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NEWS THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

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Press Preview: Tuesday, Aug. 23 at 10:00 a.m.

***Encouraging American Genius:
Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art***

**at the Corcoran Gallery of Art
August 27, 2005 – January 2, 2006**

Washington, D.C. – Exceptional quality and breadth characterize the Corcoran Gallery of Art's internationally recognized collection of pre-1945 American paintings. *Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art* features more than 85 canvases selected from the museum's rich holdings. For the first time in more than 10 years, these paintings, which comprise the historical core collection of Washington's oldest art museum, will be shown together in the Corcoran's landmark galleries. Iconic works collected by Gallery founder William Wilson Corcoran, including landscapes by such renowned artists as Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, will be exhibited alongside important canvases by major painters such as John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt, Edward Hopper and Aaron Douglas acquired after Corcoran's death. In addition to these paintings, the exhibition will showcase two sketchbooks containing Albert Bierstadt's initial ideas for his majestic canvas *The Last of the Buffalo*; the volumes, recently acquired by the Corcoran and never exhibited publicly, will be shown alongside the finished painting. Organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, *Encouraging American Genius* will be on view from August 27, 2005 through January 2, 2006.



Albert Bierstadt, *Mount Corcoran*, c. 1876–77, oil on canvas, 61 x 96 1/4 in. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund

“The Corcoran Gallery of Art has a long and distinguished record of collecting American paintings. In fact, the institution was founded with the purpose of ‘encouraging American genius,’” said Sarah Cash, Bechhoefer Curator of American Art. “This exhibition emphasizes the richness of the Corcoran’s holdings—a collection of works that brings to life most of the major movements in the history of American art.”

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One of America's oldest art museums, the Corcoran Gallery of Art was founded in 1869 as the realization of Washington, D.C. financier and philanthropist W. W. Corcoran's longstanding desire to create an American national gallery. Mr. Corcoran collected American art primarily, while most of his peers focused on purchasing European art. The new museum continued to acquire contemporary and historical American paintings well after its founder's death. A major turning point in shaping the collection occurred in 1907 with the advent of the museum's pioneering Annual and Biennial exhibitions of contemporary art, from which the Gallery acquired many of its most important paintings. Today, the Corcoran's American paintings dating from 1740 to 1945 number more than 650.

Encouraging American Genius is organized into roughly chronological thematic groupings to demonstrate the museum's strengths in colonial and federal American portraiture, nineteenth-century landscape and genre painting, early twentieth-century realism and abstraction between the wars. A major grouping of paintings in the exhibition features well-known examples of Hudson River School landscape painting. These celebrations of New World promise include Thomas Cole's well-known cycle *The Departure* and *The Return* (1837), Frederic Church's majestic *Niagara* (1857) and Albert Bierstadt's operatic *Mount Corcoran* (c.1876–77).

Several galleries in the exhibition present the Corcoran's prized American Impressionist holdings, which include Mary Cassatt's *Young Girl at a Window* (c. 1883-1885) and Childe Hassam's *A North East Headland* (1901). Complementing this section of the exhibition is a stylistically diverse grouping of paintings depicting women in Gilded Age settings, such as John Singer Sargent's *Marie Buloz Pailleron (Madame Édouard Pailleron)* (1879) and Thomas Eakins' *Singing a Pathetic Song* (1881).

A third category of paintings in the exhibition portrays the pulsating energy and change of early twentieth-century American culture. This section features vibrant scenes such as George Bellows' *Forty-two Kids* (1907), John Sloan's *Yeats at Petipas'* (1910) and Edward Hopper's *Ground Swell* (1939).

In addition to these three major groupings, the exhibition highlights a number of outstanding individual works by American masters. From famed early portraitists John Singleton Copley and Joshua Johnson, to American Barbizon painter George Inness and *trompe-l'oeil* master William Michael Harnett, to modernist greats Maurice Prendergast, Thomas Hart Benton and Marsden Hartley, *Encouraging American Genius* presents a remarkable selection of American paintings from the Corcoran's collection.

