

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

**John Wilmerding Symposium
on American Art**



PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM

John Wilmerding Symposium on American Art

October 22, 2016 / 2:00 – 5:00 pm

East Building Auditorium

The symposium is free and open to the public. Seating is available on a first-come, first-seated basis. Registration is not required.

The lectures will be streamed live at go.usa.gov/xZgne.

*Made possible by a generous grant
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2:00

Welcome

Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art

2:05 – 2:30

Still Life and America

Mark D. Mitchell, Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture, Yale University Art Gallery

The genre of still life has enjoyed unexpected power in America's artistic tradition. Its periodic resurgence provides a distinct perspective on the nation's cultural development hewn to individual experience. Mitchell offers a new look at still life, its meaning in America, and its potential for future study.

William Michael Harnett, *The Old Violin* (detail), 1886, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Mellon Scaife in honor of Paul Mellon

2:30 – 2:55

Which Is Which? The Serious Fun of Trompe l'Oeil

Wendy Bellion, associate professor, department of art history, University of Delaware

Trompe l'oeil art challenges viewers to make perceptual distinctions between things that look extraordinarily similar. It stages lessons in perception, imitation, and deception while piquing our delight in the pleasures of wit. Drawing upon the important collection of American still-life painting at the National Gallery of Art, Bellion explores the serious fun of illusion.

