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North Carolina Museum of Art Acquires Mary Cassatt Painting

Painting is first work by Cassatt in Museum's permanent collection

Raleigh, N.C.—The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) has acquired a painting by American artist Mary Cassatt titled *Portrait of Madame X Dressed for the Matinée*. The work, which shows a young woman fashionably dressed for an afternoon at the theater, is the first by Cassatt to enter the Museum's permanent collection. It will go on view in the Museum's Impressionist Gallery in late January 2014.



Previously, *Portrait of Madame X Dressed for the Matinée* was owned by R. Philip and Charlotte Hanes of Winston-Salem, N.C. The painting was gifted to the NCMA by anonymous donors and Charlotte Hanes in memory of her husband. Since its creation in 1877–78, the painting has been exhibited both nationally and internationally, including galleries and museums in Paris, Zürich, New York, Tokyo, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, and most recently, at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, N.C.

"We are very excited and fortunate to acquire this beautiful portrait by Mary Cassatt—the Museum's first major work by an American female artist before Georgia O'Keeffe," says John Coffey, the Museum's deputy director for art and curator of American and modern art. "That *Madame X* addresses the evolving role of women in modern society is equally important. In my opinion, it is not only the Museum's most important 19th-century painting by a female artist—it is our finest 19th-century portrait."

According to Coffey, *Portrait of Madame X Dressed for the Matinée* was painted during a pivotal point in Cassatt's career. In 1877, after her work was rejected by the official Paris Salon, Cassatt accepted an invitation from her friend Edgar Degas to exhibit with a group of artists known as impressionists. She was the first American, and one of only two women, to be invited into this circle. Cassatt's transition to a fully impressionist style is evident in the Museum's portrait. For example, though the sitter is conventionally posed, Cassatt painted her with the energy and vivacity of the new impressionist technique. Further, Cassatt gave careful, precise attention to the face but defined the dress and opulent cushions with cursory swirls of paint.

"Painted by an American in Paris, *Portrait of Madame X Dressed for the Matinée* testifies to the transatlantic dialogue that greatly enriched American art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries," explains Coffey.

Photo caption:

Mary Cassatt, *Portrait of Madame X Dressed for the Matinée*, 1877–78, oil on canvas, Gift of Charlotte Hanes in memory of her husband, R. Philip Hanes Jr., and gift of anonymous donors

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

(continued)

North Carolina Museum of Art Acquires Mary Cassatt Painting
Page 2

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Pat McCrory, governor, and an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources, Susan Kluttz, secretary.