

MUSCARELLE MUSEUM OF ART

at The College of William & Mary

For Immediate Release
Images available upon request.

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**SEEING COLORS: SECRETS OF THE IMPRESSIONISTS OPENS AT THE MUSCARELLE MUSEUM OF ART IN
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA THIS OCTOBER**

(WILLIAMSBURG, VA) – Claude Monet’s majestic *Houses of Parliament in the Fog*, debuting for the first time in Virginia, is among the iconic masterpieces included in *Seeing Colors: Secrets of the Impressionists*, opening at The Muscarelle Museum of Art on October 22, 2011.

The Muscarelle Museum of Art will be the only mid-Atlantic venue for *Seeing Colors: Secrets of The Impressionists*, an exhibition featuring paintings, drawings, and prints on loan from the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. More than forty original works by the leading Impressionists in Europe and the United States, including Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Mary Cassatt, John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, William Merritt Chase, and John Henry Twachtman will be displayed and discussed in terms of the innovative techniques these renowned artists used to revolutionize painting and initiate the modern era in European and American art. *Seeing Colors* will be on view in the upstairs galleries of The Muscarelle Museum of Art until January 22, 2012, with special opening hours during the holidays. Groups are encouraged to reserve their visits early.

Dr. Aaron De Groft, Director of the Muscarelle Museum of Art, stated, “this group of Impressionist paintings from one of the most impressive museums in the country makes *Seeing Colors* the most important exhibition in the history of the Muscarelle—a real distinction since the Muscarelle has organized or hosted exhibitions of drawings by Michelangelo, collections from the Medici, and paintings from the Uffizi. To top it off, our Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence, Professor John T. Spike, and his connoisseurship class at the Muscarelle, are bringing a fresh approach to interpreting the secrets and techniques of the Impressionists. People will be surprised when they see this exhibition.”

Paintings created outdoors with loose, staccato brushwork and light-filled colors hardly seems revolutionary in the twenty-first century. But in the 1870s, they were not only radical but ridiculed for their lack of ‘finish.’ *Seeing Colors* explores the techniques -- some visible, some not --that gave Impressionist paintings the look and feel of the modern world, marking a decisive break with the art of the past. For example, new research into the optics and science of color enabled the Impressionists to achieve brighter tonalities in their canvases. Monet’s landscape of “Autumn on The Seine River, Argenteuil,” another canvas featured in the show, presents the strongly contrasting primary colors of yellow and blue. “Color owes its brightness to force of contrast rather than to its inherent qualities ...primary colors brightest when they are brought into contrast with their complementaries,” declared Monet.

Unlike previous painters, the Impressionists chose their subjects to take advantage of these striking effects. Their observations were developed by other modern painters, including their great contemporary Edgar Degas,

and younger artists like Édouard Vuillard, and Émile Bernard, three artists also represented by fine examples in the show. In Émile Bernard's *Still-Life with Orange*, the artist plays the orange against a sea of blues, creating a vibrating, optical experience not previously seen on canvas.

Seeing Colors: Secrets of the Impressionists illustrates other techniques that distinguish the Impressionists and traces the diffusion of the Impressionists' discoveries. The show begins with paintings by pre-Impressionist artists, such as Eugène Boudin, to mark the initial transition from the traditional, academic paintings of the Paris Salon to the loose brushwork and airy landscapes that define the Impressionist movement. The central gallery of the installation is dedicated to paintings by Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, and Frédéric Bazille, the founders of Impressionism in France. The exhibition culminates in a special gallery of American Impressionists and modernists from Theodore Robinson and Julian Alden Weir to Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, Frederick Carl Frieseke.

Artists living abroad, such as John Singer Sargent and Mary Cassatt, were among the first American painters to embrace Impressionist techniques. John Singer Sargent's *Portrait of Ralph Curtis on the Beach at Scheveningen* offers a prime example of the technique *en plein air*, meaning 'in the open air' or painted on site rather than in the studio. In the Sargent portrait, actual grains of sand are trapped within the dried paint on the canvas, visible both to the eye and beneath the surface of the canvas in x-rays. Many other discoveries of the secrets of Impressionism await visitors to *Seeing Colors*. Don't miss this rare opportunity to experience the secrets of Impressionism.

The Muscarelle Museum of Art is located on Jamestown Road on the campus of The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Museum is open from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 12:00 noon until 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The Museum is closed on Mondays. Docent tours are available at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sundays, and other times as announced. Admission to the Museum for this exhibition is \$15.00. Admission is free for Museum members, The College of William & Mary faculty, staff, and students, and children under twelve. For more information about this exhibit or the Museum in general, please call 757-221-2700 or visit www.wm.edu/muscarelle.

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High's media arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005 the High opened three new buildings designed by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum's size, creating a vibrant "village for the arts" at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta. *For more information about the High, please visit www.high.org.*