Alfred Maurer: At the Vanguard of Modernism
ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Alfred Maurer: At the Vanguard of Modernism
April 25 - July 31, 2015

A cosmopolitan artist who spent nearly seventeen years in Paris in the first decades of the twentieth century, Alfred Maurer found himself at the nexus of exciting and changing ideas about art. Through his friendship with vanguard collectors, Leo and Gertrude Stein, Maurer gained intimate knowledge of trends in most current French art, becoming one of the first Americans to experience the work of Matisse, as well as Cezanne, Gauguin, and Picasso, among others. He in turn ushered other Americans into the Steins' circle and congregated there with such key art figures as Patrick Henry Bruce, Stanton MacDonald-Wright, and Edward Steichen. Maurer too played an essential role in the support of avant-garde taste as both advisor and agent to the Philadelphia collector Dr. Albert Barnes as he was building his remarkable collection of twentieth-century masterpieces, and as an invaluable contact for other pioneering Americans, including Walt Kuhn, Walter Pach, and Arthur B. Davies, who in 1913 put together the pivotal exhibition commonly known as the Armory Show. Returning from Paris in 1914, just before the war, Maurer joined the most current art sets in New York, sustaining close friendships with individuals who were committed to changing the direction of American painting. In his quest to forge new paths, Maurer himself produced some of the most advanced work by an American in the prewar era.

Maurer is often characterized as a painter of divergent aesthetics; yet careful study of his oeuvre, as evidenced in these galleries, reveals an unwavering attention to thematic ideas as well as formal ones—experimentation with issues of color, form, and abstraction—that can be traced throughout his life work. Maurer's keen eye for design and composition, honed in his early fin-de-siècle figure paintings, informed his dynamic portrayals of contemporary life in Parisian cafés, dance halls, and New York beach scenes in which passages of exuberant paint handling and targeted bursts of bright color presaged the radical Fauvist work that he would adopt by 1906. For the next twenty-five years Maurer married a fully assimilated understanding of Fauvist color with Cézannesque structure and daring brush strokes in a wide range of still-lifes, floral paintings, landscapes, and figure studies that were among the most adventurous of his generation. In the last years of his life Maurer created striking cubist still lifes, whose invention and mastery secured his place as a painter of the best of American Cubism, and in which were contained provocative hints of the expressive abstraction that would arise in the mid-twentieth century.

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Curriculum Connections Can Include

- artistic and literary Modernism
- comparison and contrast
- the intellectual shift from 19th to 20th century America
- composition, balance, and form
- color and palette
- experimentation through art
- perspectives and points of view
- Paris in the early 20th century
- Popular music and dance in the early 20th century
- the influence of artists and artistic movements

Questions for Observation, Reflection, and Discussion

- How is Maurer’s approach to painting still lifes, figure studies, floral paintings, and landscapes similar? How has it changed over time? How has it remained the same?
- What connections can be made between Maurer’s paintings to other artistic styles such as Realism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, and to other influential artists of his time?
- How might Maurer’s brush strokes and compositional techniques be compared to the physical dance styles and music of Paris in the 1900’s?
- Where in Maurer’s work do you see effects of the social and political atmosphere in the United States and Europe pre- and post- World War I?
- How might Maurer’s artistic style have evolved even further had has painting career lasted longer?

Project and Activity Ideas

- Play an artistic version of “eye spy,” searching for specific details in Maurer’s paintings that might tie all of his work together. What common threads do you notice throughout his career?
- Identify evidence of various artistic movements in just one of Maurer’s paintings.
- Ask students to create a visual vocabulary describing Maurer’s art by taking notes about their observations of Maurer’s use of color, brushstrokes, texture, shapes, patterns, subject matter, and composition. Assign small groups to focus on one piece in each gallery of the exhibition and then share the findings with the whole class.
- Examine Maurer’s experimentation with color by studying the color wheel and the relationship between complimentary, analogous, and arbitrary colors. How did Maurer’s color palettes and combinations evoke particular moods and emotions?
- Recreate a simple drawing or photograph through the lens of a variety of artistic styles (such as Realism, Fauvism, and Cubism) and compare how different techniques can create different effects.
- Get a sense of the social landscapes that inspired Maurer while he was abroad in Paris. See and hear the sights and sounds of the French countryside or the bustle of Paris through playlists on Pandora or Spotify, Youtube, or Hollywood films such as Midnight in Paris (2011) or Moulin Rouge! (2001).
- Discover the Modernist in you! Invent a new art movement and write a persuasive essay about what makes it unique and why it should be the next big thing. Think outside of the box and consider interesting perspectives, using unexpected color combinations, or distorting your images in a whole new way.
“... a detailed study of the artist’s oeuvre reveals that, despite superficial appearances based on insufficient comparisons, an aesthetic continuum runs through the artist’s entire career.”

