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FROM THE STREETS OF PARIS TO THE CANYONS OF THE SOUTHWEST... EXPLORE THE WORK OF FAMED TAOS ARTIST ERNEST L. BLUMENSCHEIN

Phoenix Art Museum Hosts Major Retrospective of Blumenschein's Colorful and Inventive Work

March 15 through June 14, 2009

PHOENIX (December 1, 2008) – Phoenix Art Museum celebrates the career of one of the most successful American artists of the early 20th century with the opening of *In Contemporary Rhythm: The Art of Ernest L. Blumenschein.* A founder of the famed Taos Society of Artists, Blumenschein rocketed into the spotlight with his modernist approach to capturing the American West. This major retrospective, on view March 15 through June 14, 2009, covers every aspect of the artist's career and is the first Blumenschein exhibition in 30 years and the first in Arizona.

"In Contemporary Rhythm is the most comprehensive exhibition to ever assemble, study and celebrate Blumenschein's remarkable work," commented Jerry Smith, associate curator of American Art, Phoenix Art Museum. "It features masterworks by the artist that reveal his daring aesthetic, his proto-modernist style, his social sensitivities and his influence on regional as well as national trends in art."

The exhibition follows Blumenschein's life, tracking the artistic, social and political dimensions of his art. It features his major landscape and figural paintings of the Southwest, for which he is best known today, as well as early works from the beginning of his career when he worked in France and as a professional illustrator. As Blumenschein developed as an artist, he also formed a stance on social issues that included pictorial testimonials of the cultural identity of the native people of Taos and respect for their lands.

Blumenschein landed in Taos, New Mexico, as the result of a fortunate accident. He was traveling with fellow artist Bert G. Phillips on a sketching trip from Denver to northern Mexico when a wheel of their carriage broke, leaving them stranded in Taos Valley. The delay gave the artists time to take in the spectacular countryside and interesting cultures of the area. They decided to stay and work in the area, later founding the Taos Society of Artists to promote the splendor of Taos and the art of the American West to larger audiences.

Academically trained in New York and Paris, Blumenschein painted in a style that combined traditional and realistic means of expression with subtle undercurrents of modernism, particularly in his bold use of color and the manner in which he constructed his compositions. In addition to founding the Taos Society of Artists (1915-27), Blumenschein's interests in modernism also led him to establish the New Mexico Painters (1923-27), one of the region's earliest groups of modernist painters. At the height of his career, he was one of the few artists to have paintings purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In Contemporary Rhythm Phoenix – add one

"Blumenschein's work has been treasured by collectors and museums since the early 20th century," commented Smith. "In Contemporary Rhythm exemplifies why curators and critics alike have heralded Blumenschein as the most distinctive of the Taos artists."

Exhibition Details

This exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum, in collaboration with the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, and the Denver Art Museum.

This exhibition is presented at Phoenix Art Museum in the Steele Gallery, March 15 through June 19, 2009.

A substantial catalog tracing the artist's career, artistic achievements and role within modernism will accompanies the exhibition and is available in the Museum Store. The catalog, written by Peter H. Hassrick and Elizabeth J. Cunningham, includes a foreword by Phoenix Art Museum director James K. Ballinger and a contributing essay by Associate Curator of American Art, Jerry N. Smith.

Admission to the exhibition is included in general museum admission, which is \$10 for adults, \$8 for senior citizens (65+), \$8 for full-time college students with ID, \$4 for children ages 6-17 and free for children under 6 and for museum members. Admission is also free on Tuesdays from 3:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. and for everyone on First Fridays, 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Phoenix Art Museum is located in downtown Phoenix at the corner of Central and McDowell Road. Museum hours are Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. and Wednesday – Sunday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The museum is closed on Mondays and major holidays.

This exhibition has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts as part of American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius.

Major support for this exhibition is provided by the Albuquerque Museum Foundation, BlueCross BlueShield of Arizona, A. J. Dickey, The Henry Luce Foundation, The Ruddock Family Foundation, Phoenix Art Museum's Western Art Associates, Carol Whiteman, the Virginia G. Piper Exhibition Endowment Fund, and the Don and Arlene Tostenrud Fund for American Art.

Promotional support for this exhibition has been provided by The Arizona Republic, Clear Channel Radio Phoenix, Westcor Shopping Centers, Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Yelp.com and Scottsdale, Glendale, Mesa, Chandler, and Phoenix Public Libraries.

Public Events

Phoenix Art Museum is offering a full schedule of programs and events relating to the exhibition, including:

• Blumenschein: A Painter Between Worlds – Tuesday, March 24, 7pm

Sharyn Udall, art historian and independent curator, challenges viewers of In Contemporary Rhythm to rethink long-held opinions of this major American artist. Co-presented by Western Art Associates.

In Contemporary Rhythm Phoenix – add two

- Double Vision: The Life and Work of Ernest Blumenschein Tuesday, April 7, 7pm

 Two of the country's leading Blumenschein experts examine the artist from different perspectives.

 Elizabeth Cunningham sketches his life and art by examining key landscape, portrait and figurative works. Skip Keith Miller explores the approach the artist took towards raising awareness and advocating the rights of Indian people.
- Blumenschein and Modernism Tuesday, May 19, 7pm
 Jerry Smith, associate curator of American art and an organizer of the exhibition, explores why Blumenschein considered himself a "radical conservative."

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum is the Southwest's premier destination for world-class visual arts. Popular exhibitions featuring artists such as Rembrandt, Norman Rockwell, Annie Leibowitz and Monet are shown along side the Museum's outstanding collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. A community epicenter for nearly fifty years, Phoenix Art Museum presents festivals, live performances, independent art films and educational programs that enlighten, entertain and stimulate. Visitors also enjoy PhxArtKids an interactive space for children, vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, the lushly landscaped Sculpture Garden, dining at Arcadia Farms at Phoenix Art Museum, and shopping at The Museum Store.

To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit <u>PhxArt.org</u>, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.

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