

Thursday 3 December 2009

MASTERPIECES FROM PARIS

Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne & beyond

POST-IMPRESSIONISM FROM THE MUSÉE D'ORSAY

National Gallery of Australia opens exhibition of the world's finest collection of Post-Impressionist art ... in Australia for the first time

**4 December 2009 – 5 April 2010
CANBERRA ONLY**

One of the most extraordinary international art events ever held in Australia opens tomorrow at the National Gallery of Australia, with the world premiere of *Masterpieces from Paris: Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne and beyond—Post-Impressionism from the Musée d'Orsay*.

This exceptional exhibition brings together 112 of the best known works of modern art from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Included are iconic works such as Vincent van Gogh's beautiful *Starry night* 1888 and *Van Gogh's bedroom at Arles* 1889, Paul Gauguin's *Tahitian women* 1891, Paul Cézanne's beloved *Mount Saint-Victoire* c 1890 as well as many works by Georges Seurat, Pierre Bonnard, Claude Monet, Maurice Denis, Edouard Vuillard and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec among others.

"*Masterpieces from Paris* is the most important exhibition ever shown at the National Gallery of Australia. There are only a handful of Post-Impressionist works in this country, and this is the first time this remarkable collection of masterpieces has left France together. This truly is a unique opportunity for Australians to see these renowned works of art in their own time and in their own national gallery. I would like to thank the Musée d'Orsay for sharing this remarkable collection with all Australians," said Ron Radford AM, Director of the National Gallery of Australia.

Masterpieces from Paris showcases the works of 33 artists from the revolutionary Post-Impressionist movement, which occurred in France in the second half of the 19th century.

"We are very proud that our Post-Impressionist masterpieces, the crème de la crème of the Musée d'Orsay's collection, can travel from Paris to Canberra, from one national capital to another. We are pleased to have been able to work with the National Gallery of Australia and the Australian government on this extraordinary exhibition. By collaborating and sharing French artistic creativity with the Australian public, we are further building the connections between our two countries," said Guy Cogeval, President of the Musée d'Orsay.

The artists in this exhibition changed the course of modern art. Van Gogh's adventures with the emotion of paint and the drama of colour have made him famous. Gauguin travelled to Brittany, and then to Tahiti, seeking artistic renewal. Seurat devised a 'scientific' approach to painting, while the rebel Cézanne's simplification of forms (he claimed he would 'astonish Paris with an apple') have made him a giant in art – then and now.

“Many of these works are familiar to us; we see them reproduced in school textbooks, doctor’s waiting rooms, cafes and lounge rooms. Yet when you experience the original masterpieces you can see the artists’ choice of brushstroke, the quality of colour and the enduring power of their techniques that are still admired a century later,” said Ron Radford

In addition to these famous paintings, visitors will see some magnificent lesser known works such as Vuillard’s monumental *Public gardens*. Painted for a Parisian apartment, this multi-panelled work rarely leaves the Musée d’Orsay. One of the smallest paintings in the show, *Portrait of Vuillard* by Bonnard, is shaped to fit around the edge of a chimney and probably hung in the studio shared by the two artists.

“For Australians who are not familiar with the phenomenon of Post-Impressionism, it will be a total discovery and a fantastic one. Even for the scholars who know Post-Impressionism, there will be some surprises,” said Guy Cogeval.

In association with the exhibition, from December 2009 until April 2010, the National Gallery will host a series of engaging and entertaining public programs including talks from the exhibition curators, premium VIP gourmet breakfast packages, Masterpiece Masterclasses, high tea events, film screenings and more.

Children and families will also be able to explore the exhibition with the *Let’s go!* children’s trail and special audio guides. Visitors will also enjoy a playful, three-dimensional recreation of Van Gogh’s *bedroom at Arles* in the Family Activity Room, located within the exhibition, hosting a range of children’s activities such as drawing, storytelling and other hands-on activities related to the works of art.

Masterpieces from Paris is one of the most exceptional art events ever to be held in Australia. The exhibition will be on show in Canberra only at the National Gallery of Australia from 4 December 2009 to 5 April 2010.

Thérèse Rein will officially open the exhibition at the National Gallery tonight, Thursday 3 December.

Images: A selection of images from the exhibition can be downloaded via www.nga.gov.au/mediacentre

Exhibition tickets are available to purchase online at: nga.gov.au

Media enquiries:

Kirsten Downie, Head of Marketing and Communications
T: 02 6240 6643 M: 0407 523 948 kirsten.downie@nga.gov.au

Sandra Sweeney, Marketing and Communications Manager
T: 02 6240 6700 M: 0414 379 881 sandra.sweeney@nga.gov.au

Lauren Griffiths, Threesides
M: 0417 409 264 lauren.griffiths@threesides.com.au