



Media only: Laura Baptiste (202) 633-8494
Media website: americanart.si.edu/pr
Media preview: Thursday, March 10; 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Feb. 10, 2011

Fact Sheet “To Make a World: George Ault and 1940s America”

Exhibition

“To Make a World: George Ault and 1940s America”
March 11 – Sept. 5, 2011

Location

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Eighth and F streets N.W.

Description

During the turbulent 1940s, artist George Ault (1891-1948) created precise yet eerie pictures—works of art that have come to be seen, following his death, as some of the most original paintings made in America in those years. The beautiful geometries of Ault’s paintings make personal worlds of clarity and composure to offset a real world he felt was in crisis. “To Make a World” captures a 1940s America that was rendered fragile by the Great Depression and made anxious by a global conflict. Although much has been written about the glorious triumph of World War II, what has dimmed over time are memories of the anxious tenor of life on the home front, when the country was far from the battlefields and yet profoundly at risk.

“To Make a World” is the first major exhibition of Ault’s work in more than 20 years and includes 47 paintings and drawings by Ault and his contemporaries. It centers on five paintings Ault made between 1943 and 1948 depicting the crossroads of Russell’s Corners in Woodstock, N.Y. The additional 22 artists represented in this exhibition include some as celebrated as Edward Hopper and Andrew Wyeth, while others such as Edward Biberman and Dede Plummer are scarcely known to today’s art audiences. Taken together, their artworks reveal an aesthetic vein running through 1940s American art that previously has not been identified. Alexander Nemerov, the Vincent Scully Professor of the History of Art at Yale University, is the curator.

Book

The accompanying book, co-published by the museum and Yale University Press, is written by Nemerov. It will be available for purchase (\$45) at bookstores nationwide and through the museum’s website and store.

Tour

The exhibition will travel to The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Mo. (Oct. 15, 2011-Jan. 8, 2012) and the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia in Athens (Feb. 18-April 16, 2012).

Credit

“To Make a World: George Ault and 1940s America” is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum with generous support from Dolores and John W. Beck, Joan and E. Bertram Berkley, Diane and Norman Bernstein Foundation, Janet and Jim Dicke, Sheila Duignan and Mike Wilkins, Barney A. Ebsworth, Tania and Tom Evans, Kara and Wayne Fingerman, Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason Foundation, Joffa and Bill Kerr, Robert S. and Grayce B. Kerr Foundation, John and Gail Liebes Trust, Paula and Peter Lunder, Betty and Whitney MacMillan, Margery and Edgar Masinter, Oriana McKinnon, Susan Reed Moseley, and Betty and Lloyd Schermer. Additional funding is provided through the museum’s William R. Kenan Jr. Endowment Fund and Gene Davis Memorial Fund. The C.F. Foundation in Atlanta supports the museum’s traveling exhibition program, “Treasures to Go.”

The Smithsonian American Art Museum, located above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station, is open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Website: americanart.si.edu.

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