

The Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University to Present A Critical New Exploration of the History of Modernism, in *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today*

Trailblazing Exhibition To Be on View at the Wallach October 24, 2018–February 10, 2019 and at the Musée d’Orsay March 26–July 14, 2019

New York, June 27, 2018—In a sweeping reexamination of the history of modern art, the Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University will present the exhibition *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today*, on view from October 24, 2018, through February 10, 2019. Co-organized by the Wallach and the Musée d’Orsay, Columbia’s presentation is curated by Denise Murrell, the Wallach’s Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Research Scholar. *Posing Modernity* proposes that the changing representation of the black female figure has been central to the development of modernism from Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) to the present.

Comprising more than 100 works of art from more than 40 lenders and spanning the period from the mid-19th century to today, *Posing Modernity* begins with a consideration of the role of Laure, the black model in *Olympia*, and the black models in works by Manet’s contemporaries and near-contemporaries, including Frédéric Bazille, Edgar Degas, Nadar and Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux. Through these works, the exhibition brings to light little-known connections between the avant-garde circles of 19th-century Paris and the post-abolition community of free black Parisians. *Posing Modernity* also traces the impact of Manet’s reconsideration of the black model into the 20th century and across the Atlantic to New York, where Henri Matisse visited Harlem jazz clubs and later created portraits of black dancers as icons of modern beauty.

The exhibition sets these and other works by Matisse in dialogue with the “New Negro” portraiture style with which diverse Harlem Renaissance artists—such as Charles Alston, William H. Johnson and Laura Wheeler Waring—defied racial stereotypes. The exhibition concludes with a look at the legacy of Manet and Matisse as seen in the works of artists from Romare Bearden to Mickalene Thomas.

Deborah Cullen, who has overseen the development of the exhibition as director and chief curator of the Wallach Art Gallery, said, “With its daring and persuasive thesis and wealth of extraordinary artworks, *Posing Modernity* invites diverse audiences to look again at Western modern art and find new and perhaps more personal relevance in its achievements. I am deeply grateful to Denise Murrell for her trailblazing scholarship in this exhibition, which she has based on her doctoral dissertation for Columbia’s Department of Art History and Archaeology. She has made a major contribution to the field, and this exhibition provides the Wallach an extraordinary opportunity to reinforce the program we offer to Columbia University, to our immediate community in West Harlem and our wider national and international audience for the arts.”

Denise Murrell said, *Posing Modernity* suggests that our understanding of Western modern art cannot be complete without taking into account the vital role of the black female figure, from Laure of Manet to her legacy for successive generations of artists. The exhibition not only illuminates long-observed figures, but also brings together the history of art and the history of ideas, enabling us to reexamine almost two centuries of aesthetic, political, social and racial issues.”

Highlights of the exhibition include a Manet portrait of Laure from Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin; a major Manet painting of Jeanne Duval from the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest; Bazille’s *Young Woman with Peonies*, painted in tribute to Manet, from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; a Degas pastel from the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; a large-scale Matisse cutout evoking the African American dancer Katherine Dunham from the Musée Matisse, Nice; the iconic Harlem Renaissance painting *Girl in a Red Dress* by Charles Alston, from the Harmon and Harriet Kelley Foundation for the Arts; and Romare Bearden’s *Patchwork Quilt* from The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

After being presented at the Wallach, *Posing Modernity* will be expanded to include Olympia and other works and presented as *Le Modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse* at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris from March 26 to July 14, 2019.

The forthcoming *Posing Modernity* catalog, co-published by Yale University Press, includes a foreword by Laurence des Cars, president of the Musées d’Orsay et de l’Orangerie, Paris, and an introductory essay, “The Gift of Olympia,” by Anne Higonnet, professor of art history at Columbia and Ann Whitney Olin Professor of Art History at Barnard College. The 224-page volume, lavishly illustrated with more than 175 color images, will be available for purchase at the Wallach Art Gallery.

The exhibition has been developed through the generous support of the Ford Foundation. It is organized by The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University in the City of New York, and the Etablissement public des musées d’Orsay et de l’Orangerie, Paris. The curators for the Paris exhibition are Cécile Debray, director of the Musée de l’Orangerie; Stéphane Guégan, scientific adviser to the president of the Musées d’Orsay and Orangerie; Denise Murrell, Ford Foundation postdoctoral research scholar, Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University; and Isolde Pludermacher and Edouard Papet, curators at the Musée d’Orsay.

About Columbia University

Among the world’s leading research universities, Columbia University in the City of New York continuously seeks to advance the frontiers of scholarship and foster a campus community deeply engaged in the complex issues of our time through teaching, research, patient care and public service. The University is comprised of 16 undergraduate, graduate and professional schools, and four affiliated colleges and seminaries in Manhattan, and a wide array of research institutes and global centers around the world. More than 40,000 students, award-winning faculty and professional staff define the University’s underlying values and commitment to pursuing new knowledge and educating informed, engaged citizens. Founded in 1754 as King’s College, Columbia is the fifth oldest institution of higher learning in the United States.

About the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery

The Wallach Art Gallery advances Columbia's historical, critical and creative engagement with the visual arts. Serving as both a laboratory and a forum, the Wallach offers opportunities for curatorial practice and discourse, while bridging the diverse approaches to the arts at the University with a welcome broader public. The Wallach presents projects that are organized by graduate students and faculty in the Department of Art History and Archaeology or by other Columbia scholars, focus on the contemporary artists of the campus and its communities and offer new scholarship on the University's special collections. Established in 1986, the Wallach Art Gallery is the University's premier visual arts space. It is a platform for critically acclaimed exhibitions, a dynamic range of programming and publications that contribute to scholarship.

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