

Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery
Homage to Manet
31 January to 19 April 2015
Exhibition reveals an interesting East Anglian connection
and
includes rarely seen paintings from
Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery's own collection.

The major loan exhibition *Homage to Manet* at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, explores the legacy of one of the most important and controversial artists of modern times, the French artist Edouard Manet (1832-1883) and in doing so reveals a surprisingly strong East Anglian connection.



Edouard Manet (1832-1883), *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus*, 1868, oil on canvas
© Ashmolean Museum,
University of Oxford

Manet's compelling and enigmatic *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus* is one of the stars of the show. Recently acquired for the nation by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, and other foundations and individuals, it introduces the central theme of the exhibition – how Manet influenced the way future generations of artists depicted women.

Alongside Manet, one of the key artists featured in this important exhibition is Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), who in later life settled at Walberswick in Suffolk. Walberswick had become a hotspot for artists during the 1880s and a number of artists chose to live there. Steer was a founder member of the New English Art Club and is widely regarded as one of the English Impressionists who was heavily influenced by Edouard Manet.

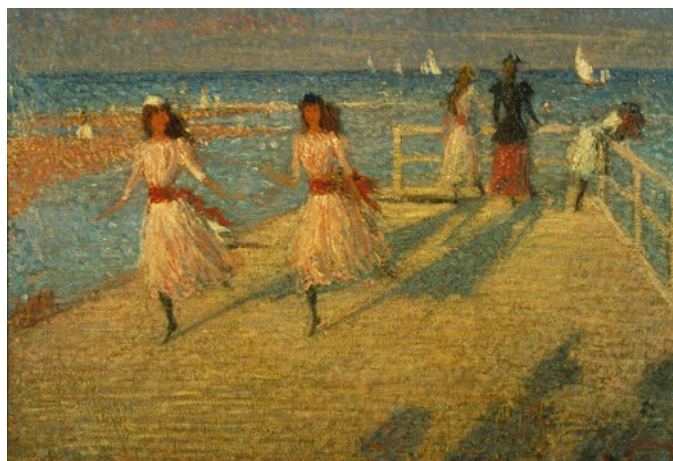
Steer's painting, *The Blue Dress* (1892), depicts the professional model Rose Pettigrew, who gazes directly out of the canvas lost in her own thoughts, in a manner not dissimilar to Fanny Claus as painted by Manet in 1868.

Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery's Exhibition Officer and Project Curator, Heather Guthrie explains: "While Manet's legacy is undisputed it has rarely been the subject of an exhibition. By putting his *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus* within the context of

selected works by Claude Monet (1840-1926), John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), and Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *Homage to Manet* makes a connection between Manet, French Impressionism and its later flowering in Britain. This is most notably celebrated through the work of Philip Wilson Steer and his associations with East Anglia”.

Steer's *The Blue Dress*, on loan from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge is therefore an obvious homage to Manet. Like Manet, Steer focuses on women engaging with their own private lives and preoccupations, on their own terms, and not just as objects of someone else's gaze.

Likewise Steer's atmospheric oil painting *Girls Running*, Walberswick Pier, 1888–1894 on loan from Tate, London, captures the essence of Impressionism on the Suffolk coast. Considered too radical to exhibit, Steer reworked this canvas in the 1890s; the innocent girls no longer hold hands. Contemporary British critics rated Steer's talent alongside that of Manet and Monet. One commented, 'Mr Steer has not, or has not yet, the science in singing of a Manet, but at least he has a voice'.



Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *Girls Running*, Walberswick Pier, 1888-1894, oil on canvas
© Tate, London 2014

Another work by Steer makes its first public debut in *Homage to Manet*. Painted around 1900 it depicts *Two Girls Resting on the Grass* and has recently been acquired by Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery as part of a number of works bequeathed by Donald Parker through the Art Fund. It was previously in a private collection. As an image of female repose it resonates with similar subjects by Manet from 1862, and later by Monet and Renoir.

Also of local interest is John Singer Sargent's (1856-1925) charcoal portrait study of the striking Sybil Sassoon, whom he had known when she was growing up in Paris. The following year in 1913, Sybil married George Cholmondeley. As the new Countess of Rocksavage, she received Houghton Hall, Norfolk, as a wedding gift. This deftly produced likeness preceded an oil painting also by Sargent made in celebration of Sybil's marriage. It is reminiscent of the stunningly direct pastel drawings Manet produced towards the end of his career.

