HIM, BUT RATHER AS A TRUE AMERICAN INNOVATOR OF THE EARLY MODERN ERA WHO EMBODIES THE EXPERIMENTAL AND INQUISITIVE NATURE OF THE AGE.

**ALFRED MAURER: THE FIRST AMERICAN MODERN** IS THE FIRST TOURING EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO THIS ARTIST SINCE THE 1973 SMITHSONIAN RETROSPECTIVE OF HIS WORK. THE EXHIBITION OPENED IN APRIL 2003 AT THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF ART IN ATHENS. FROM THERE IT WENT TO THE MARION KOOGLER McNAY ART MUSEUM IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, THE PALMER MUSEUM OF ART AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE WESTMORELAND MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART IN PENNSYLVANIA, THE GREENVILLE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART IN SOUTH CAROLINA, AND RETURNS TO THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM IN MINNESOTA FOR THE FINAL EXHIBITION OF THE TOUR IN JANUARY OF 2005.

**THE FREDERICK R. WEISMAN ART MUSEUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA** IS A TEACHING MUSEUM THAT LINKS THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE CULTURAL LIFE OF MINNESOTA IN A DYNAMIC AND CONGENIAL PLACE, FOR THE DISCOVERY, UNDERSTANDING, AND ENJOYMENT OF THE ART IN ALL ITS FACETS. HOUSED SINCE 1993 IN ARCHITECT FRANK GEHRY'S SCULPTURAL STAINLESS STEEL AND BRICK BUILDING, THE MUSEUM'S 20,000-PIECE COLLECTION IS ESPECIALLY RICH IN 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN ART BY SUCH ARTISTS AS GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND MARSDEN HARTLEY.

THE WEISMAN IS LOCATED AT 333 EAST RIVER ROAD IN MINNEAPOLIS. MUSEUM HOURS ARE TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.; THURSDAY, 10 A.M. TO 8 P.M.; WEEKENDS, 11 A.M. TO 5 P.M.; CLOSED MONDAYS. PUBLIC PARKING IS AVAILABLE IN THE MUSEUM RAMP AT A RATE OF \$2.50 PER HOUR OR A FLAT RATE OF \$5.00 ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. THERE IS NO ADMISSION FEE TO THE WEISMAN. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 612-625-9494.

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