

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

AMERICA'S FIRST MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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THE RENOIR RETURNS: A CELEBRATION OF MASTERWORKS AT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

**Opening April 15, 2006, Special Exhibition Marks the Homecoming
of Signature Works and Completion of Major Building Project**



Marjorie and Duncan Phillips in front of
Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*
(1880-81), ca. 1954. Photo by Naomi Savage.

Washington, D.C.— Following an enormously successful four-year international tour, *The Renoir Returns: A Celebration of Masterworks at The Phillips Collection* welcomes home to Washington, D.C., the Phillips' acclaimed European impressionist and modern masterpieces, including the iconic work of the museum, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1880-81). It also marks the culmination of a major addition, the Sant Building, that the Phillips began in 2003 to modernize and expand the institution, while maintaining the beloved qualities of one of the leading intimately scaled museums in the world.

The return of the museum's
masterworks will be celebrated
with free admission throughout
an event-filled opening weekend

(Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, noon-7 p.m.), generously sponsored by an anonymous donor. On opening day, the Phillips will feature festivities such as roving performers portraying colorful characters from *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, a tableau vivant of the painting by area students, hands-on art projects, and performances reminiscent of the cafés and cabarets that flourished in late-19th-century Paris. On Sunday, April 16 at 5 p.m., the museum will present the world premiere of composer and pianist Haskell Small's *Renoir's Feast*, a specially commissioned musical celebration inspired by the *Boating Party*.



Artist's rendering of The Phillips Collection
along 21st Street NW, on completion of the
building project.

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“*The Renoir Returns* and the public opening of our new spaces mark a new chapter in the life of the Phillips,” said Jay Gates, director. “With our masterworks reinstalled, and the new addition and vastly improved renovated spaces opened, we will be able to serve our audiences in important new ways. We are especially grateful that funding for our opening weekend, given by a generous benefactor, will allow the broadest possible audience to visit the museum and participate in this exciting celebration.”

The exhibition is sponsored by Lockheed Martin Corporation as part of a five-year commitment to The Phillips Collection.

***THE RENOIR RETURNS:
A CELEBRATION OF MASTERWORKS AT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION***

The Renoir Returns: A Celebration of Masterworks at The Phillips Collection presents key works in painting and sculpture that express founder Duncan Phillips’ singular perspective on modern art. It will be installed in the rooms of Phillips’ 1897 Georgian Revival home, and will feature European masterworks that Phillips acquired during his lifetime—ranging from El Greco to Picasso, and from large, major works to intimate, smaller pieces. The installation will include some of the most acclaimed works from the last two centuries of significance on three levels: for their place in each artist’s oeuvre, their particular connection to Phillips and his museum, and their role in the history of modern art. Taken together, they offer insight into the emergence of modernism, and reveal the particular vision of an influential collector who shaped the way it has come to be viewed.

On view again will be the loved and admired *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, which Phillips called “the only Renoir I need.” This masterful painting will be hung surrounded by other European masterworks that Phillips acquired during the 1920s, an especially active period for him as a collector. The painting, executed at the height of Renoir’s career, includes the artist’s fiancée, Aline Charigot, and their varied circle of friends at a restaurant on an island at Chatou just outside of Paris. The painting also reflects and celebrates modern life and the new social realities of the late-19th century, with its ascendant middle class. Most of the figures are recognizable individuals, such as the artists Gustave Caillebotte and Paul Lhote, Comédie Française actress Jeanne Samary, and Charles Ephrussi, a financier and the editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.

Other returning masterpieces will include Vincent van Gogh’s *Entrance to the Public Gardens in Arles* (1888), which Phillips purchased in 1930 to mark the transformation of his home and collection into a public museum; Paul Cézanne’s *Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears* (1890-93), believed to have been given by the artist to Claude Monet as a gift; and Pablo Picasso’s *The Blue Room* (1901), with the mannered figuration and prevailing palette of the artist’s Blue Period. Earlier masterworks—such as El Greco’s *The Repentant St. Peter* (c. 1600-05, or later), Jean-Simeon Chardin’s *A Bowl of Plums* (c. 1728), Eugene Delacroix’s *Paganini* (1831), and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ *The Small Bather* (1826)—provide references and counterpoints that reflect Phillips’ personal interpretation of modernism, which he saw not as breaking with the past, but as evolving from it.

