

The French,

“PAINTING IN FRANCE: 1803–2003”

DECEMBER 20, 2003 – APRIL 1, 2004



CIRCLE OF JACQUES LOUIS DAVID, *Portrait of a Lady*, ca. 1810,
San Diego Museum of Art, Gift of Anne R. and Amy Putnam

HERMAN MHIRE FLINCHES slightly as he describes the inaugural exhibit of the new University Art Museum as a “once in a lifetime opportunity.”

He dislikes resorting to a cliché. Yet it’s difficult – even for him, an

articulate art scholar and the museum’s director – to convey the significance of “Painting in France: 1803–2003” in just one phrase.

But he tries again: “An exhibit of this quality, of this magnitude, has never happened in this part of the state before.”

Collection

PHOTO RMN - HERVÉ LEWANDOWSKI



ALFRED SISLEY, *Le Pont de Moret*, 1893, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



JEAN-FRANCOIS MILLET, *The Disappointed Hunter*, ca. 1841, Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, Minnesota



EUGENE BOUDIN, *Figures on the Beach*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

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HERMAN MHIRE, DIRECTOR
UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

PAINTING IN FRANCE: 1803-2003” is the final event of a year-long, statewide celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. (See related story, this page.) The collection is referred to in promotional material as “a survey

exhibition of 200 years of French artistic genius.”

That description is not hyperbole. France dominated the world art scene during much of those centuries. University Art Museum guests will see several periods represented, such as Neo-

Louisiana Purchase Reappraisal - 200 Years Later

LAFAYETTE ART LOVERS HAVE Napoleon Bonaparte to thank for the new University Art Museum.

The bicentennial observance of his sale to the United States of nearly 600 million acres of French-owned land was the catalyst for the facility’s construction. Here’s how:

In 2000, state and area tourism officials met to begin planning a statewide celebration of the Louisiana Purchase. Herman Mhire, director of University Art Museum, was present, along with Gerald Breaux, director of the Lafayette Convention and Visitors Commission. The group agreed Lafayette would be the ideal location for a French art exhibit, since it’s the heart of Louisiana’s French-speaking region.

“Gerald said to everyone assembled, ‘I want a major exhibit in Lafayette in 2003.’ Then he turned to me and said, ‘What are you going to do for us?’ ” Mhire recalled this spring.

“My response was, ‘We’d all love to have a major exhibit from France. But we don’t have a proper museum building.’

“Gerald said, ‘Work up a project. Let’s worry about the building later.’ ”

So, Mhire planned a trip to France. Before he left, he accepted an invitation to view the art collection of Lafayette philanthropists Lulu and Paul Hilliard.

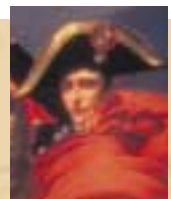
Mhire mentioned his upcoming trip, noting that there was no appropriate museum in Lafayette if French officials agreed to loan some paintings.

“Paul said, ‘I think my wife and I can help you with that.’ I had no idea what he meant. I just thought, ‘Isn’t he kind?’ ”

When he returned from France, Mhire met with UL Lafayette President Ray Authement and Paul Hilliard to report the French curators’ willingness to help.

A couple of weeks later, the Hilliards donated \$3 million toward construction of a first class museum. That gift enabled an architect to be hired quickly.

It was soon determined that the museum could open Dec. 20, 2003, the 200th anniversary of the transfer of the Louisiana territory by Napoleon to Thomas Jefferson. ■



LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM



WILLIAM ADOLPHE BOUGUEREAU, *Chuchotements de l'Amour*, 1889, New Orleans Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chapman H. Hyams

classism, Romanticism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Modernism.

The names of many of the artists are familiar – Gauguin, Matisse, Monet, Picasso – and paintings are on loan from some of the most famous art

museums in the world, such as the Louvre in Paris and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

About 80 paintings will fill 10,000 square feet of gallery space in the new museum.



Henri Harpignies, *Fresnet at St. Prive*, 1902, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, Bequest of George B. and Jenny R. Mathews, 1952



JEAN DUBUFFET, *Bonne Mine*, 1961, San Diego Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds from the Armand Hammer Foundation and Anne K. and Amy Putnam and a gift from Vivian Conway and Inez Grant Parker, by exchange



PHOTO RMN - GERARD BLOT

ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET, *Le Baron Jean-Dominique Larrey*, Louvre Museum, Paris

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When Mhire was exploring the possibility of an exhibit of French paintings – before there was even a definite plan to build a new facility – he met with curators at major museums in Paris, such as the Musée d’Orsay, Centre Pompidou, Musée Carnavalet and the Louvre.