Originally organized to travel nationally during the Corcoran's expansion and renovation, this exhibition will launch a four-venue tour of the Corcoran's best American paintings. The exhibition will travel to Houston, Texas; Southampton, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Sarasota, Florida.

"This treasure trove of American art will inspire and engage art and culture audiences both in the nation's capital and across the country," said Jeanne Ruesch, chairman of the Corcoran Gallery of Art Board of Trustees. "We are honored to share our famous collection with art lovers nationwide and look forward to featuring the paintings in our permanent collection galleries upon completion of the tour."

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“Wachovia is dedicated to enhancing the communities in which we live and we’re pleased to partner with the Corcoran to support this exhibition,” said Sam Schreiber, Wachovia’s regional president for the Greater Washington D.C. market.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition will be accompanied by an informative, fully illustrated, soft cover book entitled *A Capital Collection: Masterworks from the Corcoran Gallery of Art*, published by Third Millennium. This companion catalogue takes a thematic approach to the Corcoran’s diverse holdings in all media, both American and European. It is organized into five sections: Identity, Narrative, Nature, History and Imagination, with engrossing text and in-depth studies of more than 125 selected works. Nineteen works from *Encouraging American Genius* are featured in the catalogue. Corcoran curators and guest authors have contributed essays to this celebration of the collection.

TRAVELING EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Following the presentation at the Corcoran Gallery of Art from August 27, 2005 through January 2, 2006, *Encouraging American Genius* begins a national tour. The exhibition is currently scheduled to be on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston, TX; February – May 2006), The Parrish Art Museum (Southampton, NY; June – September 2006), the Mint Museum of Art (Charlotte, NC; October – December 2006) and the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (Sarasota, FL; February – April 2007).

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

A Family Festival is planned for Saturday, October 8, 2005. Other programs scheduled in conjunction with this exhibition include an Educator Workshop with curricular materials, a scholarly symposium, a series of perspective talks and Book Club gatherings. Below is a sampling of upcoming programs and for more information, please visit the Corcoran’s website at www.corcoran.org.

Corcoran Member Preview Day

Thursday, August 25, 2005

10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Members have the opportunity to visit the *Encouraging American Genius* exhibition in advance of the general public opening. Members-only tours will be offered by Sarah Cash, Bechhoefer Curator of American Art, and Emily Shapiro, Assistant Curator of American Art, at 6:30 p.m. Members receive a 10 percent discount in the Cafe des Artistes and a special 20 percent discount on all purchases made in the Museum Shop.

Business and Professional Women Evening Reception and Tour

Thursday, September 22, 2005

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

BPW members: complimentary

Non-members: \$25 advance; \$35 after September 15, if available

Join the Business and Professional Women (BPW) members and guests for the first BPW

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evening reception in the Corcoran atriums. Enjoy seasonal hors d'oeuvres and special-led tours of *Encouraging the American Genius* and *William McLeod and the Curators Journals*. Coffee and desserts will be served after the tour. Registration is available online at www.corcoran.org/bpw.

Very Special Wine Tasting Evening!

Thursday, October 20, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Corcoran members \$50; public \$60

Spend a delicious evening enjoying a patriotic mix of fine American wines and award-winning farmstead cheeses, hosted by Joshua Wesson, co-founder of Best Cellars, and one of the country's most entertaining wine and food authorities. Uniting his grape stained expertise with a seasonal selection of hard-to-find cheeses, Wesson promises to reveal all about the art of matching wine with cheeses. This event celebrates the Corcoran exhibition, *Encouraging American Genius*.

**Fall Family Festival
And Wachovia Employee Day**

Saturday, October 29, 2005

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

FREE

Bring family, friends, and neighbors downtown for a “historic” day of all-American fun! This all-day, all-ages, all-out celebration at DC's neighborhood museum will include art-making workshops, storytelling, music and live performances. No reservations are required for this FREE event.