In addition the exhibition includes Norfolk artist Alfred Munnings' (1878-1959) iconic depiction of the artist *Laura Knight painting a portrait of a horse*. Having trained in Paris, Munnings advocated the Impressionist style of painting. Here Munnings depicts Laura Knight in Edwardian dress, painting in front of her subject *en plein air*, in full sunlight.

The exhibition *Homage to Manet* also features several rarely seen works from Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery's own collection include, a charming work by Gwen John (1876-1939) of *Girl in a Blue Dress holding a Piece of Sewing*, dated c.1914-15 and Sir George Clausen's (1853-1944) *Children and Roses* 1899. Gwen John was one of the few female artists to exhibit at the New English Art Club, while Clausen is credited with enabling Impressionism to gain a wider audience in Britain.



George Clausen, *Children and Roses*, 1899, oil on canvas © Norfolk Museums Service (Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery)

Focusing on the period from 1860 until approximately 1914, *Homage to Manet* comprises approximately 60 works including oils, pastels, prints and drawings on loan from national collections, such as Tate, the British Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery, as well as regional and private collections. Displayed thematically they illustrate the various elements of Manet's extraordinary legacy and examine the different treatments of women in art, at a time when their position in society was changing rapidly.

Homage to Manet is an intelligent, thought-provoking, as well as visually stunning exhibition. It succinctly summarises Manet's legacy and reputation as one of the most important artists of modern times. Created by and for Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, this is a one-off exhibition and there will never be another opportunity to see this particular grouping of important paintings, drawings and prints.

Paul Smyth, Communities Committee Chair at Norfolk County Council, said: "*This outstanding exhibition gives the people of Norfolk a fantastic opportunity to see a unique collection of works by Manet and other significant artists. It is a great coup for the Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery and it will doubtless attract many visitors to the county. Well done to all those whose efforts have made the Homage to Manet exhibition possible.*"

NOTES TO EDITORS:

This exhibition has been created and curated by Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery. It will not be travelling.

Homage to Manet

Saturday 31 January to Sunday 19 April 2015

Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery
Castle Hill
Norwich NR1 3JU
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Please see separate fact sheet for admission details and information regarding the full programme of events which accompanies the exhibition.

For more information and images please contact:
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***Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus, 1868**, was acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford in 2012 following an eight-month campaign to save the painting for the nation. It was purchased with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, other foundations and individuals.

After Manet's death in 1883 the *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus* was bought by John Singer Sargent, the painting remained in the family until 2012. The issue of legacy is an increasingly popular and fascinating way to explore the work of the world's great artists. The fact that this painting was part of Sargent's own collection is significant and forms a neat connection in *Homage to Manet*. Brought to Britain in the 1880s this painting, whose future has been secured for generations to come, continues to occupy a rare place in our cultural heritage.

**** Manet's Olympia** was secured through public subscription and offered to the French nation in 1890 and today hangs in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

The Principal Exhibition Sponsor for *Homage to Manet* is Birketts Solicitors. Jonathan Agar, Chief Executive said: "As passionate supporters of the Norfolk community, Birketts is proud to support Norwich Castle and the East Anglia Art Fund. With our roots in East Anglia stretching back to Edouard Manet's lifetime we are delighted to sponsor the *Homage to Manet* exhibition."

Homage to Manet is also supported by the East Anglia Art Fund and the Eastern Daily Press.

Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery is part of the countywide multi-award-winning Norfolk Museums Service (NMS), comprising ten museums and a study centre. It is one of only twenty-one Major Partner Museums in England receiving substantial revenue investment from Arts Council England. Norfolk Museums Service is a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's District Councils, funded through council tax, earned income and grants.

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art, helping museums to buy and show great art. Over the past 5 years we've given over £26m to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections, from ancient sculpture and treasure hoards to Old Master paintings and contemporary commissions. We are highly experienced in working with collectors to help place gifts of art in suitable museums and galleries and, through our agreement with the recipient museum, we ensure that the gift is available of the public to enjoy for many years to come. We also help museums share their collections with wider audiences through supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including the national tour of the Artist Rooms collection and the 2014 tour of Jeremy Deller's *English Magic*, the British Council commission for the 2013 Venice Biennale. Our support for museums extends to the Art Guide app – the comprehensive guide to seeing art across the UK, promoting a network of over 650 museums and galleries throughout the country, and the £100,000 Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year – an annual celebration of the best of UK museums, won in 2014 by Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield. We are independently funded, the majority of our income coming from over 108,000 members who, through the National Art Pass, enjoy free entry to over 220 museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

Find out more about the Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org. Please contact Madeline Adeane, the Press Relations Manager, on 020 7225 4804 or madeane@artfund.org

For more information and images relating to *Homage to Manet* please contact:
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