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Grand Rapids Art Museum presents *Dutch Utopia: American Artists in Holland, 1880-1914*

Exhibition explores little-studied period in American art history

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., May 7, 2010 – The Grand Rapids Art Museum presents the internationally-touring exhibition *Dutch Utopia: American Arts in Holland, 1880-1914* from May 21 to August 15, 2010. *Dutch Utopia* is the first major exhibition to explore the little-known phenomenon of American artists settling or working in Holland around the turn of the twentieth century, and to consider the cultural significance of their artwork. These artists created visions of Dutch society that celebrated a pre-industrial lifestyle and, in some cases, alluded to America's own colonial Dutch heritage.

Dutch Utopia features over seventy paintings and works on paper drawn from public and private collections throughout the United States and Europe. It includes works by distinguished artists such as Robert Henri, William Merritt Chase, John Twachtman, and John Singer Sargent, along with those of painters admired in their own time but less well-known today—including George Hitchcock, Gari Melchers, George Boughton, Elizabeth Nourse, Anna Stanley, and Walter MacEwen.

The exhibition focuses on a number of American painters who, disillusioned with the rapid modernization of U.S. cities and towns, established art communities in six small, pre-industrial societies in the Netherlands between 1880 and the beginning of World War I. During this time, hundreds of American artists traveled to Holland to sketch in the bucolic landscape or study the art of the Dutch Old Masters.

Several even relocated on a permanent or semi-permanent basis to largely rural art communities in Laren, Katwijk, Volendam, Egmond, Rijsoord, and Dordrecht. During a time of increasing industrialization, these artists produced paintings that romanticized the traditional lifestyles of Dutch villagers, while idealizing their self-sufficiency and strong connection to the land.

Dutch Utopia examines the work produced by these American artists within the context of six major themes: the influence of Dutch Golden Age painting; the impact of the contemporary Hague School; anti-modernism and the American Progressive Movement; points of convergence in national identities; the proliferation of artist colonies; and Holland as a tourist destination. Featuring a variety of subject matter, works in the exhibition range from intimate domestic interiors and charming vignettes of daily life to picturesque rural landscapes and impressive Dutch genre paintings.

Dutch Utopia: American Artists in Holland, 1880-1914 is organized by the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia, in association with the Singer Laren Museum, the Netherlands. A fully-illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition, serving as a lasting scholarly resource on this significant yet often overlooked period in American art history.

The *Dutch Utopia* exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Henry Luce Foundation, with major additional support provided by the Telfair Academy Guild. Further support for the exhibition has been provided by the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Local support made possible by J.C. Huizenga, Jim and Donna Brooks, Gay Cummings, VanderLaan Family Foundation, and additional sponsors.

Images available on request.

May 23: Film and Lecture

Mathias J. Alten: A Personal Portrait (2007, 20 min.); “Side By Side: Mathias Alten and Norman Chamberlain” by Stephen Hoffius

May 30: Gallery Talk

“Dutch Utopia: American Artists in Holland, 1880-1914”
Cindy Buckner, Associate Curator

June 13: Lecture

“The Lure of the Netherlands: Why Some American Artists Preferred to Go Dutch”
Henry Luttikhuisen, Professor of Art and Art History, Calvin College

About the Grand Rapids Art Museum

The Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) celebrates 100 years of art, legacy and vision with its Centennial Year in 2010. The mission of the Grand Rapids Art Museum is to provide a gathering place where people of all ages and backgrounds can enrich their lives through interaction with works of art in a thought-provoking and creative way. Established in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, the new art museum is internationally known for its distinguished design and LEED Gold certified status. Established in 1910 as the Grand Rapids Art Association, GRAM has grown to include more than 5,000 works of art, including American and European 19th and 20th century painting and sculpture and over 3,000 works on paper. Embracing the city’s legacy as a leading center of design and manufacturing, GRAM has a growing collection in the area of design and modern craft.

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