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For Immediate Release

THE FRICK PITTSBURGH PRESENTS

Van Gogh, Monet, Degas

**THE MELLON COLLECTION OF FRENCH ART
FROM THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS**

PITTSBURGH, March 9, 2018—The Frick Pittsburgh in Point Breeze will present *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas: The Mellon Collection of French Art from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*, an exhibition featuring more than 70 masterpieces collected by Pittsburgh-born collector and philanthropist, Paul Mellon (1907–1999), beginning March 17, 2018. The exhibition will remain on view at The Frick Art Museum through July 8, 2018, and will be complemented by a range of public programs.

The Frick is the premiere venue for this touring exhibition, which includes three works by Vincent Van Gogh (1853–1890): *The Laundry Boat on the Seine at Asnières* (1887); *Daisies, Arles* (1888); and *The Wheat Field behind St. Paul's Hospital, St. Rémy* (1889). Claude Monet (1840–1926) is represented by four works in the show, including a large, late work capturing the dazzling irises in his garden at Giverny, and 10 works by Degas (1834–1917) are featured—including the artist's most famous sculpture, *The Little Dancer*.

Says Frick Executive Director Robin Nicholson, “We are delighted to have the rare opportunity to present this extraordinary collection of French art to Pittsburgh at The Frick Art Museum— not far from Paul Mellon’s birthplace. In addition to its core of stunning Impressionist paintings, *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas* will dazzle audiences with masterpieces from every important school of French art from Romanticism through the School of Paris.” Nicholson continues, “A number of works included in the exhibition were only recently given to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and have not been seen publicly for a generation.”

Van Gogh, Monet, Degas: The Mellon Collection of French Art from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is a dazzling exhibition that features many of the most recognizable names in the history of French art. Van Gogh, Monet, and Degas are just three of nearly 40 artists included in this exhibition of works from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. More than 70 works exemplify the major stylistic and intellectual movements in French art from around 1820 to 1920 and also provide a glimpse into the personal collecting of the Mellons, illustrating their fondness for intimate works with a sense of immediacy and emotional appeal. In the words of Paul Mellon, “. . . art makes one feel the essence of something, turning the ordinary, everyday object or scene into a universal one.”

ABOUT PAUL MELLON

Renowned as one of the great collectors and philanthropists of the 20th century, Paul Mellon’s lifelong love of art resulted in extraordinary gifts to three institutions he held dear: the National Gallery of Art, Yale University, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Mellon served as a Trustee of the Virginia Museum for an unprecedented 41 years, from 1939 – 1979, and in 1985 was instrumental in the construction of a new wing to house his collection of British, American and French sporting art and works by French artists of the Romantic, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist periods.

Paul Mellon was the son of Henry Clay Frick’s close friend and colleague, Andrew Mellon (1855 –1937). Both Frick and Andrew Mellon became known for their legacies as art collectors, the roots of which were formed when they traveled to Europe together in 1880.

Paul Mellon grew up in this milieu of collecting and philanthropy and was an avid collector throughout his life.

Since the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts opened in 1936, superb examples of Impressionist art have been a collecting priority. In 1983, when Paul Mellon was asked how he determined the institutional recipients of works in his collection, he replied, "I look at the museums, consider what they need, and then try to be fair." The Mellons were over, above, and beyond "fair" to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. By 2014, when the final group of gifts arrived at the museum, the Mellons had given nearly 1,800 works of art to the museum to be shared with the people of Virginia and beyond. This exhibition contains many works from that final gift—works that the Mellons lived with and which stayed in the house with Rachel Mellon after her husband's death. Many of these paintings have not been exhibited publicly for a generation.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition is organized around themes and ideas that were of particular interest to artists working during the rapidly modernizing world of the 1800s and early 1900s. Overarching these themes, however, are the tastes and interests of Mr. and Mrs. Mellon themselves. Paul Mellon was an avid sportsman who enjoyed riding and bred racehorses. The French paintings with equine subjects depict aspects of horse racing, as well as the horse's many roles in 19th-century society. Rachel Lambert was Paul Mellon's second wife. Known as Bunny, she was an avid gardener, and her love of flowers and the outdoors is evident in many of the couples' painting selections. Throughout the exhibition these particular personal interests—horses and gardens—are reflected in the paintings.