- Stacy Epstein in Alfred Maurer: At the Vanguard of Modernism

Alfred Maurer, Model with a Japanese Fan (Jeanne), c. 1902, oil on canvas, 32 x 25 7/8 in., Karen and Kevin Kennedy Collection

Alfred Maurer, Head of a Woman, c. 1908, tempera on French cardboard mounted on gessoed panel, 18 1/4 x 15 in., Myron Kunin Collection of American Art
Resources


Connections to the Common Core

Due to the customized nature of each group visit and the activities surrounding each class, the standards listed below are only examples of what can be addressed through actively looking at, discussing, and writing about art at the Addison and in students’ classrooms. Class visits to the museum can also focus on reinforcing skills from subject areas such as reading or math. For more specific standards corresponding to specific projects, lessons, artworks, or exhibitions across disciplines, please contact Christine Jee for more details.

English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language

Mathematics: Standards for Mathematical Practice

Alfred Maurer, Still Life with Pears, c. 1930–31, oil on board, 26 x 36 in., Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, museum purchase.

Don't forget: The Addison Gallery’s Online Database http://accessaddison.andover.edu/ features nearly all of the 17,000 works in the Addison collection and offers downloadable JPGs for class presentations and projects. You can search for images related to virtually any topic that you are studying in your classroom. Our new features make it even easier to search by themes, artists, periods, or styles.
In 1948, Addison director Bartlett Hayes organized a retrospective exhibition of the work of Hans Hofmann that traced the evolution of this artist from early figurative work to fully conceived abstraction. Accompanying the exhibition was a collection of Hofmann essays, titled *Search for the Real*. Referencing that influential publication and exhibition, this presentation of works from the Addison collection likewise explores the progression in American art from Realism to Abstraction in the late-19th to 20th centuries. Works by such realist masters as Winslow Homer, James McNeill Whistler, and John Singer Sargent simultaneously capture the real world as they explore more abstract qualities of color, form, and composition, while 20th-century artists like Edward Hopper, Stuart Davis, and Marsden Hartley pare their compositions to elemental forms and forces. Photographs, studies, and finished works by Hans Hofmann, Ralston Crawford, and Charles Sheeler further reveal individual artists’ process of reduction, transformation, and abstraction that lay the stage for more completely abstract works by Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Sol LeWitt, among others.

Curriculum Connections Can Include
- the intellectual shift from 19th to 20th century America
- Abstraction and Realism
- comparison and contrast
- geometric form
- the progression of art in America
- color, tone, mood, and expression
- representation of and connection to place
On the Scene: 20th Century Street Photography
May 30 – July 31, 2015

In the second decade of the 20th century, as the population of New York surpassed that of London, images of street life became an increasingly appealing form of documentary and artistic interpretation among American photographers. This new subject matter was most certainly influenced by contemporary painters like John Sloan and Robert Henri, who found excitement in the physically teeming and visually cacophonous streets of New York. In addition, while photographers had been drawn to urban spaces since the medium’s beginnings, new technological advances encouraged spontaneity and easier movement through congested spaces and rushing crowds. Offering a wide cast of characters and vast variety of experiences on which to focus, the city street took firm hold of photographers’ imaginations, giving birth to a rich genre that developed throughout the 20th century and still continues today.

Featuring approximately 100 photographs by such artist as Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Lisette Model, Walker Evans, Helen Levitt, Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, and Dawoud Bey, this exhibition explores the myriad ways artists have approached the subject of bustling city scenes over time. Capturing the chaotic energy, chance juxtapositions, and fleeting encounters of everyday life in images that are by turns confrontational and tender, somber and witty, gritty and beautiful, each of these masters distills decisive moments into universal images of humanity.

Curriculum Connections Can Include
- visual and literary narratives
- characters and setting
- urban landscapes
- role of figures in street photography
- symbolism of pose, costume, setting, and props
- perspective and point of view
Class Visits to the Addison

Admission is always free. Two classes (or up to 50 students) at a time can be scheduled for Tuesday - Friday, between 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Guided visits generally run between 1 - 1.5 hours depending on student age and class size and can also include time for student writing or sketching in the galleries.

- The Addison supports a co-teaching philosophy where our education staff’s knowledge of the artworks combine with the teacher’s objectives and expectations for the visit, as well as incorporating students’ knowledge and experiences.

- We will work with you to plan and co-facilitate a visit that will be inquiry-based and engages students in close looking and discussion. Teachers are welcome to stop by our office, call, or email to learn more about our exhibitions and artworks and the ways in which they connect to your course topics.

- The Addison education staff collaborates with educators to create and support long-term projects inspired by exhibitions, collection themes, museum practice, or particular artists. Addison staff works with teachers to develop creative, cross-disciplinary projects that meet multiple social and academic objectives.

Free Public Museum Hours
Tuesday – Saturday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Sunday: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Free Group Visit Hours by Appointment
Tuesday – Friday: available 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Teacher Resources, Workshops, & Exhibition Information
www.addisongallery.org

Instagram
@addisongalleryofamericanart

Education Blog
inspiredbytheaddison.tumblr.com

Addison Gallery of American Art
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Front cover: Alfred Maurer, In the Vineyard, c. 1910, oil on board, 32 x 25 1/2 in., private collection