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Left image: Vincent van Gogh, *Lilacs* 1887. Oil on canvas. Michael Armand Hammer and the Armand Hammer Foundation.
Right image: Edvard Munch, *The Kiss (On the Shore)*, 1921. Oil on canvas. Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston.

Loans of a Lifetime

Van Gogh to Munch Features Works from Important American Collections

On View June 4 – August 28, 2011

April 26, 2011 – The Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) is pleased to present a selection of important paintings that have been generously lent by two Foundations: the Armand Hammer Foundation and the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation. The mandate of both of these organizations is to share the works bequeathed to them by their founders with the public by lending to museums throughout the country. ***Van Gogh to Munch European Masterworks from the Armand Hammer Foundation and Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation*** presents nearly 30 works, combining 12 paintings from SBMA's permanent collection with 17 extraordinary loans from two of the most important American collections of Impressionist and Modern art in the last century. Upon conclusion of this special summer exhibition in McCormick gallery, the loans from the two Foundations will be reintegrated into the Museum's permanent collection installation in Preston Morton and Ridley-Tree galleries, where they will be on view for the next two years.

Armand Hammer Foundation

The paintings on view from the Armand Hammer Foundation represent just a small fraction of the ravishing collection put together by ***Dr. Armand Hammer*** (1898-1990), an American business tycoon most closely associated with Occidental Petroleum, a company he ran for decades; but also well-known for the extraordinary works of art he gifted to his namesake, the Hammer Museum at the University of California, Los Angeles from 1965 through 1990. His interest in art originated during his travels to the former Soviet Union in the early 1920s, where he had initially hoped to practice medicine, but realized the greatest need of the people was a reliable source of food – which turned into one of his first business ventures. Hammer began collecting art as he decorated his home in Moscow, and brought many of the works back when he returned to the United States in 1929. These pieces were the foundation for the Hammer Galleries in New York, which continues to operate today.



Left image: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Coastline at Antibes* 1888. Oil on canvas. Michael Armand Hammer and the Hammer Foundation.

Right image: Claude Monet, *Villas in Bordighera* 1884. Oil on canvas. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick.

The works on loan in this exhibition complement beautifully many of the most beloved works of art in SBMA's collection of 19th-century French art and have been installed so as to demonstrate this easy dialogue. Works by Corot, Chagall, Degas, Fantin-Latour, Morisot, and Renoir from the Hammer Foundation are presented side-by-side with canvases by the same or related masters from the Museum's own collection or from area private collections. For example, the exquisite van Gogh from the Hammer Foundation dates from just one year after the landscape on deposit here from a private collection of the outskirts of Paris; and yet there is a dramatic transformation of the artist's palette from the earthy tones of the landscape to the bursts of pigment swagged on with a loaded brush in the floral still life. Alongside the Museum's *Villas in Bordighera* (1884) by Monet, the Hammer Foundation's Renoir landscape instances these two artists' shared passion for the Mediterranean landscape in the 1880s.

Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation

Native Texan ***Sarah Campbell Blaffer*** (1885-1975) was an art patron and philanthropist, and daughter of William Thomas, one of the founders of the Texas Company (later Texaco). Her devotion to the visual arts began during a visit to the Louvre on her wedding trip to Europe in 1909 after her marriage to Robert E. Lee Blaffer, one of the founders of Humble Oil and Refining. An early benefactor of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFA), Blaffer formed her Foundation in 1964 with the primary goal to bring the visual arts to people throughout the state of Texas.

The Foundation's collection, much of which is still on semi-permanent display at MFA, comprises mostly old master paintings dating from the Renaissance through the 18th century. The handful of early 20th-century, northern modernist paintings are frequently lent since the rest of the Blaffer collection offers little context for them. Fortunately for SBMA, these paintings were available for extended loan, offering a rare means of counterbalancing the Museum's recognized strength in the area of French 19th- and early 20th-century European paintings.



Edvard Munch, *Kneeling Female Nude Crying* 1919. Oil on canvas. Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston.

The large canvases by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944), in particular, are powerful embodiments of Western sensibilities at the turn of the last century, when cutting-edge art strove to represent the angst-ridden experience of the modern individual, alienated from society and suffering from the neuroses that Sigmund Freud would so eloquently describe in his *Civilization and its Discontents* (published in 1930).



Left image: Lyonel Feininger, *Zirchow I*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston.



Right image: Max Pechstein, *Die Alte Brücke (The Old Bridge)*, ca. 1910-11. Oil on canvas. Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Gift of the Joseph B. and Ann S. Koepfli Trust.

The paintings by Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956) and Max Beckmann (1884-1950) exemplify the German adaptation between the World Wars of French avant-garde technique, meshing van Gogh's expressive facture with the Fauves' willful rejection of a conventional palette in favor of strident, anti-naturalistic hues characteristic of the movement generically termed German Expressionism. American artist Feininger and his work *Zirchow I* (1912) makes for an intriguing, but perhaps less obvious, comparison with SBMA's painting by German painter Max Pechstein, *Die Alte Brücke (The Old Bridge)* (1910-11). *Zirchow I* is part of a series of increasingly abstract landscapes, centering on the architectural motif of a church. The sharply delineated shards of color reflect the artist's debt to Cubism. By contrast, Pechstein's landscape, which was probably done just after his visit to Paris where he encountered the strident hues of Matisse and the Fauves, is more blatantly anti-naturalistic in palette. Despite these differences, the works were completed only a year apart when both artists were members of the Dresden-based alternative art movement group, Die Brücke (in English, 'the Bridge'), whose name alludes to the artists' aspiration to create a new pictorial language that would pave the way to the future. In addition, both painters were directly affected by the Nazi Party's coming to power in 1933. Pechstein was vilified by the Nazis and 326 of his paintings were removed from German museums. Feininger and his wife, who was partly Jewish, were forced to leave Germany and flee to the United States. Both artists' works were shown in the *Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art)* exhibitions – Feininger's in 1936, and Pechstein's in 1937 in Munich.

"It is such a treat for our audiences to be able to enjoy these great works of art, which in one fell swoop, fill in several glaring lacunae in our permanent collection. We are extremely grateful to both Foundations, and in particular, to Michael Armand Hammer for his willingness to share these stunning paintings," commented SBMA Chief Curator, Eik Kahng.

This exhibition is made possible through the generosity of Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

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