

ADDISON

Addison Gallery of American Art

PRESS RELEASE

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PHILLIPS ACADEMY STUDENTS DECONSTRUCT WINSLOW HOMER'S *EIGHT BELLS* IN NEW ADDISON EXHIBITION

Andover, Massachusetts (May 26, 2015) – The Addison Gallery of American Art, located on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, presents *In Calm Water, On Stormy Seas*, on view from May 30 through July 31, 2015. The Addison's iconic painting *Eight Bells* by Winslow Homer serves as the centerpiece and inspiration for the ideas explored in the exhibition, including how artists have treated the subject of water in different mediums and with different expressive goals. *In Calm Water, On Stormy Seas* was curated by students in the Phillips Academy class *Visual Culture: Discovering the Addison Collection*.

The exhibition examines the unifying theme of water, both as physical experience and as symbol of abstract ideas. Depictions of calm waters convey notions of tranquility and clarity of mind, while images of stormy seas highlight the power of nature and lead the viewer to consider the fragility of human existence and our fear of the unknown. Traditionally, tumultuous waters have been associated with masculine characteristics, while calm waters have connoted a sense of femininity. Viewers are asked to consider whether placid waters are always feminine and stormy seas necessarily masculine.

Gendered depictions of water can include portrayals of human presence or may be purely abstract. Like Homer, artists such as Eadweard Muybridge, Maurice Prendergast, Arno Minkinen, and Sally Mann, rely heavily on the human body—male or female—to make such references. In contrast, modern and post-modern artists like Anthony La Paglia, Arthur Yanoff, and Pat Steir subtly suggest gender-specific qualities through their highly stylized depictions of waves.

The course, co-taught by Art Department instructor Elaine Crivelli and Addison staff Rebecca Hayes, Curator of Education, and Kelley Tialiou, Charles H. Sawyer Curatorial Assistant | Librarian | Archivist, focuses on a different aspect of the collection each year, and this spring students used Homer's work as an entry point into the collection and focal point of their exhibition. Painted in 1886, "*Eight Bells* might have been among the most favored works among generations of students, but it also has resonance today. Through sustained and critical observation of the painting, the students actually discovered several themes highly relevant to today's society," Tialiou noted.

Following a rigorous visual analysis of *Eight Bells*, students worked to develop an exhibition drawing on the themes that emerged from the painting. After conducting research, engaging in debates, and then delving deeper into their research, students ultimately chose works that illuminate and are illuminated by *Eight Bells*. This highly collaborative process has deeply informed their decisions regarding layout, interpretive texts, and collateral educational programming. "The course is a unique experience for students to examine, appreciate, and learn about various works of art from historic to contemporary within the context of a thematic exploration," Crivelli remarked.

Please join the students and Addison staff on Sunday, May 31 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm for the opening celebration, which will feature a gallery talk at 3 pm, as well as water-inspired musical performances and water-based art activities. Light refreshments will be served, and this event is free and open to the public.

The Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, is open to the public from Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on Mondays, national holidays, December 24, and the month of August. Admission to all exhibitions and events is free. The Addison Gallery also offers free education programs for

teachers and groups. For more information, call 978.749.4015 or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org.

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About the Addison Gallery of American Art

Devoted exclusively to American art, the mission of the Addison Gallery of American Art is to acquire, preserve, interpret, and exhibit works of art for the education and enjoyment of all. Opened in 1931, the Addison Gallery has one of the most important collections of American art in the country that includes more than 17,000 works by prominent American artists such as George Bellows, John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Jackson Pollock, as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and many more. The Addison Gallery, located on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs, all of which are free and open to the public. For more information, call 978.749.4015, or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org.