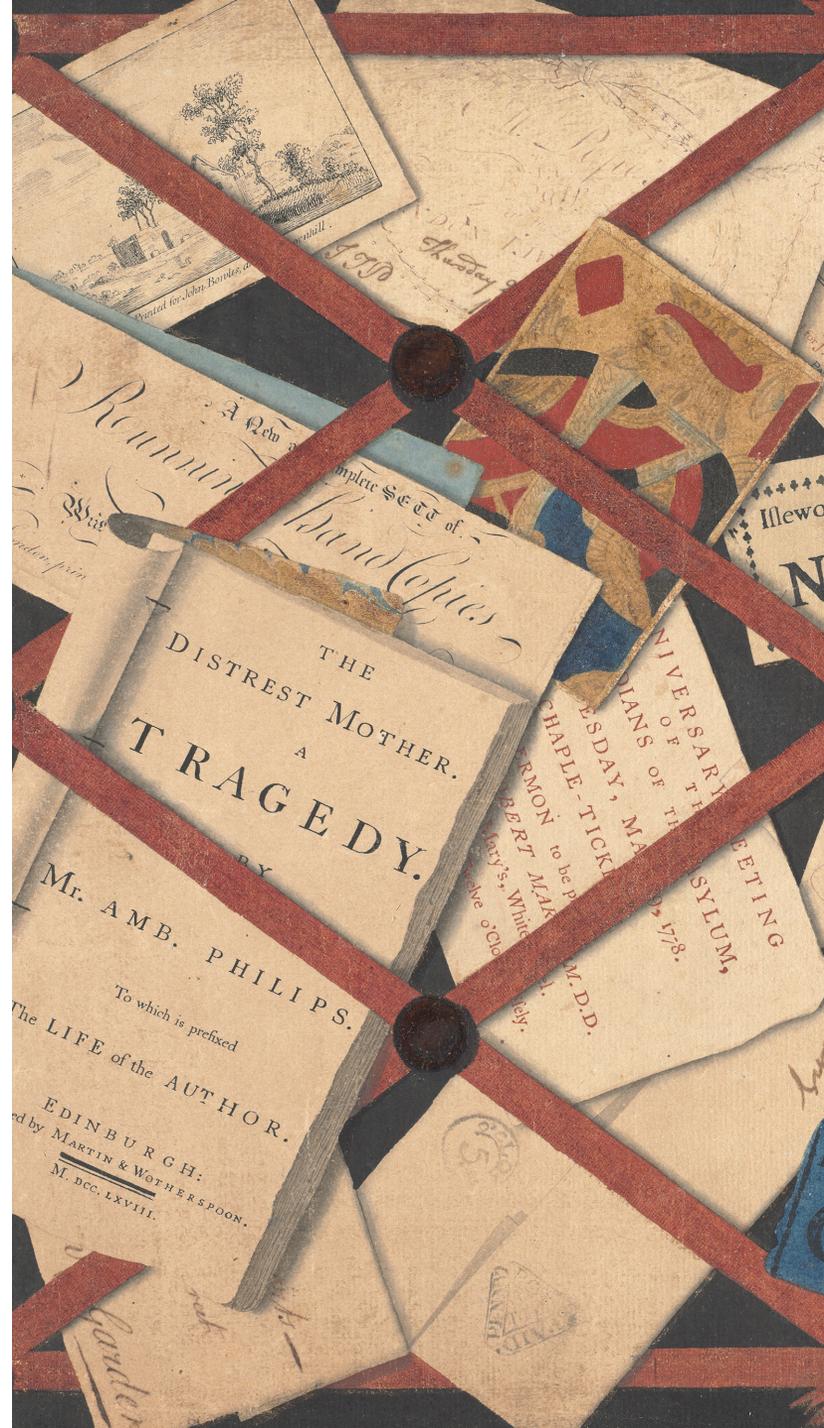
2:55 – 3:20

Seeing in Detail: Frederic Church and the Language of Landscape

Jennifer Raab, assistant professor, department of the history of art, Yale University

What does it mean to see a work of art “in detail”? Looking at a few of Frederic Church’s most famous landscape paintings, Raab considers broader questions of detail, vision, and knowledge in nineteenth-century America.

Samuel Lewis, *A Deception* (detail), c. 1780, pen and black, iron gall, and colored inks with watercolor over graphite on laid paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Max and Heidi Berry





3:20 – 3:30 BREAK

3:30 – 3:55

Arthur Dove: Circles, Signs, and Sounds

Rachael Z. DeLue, associate professor, department of art and archaeology, Princeton University

The modern American artist Arthur Dove (1880–1946) drew inspiration from the natural world when making his paintings and assemblages, but he also played around with found objects, popular music, sound technology, aviation, farm animals as subject matter, meteorology, language, and script, including his own signature. The circle motifs that appear persistently across Dove’s art serve to signify and connect these disparate things, creating a vital and unique form of abstraction, one resolutely if paradoxically bound to objective reality and material existence. As Dove himself said, “There is no such thing as abstraction,” preferring the term “extraction” to describe the essential relationship between his work and the world. DeLue discusses some of the chief characteristics of Dove’s extractions, focusing on examples from the collection of the National Gallery of Art.

Arthur Dove, *Moon* (detail), 1935, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth. © The Estate of Arthur G. Dove, courtesy of Terry Dintenfass, Inc.

3:55 – 4:20

Marsden Hartley's Maine

Randall Griffey, associate curator, department of modern and contemporary art, Metropolitan Museum of Art

American painter Marsden Hartley (1877 – 1943) entered the modernist canon as a result of the abstract paintings he created in Germany in 1914 – 1915. But the paintings he created of his home state of Maine late in his career, beginning in 1937, brought him his greatest acclaim during his lifetime. In fact, Hartley began his career in 1909 at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, 291, as a painter of Maine. Pre-viewing a major exhibition to open in March 2017 at the Met Breuer and in July 2017 at the Colby College Museum of Art, Griffey illuminates the painter's dynamic, rich, and occasionally contradictory artistic engagement with his native Maine. Maine was to Hartley a springboard to imagination and creative inspiration, a locus of memory and longing, a refuge, and a means of communion with previous artists who painted there, especially Winslow Homer. Like the exhibition to which it is related, this presentation showcases Hartley's impressive range, from early post-impressionist interpretations of seasonal change in the region to late, folk-inspired depictions of Mount Katahdin, the state's great geological landmark.

4:20 – 4:45

Rockwell Kent and the End of the World

Justin Wolff, associate professor of art history, department of art, University of Maine

In November 1937 *Life* magazine featured four lithographs by the American artist Rockwell Kent (1882 – 1971) in an article titled “Four Ways in Which the World May End.” Wolff analyzes the so-called End of the World lithographs, which are in the National Gallery of Art collection, in the context of scientific theories about cosmic cataclysm, suspicions that European fascism portended an apocalypse, and Kent's solidarity with a radical leftism that anticipated capitalism's disintegration. Looking beyond their political meaning, Wolff considers as well what the lithographs elucidate about Kent's renowned emotional intensity and wanderlust — specifically, what they reveal about his tenacious quest to acquire psychic integrity in barren lands at the ends of the world.

4:45 – 5:00

Q & A Session

cover Sanford Robinson Gifford, *The Artist Sketching at Mount Desert, Maine* (detail), 1864 – 1865, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr. in honor of John Wilmerding. back cover Marsden Hartley, *Maine Woods* (detail), 1908, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Bernard Brookman