“The French curators were absolutely courteous and hospitable. They all love Louisiana and said, ‘We

have to be part of this,’ ” he said.

As he collected paintings for this exhibit, the museum director was assisted by Philippe Gustin, director of Le Centre International in Lafayette, and the center’s staff, who handled French translations and international communications. Claude Teboul, president, France-Louisiane / Franco Americaine in Paris, also helped communicate with French museums.

Over the past year, Mhire has worked with museums in Belgium, as well as France. “Some of them are sending paintings to the United States for the first time,” he noted.

LIKE COUNTLESS OTHERS, Mhire has raced through museums in other parts of the nation and world, pausing only a few seconds at each painting or sculpture in an effort to drink it all in during one visit. Since “Painting In France: 1803-2003” will be at the University Art Museum from Dec. 20, 2003, to April 1, 2004, Acadiana residents will have time to savor it.

Purchase of a University Art Museum membership will enable a person to visit the museum an unlimited number of times without paying admission. During the exhibition’s 14-week run, special events, such as concerts of French music and lectures about French art, will offer new dimensions.

A strong turnout is expected. There’s a population base of about 800,000 within easy driving distance and some museums that have loaned paintings for this opening exhibit have scheduled tours to Lafayette.

“The economic impact is going to be tremendous. This is economic development through cultural tourism,” Mhire said, noting also that cultural tourism is the second largest industry in Louisiana.

EVEN IF UNIVERSITY ART MUSE-
um were empty, it would be
worth the trip. It was designed
by Eskew+Dumez+Ripple of New
Orleans, whose projects include the
John M. Shaw Federal Courthouse in
Lafayette and the Aquarium of the
Americas in New Orleans.

Exterior walls are made of 44 pre-
cast concrete panels that are each 10-
feet wide, 33 feet tall and each weigh
22 tons. The 240-foot-long interior
wall, which will face the former UL
Foundation building, will be glass.

The \$16 million facility, under
construction at the intersection of St.
Mary Boulevard and Girard Park
Drive, will meet all national and inter-
national museum standards, including
those for climate control and security.
“There’s not an exhibition, national or
international, that cannot be presented
here,” Mhire observed.

WITH “PAINTING IN FRANCE,”
University Art Museum has
deliberately set a high
standard. Major exhibitions are
booked through 2005.

Andrew Wyeth’s popular “Helga”
series is up next. That exhibit was
recently at the Joslyn Art Museum in
Omaha, Neb., where it drew a total of
60,000 visitors, an average of about
5,000 people per week.

For Fall 2004, Mhire is planning an
exhibit of the largest private collection

PHOTO RMN - HERVE LEWANDOWSKI



CLAUDE MONET, *La Seine à Argenteuil*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

in North America of arts of the Amazon.
In 2005, museum guests will be treated
to the ceramics of Pablo Picasso.

The new University Art Museum
presents an opportunity for people to
broaden their perspective by viewing
the work of some of the finest artists
in the world.

Once again, Mhire searches for
words to describe the value of that.

“It’s a cliché, but great art reminds
us that life is amazing and that human
experience is expressed in a thousand
different ways.” ■

“PAINTING IN FRANCE:
1803-2003”

DEC. 20, 2003 – APRIL 1, 2004

ARTISTS INCLUDE:

Eugene Boudin
William Adolphe Bouguereau
Georges Braque
Gustave Courbet
Camille Corot
Jean Dubuffet
Charles Dufresne
Paul Gauguin
Anne-Louis Girodet
Henri Harpignies
Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres
Henri Matisse
Jean-Francois Millet
Claude Monet
Pablo Picasso
Camille Pissarro
Paul Signac
Alfred Sisley
Yves Tanguy
Maurice de Vlaminck

University Art Museum

Hours of Operation:

Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays and holidays

(337) 482-5326

www.louisiana.edu/uam/



GEORGES BRAQUE, *Guitare et verre*, 1921, Centre Pompidou, Paris

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