



Contact:
Katrina Carl
Director of Communications
805.884.6430
kcarl@sbma.net



Left: Alfredo Ramos Martínez, *Jarrón azul de flores (Old Fashioned Bouquet)*, ca. 1935. Oil on cardboard. SBMA, Gift of P.D. McMillan Land Company. Right: Claude Monet, *Waterloo Bridge*, 1900. Oil on canvas. SBMA, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art presents *Modern Life: A Global Artworld, 1850 – 1950*

A long-term exhibition that features SBMA's renowned permanent collection

December 10, 2024 — The Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) is excited to announce *Modern Life: A Global Artworld, 1850 – 1950*, a long-term exhibition of the Museum's renowned permanent collection. Combining artists from Europe, South America, and North America, it illustrates the parallels between modern art and modern life, and how art broke through national, geographic, and linguistic barriers. Over 80 paintings, sculptures, photographs, and prints from the collection and selected loans reflect global shifts in science, technology, politics, and popular culture.

Modern life emerged in the mid-19th century when undersea telegraph cables, railroads, steamships, and colonialism encircled the globe. This exhibition considers how artists in SBMA's collection confronted, avoided, celebrated, and criticized the transformations of the tumultuous century between 1850 and 1950. To make sense of these swirling currents of change, the exhibition has sections, including "Abstraction," "Global Surrealism," "Art, Science, Technology," and "Landscape." *Modern Life* also contains rotating selections from the Museum's more than 8,000 photographs and 2,800 caricatural prints. An illustrated timeline wall highlights SBMA's 80-year history. As such, this exhibition is a window into the Museum's past, a snapshot of its broad collection, and a history of the world we live in today with its linked global economies and instantaneous communication.

One of the prime drivers of the changes in modern life was the advancement in science and manufacturing. The section on Art, Science, & Technology considers artworks that display the advances in science and manufacturing behind what historians call the Second Industrial Revolution. Some artists

dealt with the expansion of massive cities: American painter George Bellows pictures a snow-filled New York with a streetcar, crowded sidewalks, and a rearing horse, while Berthe Morisot's expansive view of Paris shows an area of the city that was emblematic of the modernized metropolis and the site of two Universal Expositions. Three paintings transform industry into something sublime: two Claude Monet paintings of the Thames River in London show the luminous, foggy atmosphere that was the product of burning coal, while a John Decker shows the canals of Venice Beach at night bursting with electric lights and oil derricks during a short-lived oil boom. Paul-Joseph-Victor Dargaud shows us the Statue of Liberty under construction at a Paris workshop; this symbol of the United States was made in France and the product of French metal fabrication technology.



Left: Joaquín Torres-García, *Composition*, 1932. Oil on canvas. SBMA, Museum purchase with funds provided by the 20th c. Art Acquisition and Endowment Funds, the Grace Jones Richardson Trust, Jon B. and Lillian Lovelace, and Les and Zora Charles. Center: Henri Matisse, *Pont Saint-Michel*, ca. 1901. Oil on canvas. SBMA, Bequest of Wright S. Ludington. Right: Kay Sage, *Second Song*, 1943. Oil on canvas. SBMA, Gift of Estate of Kay Sage Tanguy.

The Abstraction section displays a range of artists and explores how the Santa Barbara Museum of Art's collection can tell an international story. An early Henri Matisse depicts a view of the Seine in Paris turned into a set of brilliantly colored interlocked shapes, and two other works by Wassily Kandinsky and Josef Albers represent the Bauhaus, the famed German art school shut down by the Nazis in 1933. Albers later moved to the United States, as did Oskar Fischinger who came to Los Angeles. This crisscrossing of the Atlantic is also seen in the life and work of Joaquín Torres-García, who was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, moved to Europe for decades, and returned to South America in 1934.

The section on Global Surrealism shows just how far the Paris-originated movement spread, including to the Americas, and how its fascination with disquieting and fantastic subject matter stretches across the 20th century. A Salvador Dalí nude floating on clouds dates from his first months in the United States after fleeing from the war in Europe; a ghostly angelic form by the American surrealist Kay Sage, who also left Europe ahead of the Nazi invasion of France. These are joined by *The Casting of the Spell* by Wifredo Lam, who evacuated France in 1941 because of the Nazi invasion, and returned to his native Cuba, where his paintings began to explore Afro-Cuban history and identity. A work by Dorr Bothwell, a California surrealist, is shown next to a work by Serbian surrealist Milena Pavlović-Barili. Because many Surrealists fled Paris for Mexico, they had a profound effect on artists there, including Rufino Tamayo and even the always political David Alfaro Siqueiros, who is represented by a mysterious landscape seemingly filled with clouds and smoke.

There are additional sections on Tourism, Auguste Rodin and Figurative Sculpture, Landscape, Flowers, and Mid-20th Century Abstraction. In these sections, too, there is a mix of artists from different countries who themselves crossed borders and innovated. A cluster of flower and still life paintings

includes Dutch abstract painter Piet Mondrian, which is next to the Americans Florine Stettheimer and Marsden Hartley. They are joined by two florals by Alfredo Ramos Martínez, a Mexican artist, and the French couple Victoria and Henri Fantin-Latour, each represented by a bouquet. Other artists on view in other sections include Mary Cassatt and John Singer Sargent, two American expatriates who lived in Europe. There are the French impressionists Alfred Sisley and Camille Pissarro, as well as Léonard Tsuguharu Foujita, an artist born in Japan who lived in France for years. The post-war section is anchored by a stone sculpture by Isamu Noguchi, a Japanese American artist who was born and lived in California. It is joined by works by Carlos Cruz-Diez, and two California hard-edge painters, John McLaughlin and Frederick Hammersley. A selection of Rodin's bronze and marble sculptures are seen alongside those of Richmond Barthé, Rosa Bonheur, and Aristide Maillol.

The art world is global now, and, as this exhibition shows, it has been since the 19th century. Artists have been travelers who crossed borders, absorbed new styles, and forged their own paths. Where artists begin their careers matters, as does where they travel, who they meet, exhibit with, and collaborate with. All of this informs the art that they make. This exhibition seeks to show the diversity of approaches to art making. It is also a chance for people to be surprised by the breadth of the Museum's collection, which has steadily grown thanks to the community's generosity since it first opened over 80 years ago.

Modern Life is presented in both English and Spanish, part of the Museum's ongoing commitment to prioritizing dual-language education. In addition, SBMA welcomes Tri-County residents (Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo) for Free 2nd Sunday with free admission and programming every second Sunday of the month.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is one of the finest museums on the West coast and is celebrated for the superb quality of its permanent collection. Its mission is to integrate art into the lives of people through internationally recognized exhibitions and special programs, as well as the thoughtful presentation of its permanent collection.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA

Open Tuesday – Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, 1st Thursdays 5 – 8 pm

805.963.4364 www.sbma.net

Connect: [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [X](#) | [TikTok](#) | [YouTube](#)