Scholarly Symposium

Thursday, November 17 and Friday, November 18

Thursday, 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.; Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art will host a scholarly symposium celebrating its world-renowned collection of American paintings featured in the exhibition, *Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art*. During this two-day event recognized authorities and younger scholars of American art will present illustrated lectures, and lead intimate gallery talks. A full schedule of events can be found at www.corcoran.org.

Encouraging American Genius Educator Workshop

Saturday, November 19, 9:00 a.m. – Noon

Free

Educators are invited to attend a study program that will include private tours, distinguished guest speakers and an interactive workshop with Museum staff members. All participants will receive the *Encouraging American Genius* Educator Resource Pack. Call (202)639-1727 to register.

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Benjamin Franklin and American Genius: A Talk by Walter Isaacson

Monday, November 21, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Corcoran members \$20; public \$25

To complement the Corcoran exhibition, *Encouraging American Genius*, one of the most brilliant personalities of our time discusses the genius of Benjamin Franklin, as well as the special qualities of American genius. Walter Isaacson is the President and CEO of the Aspen Institute, and he has also been Chairman and CEO of CNN and the Managing Editor of *Time* magazine. He is author of *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (2003), *Kissinger: A Biography* (1992) and is currently writing a biography of Albert Einstein.

Perspective Talks

All Sundays at 3 p.m.

Free

These gallery talks led by artists, curators and critics explore the exhibition from multiple viewpoints, stimulating discussion about the meaning and impact of these American art masterpieces in the Corcoran's collection. These talks will take place on Sundays throughout the run of the exhibition. A full schedule of events is available at www.corcoran.org. Free with museum admission, no reservations are necessary.

EXHIBITION SPONSORSHIP

Wachovia Presents

Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art

This exhibition is organized by the Corcoran and presented by **WACHOVIA**

Related educational programming is made possible by The Brown Foundation, Inc., of Houston and Altria Group, Inc.



CURATORS

Sarah Cash, Bechhoefer Curator of American Art and Emily Shapiro, Assistant Curator of American Art, of the Corcoran Gallery of Art

PRESS PREVIEW

A press preview for *Encouraging American Genius* is scheduled for Tuesday, August 23 from 10 a.m. to noon. To RSVP, please call Liz Bradley at (202) 639-1867.

PRESS IMAGES

High-resolution digital images are available to press via the Corcoran's FTP site www.corcoran.org/press. To obtain login and password, please visit

<http://www.corcoran.org/press/index.asp> or contact the Communications Office at PR@corcoran.org or (202) 639-1867.

ABOUT THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

The Corcoran Gallery of Art was founded in 1869 as Washington's first museum of art. It is a privately funded institution incorporating both a museum and college of art and design. As one of America's oldest art institutions, the institution is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as European painting, sculpture, photography and decorative arts.

Founded in 1890, the Corcoran College of Art + Design is Washington's only 4-year college of art and design. The college currently offers a four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree program; a two-year Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) degree program; Master of Arts (MA) degree programs in Interior Design, the History of Decorative Arts and Teaching; and a Continuing Education program encompassing more than 250 courses and seven certificate programs for part-time adult students; as well as year-round classes designed especially for children and teens.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art is located at New York Avenue and 17th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. and is open Wednesdays – Sundays from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and until 9 p.m. on Thursdays. The museum is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, but open on holiday Mondays. Admission to the Corcoran is: \$8.00 for adults; \$6.00 for senior citizens and U.S. military personnel; \$4 for students with current ID and \$3 for Member guests. Admission is always free for Members and children under 12. Admission is “pay as you wish” on Thursdays after 5 p.m. For information about the museum, call (202) 639-1700 or visit www.corcoran.org. For information about the college, call (202) 639-1800 or visit www.corcoran.edu.

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