Project director for *The Renoir Returns: A Celebration of Masterworks at The Phillips Collection* is Eliza Rathbone, the museum's chief curator, with the participation of the entire curatorial team. The accompanying book to the exhibition, *Art Beyond Isms*, is written by Rathbone and Johanna Halford-MacLeod, director of publications at the Phillips, and features a preface by Director Jay Gates.

SANT BUILDING CREATES NEW GALLERIES AND MORE

On April 15, The Phillips Collection will also open to the public its major renovation and addition project, a four-year undertaking aimed at better serving the museum's many audiences. The Sant Building honors longtime Phillips patron and former Board President and Chair Victoria P. Sant, who, with her husband, Roger, triggered the successful completion of a \$27-million fundraising campaign by giving \$9 million in matching funds for the project. With 65 percent of the additional space located below ground, the project, designed by Washington architects Cox, Graae and Spack, maintains the look and feel of the original streetscape and respects the integrity of the surrounding Dupont Circle neighborhood. These new facilities will allow the Phillips to fully engage its many audiences and present more of its collection, while retaining the special qualities that have distinguished the museum.

Key features include:

- New and expanded galleries, among them the first to accommodate larger-scale post-1950s work
- The relocated Rothko Room, which opened in 1960 as the first public space dedicated solely to the work of abstract expressionist artist Mark Rothko, installed in its original configuration
- A 180-seat auditorium for lectures, films, and events
- An art activity room for hands-on education projects, and exhibition spaces for student art
- An art technology lab, for developing interactive resources based on the Phillips' acclaimed educational programs
- An outdoor courtyard with sculptures by Ellsworth Kelly and Barbara Hepworth
- A new library and archives housing Duncan Phillips' writings and correspondence with artists, dealers, and other cultural figures
- New and expanded visitor entrance, café, and shop
- A new art conservation studio

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF MODERN ART

The addition also makes possible The Phillips Collection Center for the Study of Modern Art, an ambitious new museum-based educational model. Undertaken in partnership with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, this interdisciplinary enterprise will bring together scholars from across academic fields—the arts, humanities, and sciences—in an ongoing forum for discussion, research, and publishing on modern art.

The Center will also function as the Phillips-based affiliate for the University of Illinois' semester in Washington for graduate and undergraduate study in modern art, including museum internships. University professor and Phillips trustee Jonathan Fineberg is heading the University of Illinois program at the Phillips Center. In addition to the university's students, Phillips Collection members, students from area universities, and the public will be able to enroll in the Center's museum, studio, and art-history courses, which begin in September 2006. These courses will be taught by the university faculty, Phillips staff, and artists.

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, is home to one of the finest collections of impressionist and modern American and European art in the world, with nearly 2,500 works by artists including Daumier, Renoir, Bonnard, Matisse, Monet, Degas, van Gogh, Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, Klee, O'Keeffe, Lawrence, Dove, Avery, Diebenkorn, and Rothko. The museum was founded by Duncan Phillips and opened in 1921. Founded by Duncan Phillips and opened to the public in 1921, the museum comprises Phillips' 1897 Georgian Revival home and two similarly scaled additions that retain the intimacy of a private residence. The Phillips maintains an active collecting program and regularly organizes major special exhibitions in addition to maintaining a program of traveling exhibitions and making its works available to audiences around the world through loans to other museums. The museum also produces award-winning and in-depth education programs, with an active schedule for K–12 teachers and students, as well as for adults. Since 1941, the museum has hosted weekly concerts in its wood-paneled Music Room installed with modern masterpieces.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Phillips Collection is located in the heart of Washington's historic Dupont Circle neighborhood, at 1600 21st Street, NW, near the Dupont Circle Metro (Q Street exit). Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday Artful Evenings until 8:30 p.m.; Sunday from 12 to 7 p.m. (12 to 5 p.m. June through September). Closed Monday.

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