Other thematic sections of the exhibition include: the French Countryside, water, people, views of Paris, flowers, other still-life subjects, and interiors. Within these themes, important artists and movements of the 19th century are represented, with Gustave Courbet and Édouard Manet from the Realist movement, while Post-Impressionism, Symbolism and other later 19th and early 20th-century styles are reflected in the work of Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Edouard Vuillard, Henri Matisse, and Henri Rousseau.

The varied career of Edgar Degas is represented by ten works that give a sense of his breadth of accomplishment. Degas is known for his exploration of new methods of image making and new subjects that investigated aspects of contemporary life. His racing pictures are included in the section related to the horse, as are four of his remarkable equestrian bronzes. Also included are the artist's most famous sculpture, *The Little Dancer*, and one of his radically groundbreaking works set in a millinery shop.

Degas was part of the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, as were many of the other artists included in this exhibition, exemplifying the strong core of Impressionist works in the Mellon collection. Other artists who were included in the first Impressionist exhibition and are part of *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas* are:

Eugène Boudin (1824–1898) — Boudin was instrumental in promoting *plein air* (outdoor) painting in France and is best known for his pictures of fashionable tourists vacationing on the Normandy coast. He was a mentor to the young Claude Monet, who later commented, "If I have become a painter, I owe it to Eugène Boudin." The exhibition includes four works by Boudin.

Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) — Although most-associated with the shifts in art toward Modernism that followed the Impressionists, young Cézanne exhibited in the first Impressionist exhibition and also in the third. Cézanne is represented with a portrait of Victor Chouquet, one of his important early collectors.

Stanislas Lépine (1835-1892) — Although Lépine's landscapes are generally more finished in their execution than those of the Impressionists, he was a master at capturing atmosphere and specialized in views of the Seine. Two of his views of Paris are included in the exhibition.

Claude Monet (1840–1926) — Monet painted outdoors on the Normandy coast during his early career, working closely with the older artist Eugène Boudin (see above), who introduced him to *plein air* painting. In turn Monet invited Boudin to

participate in the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874. Four works by Monet are represented in *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas*, including a large, late work capturing the dazzling irises in his garden at Giverny, and a much earlier canvas depicting his first wife Camille framed in a window overlooking a garden.

Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) — As a young woman from an affluent background, Morisot received artistic training as part of her early education. Her tutor often took her and her sisters to the Louvre to study and copy works, and famously warned her parents that she would eventually face struggles as a woman with serious artistic ambitions. While women could not paint the grittier subject matter of dance halls and cafés that their male counterparts explored, Morisot and other women artists of the time provided a contrasting view of domestic life. Three of her works are included in the exhibition.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) — Perhaps the Impressionist artist most interested in people and their daily pursuits, Renoir is known for charming images of women and girls. He often went on painting excursions with his friends Monet and Sisley. In fact, they were painting together and developing the loose, color-infused style of Impressionism years before the 1874 exhibition. Three works by Renoir are part of the exhibition, including a portrait of his young son Jean (who grew up to be one of the most influential French filmmakers of the 20th century).

Alfred Sisley (1839–1899) — A painting of wildflowers and a characteristic *plein air* view, *The Watering Pond at Marly with Hoarfrost* represent this Impressionist's work. Sisley, of British parentage, spent most of his life in France and remained dedicated to the Impressionist approach throughout his career, creating beautiful, expressive landscapes, with little interest in the figure or urban life

Camille Pissarro (1831–1903) — Pissarro was the only artist to show his work at all eight Impressionist exhibitions. He also maintained a rigid anti-academic point of view, and, like Degas, after the first 1874 exhibition, he never again submitted work to the official Salon. Pissarro was born on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas and of the three works

of his in the exhibition, two are early views of the island, and the third is a later, Impressionist landscape

Paul Mellon equated the importance of Impressionists to their collection in terms of his and his wife's mutual love of nature, Mr. Mellon explained " . . . never before or since in the unfolding pageant of art have painters so brilliantly captured the poetry of the countryside."

EXHIBITION ADMISSION AND TOURS

Admission to *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas: The Mellon Collection of French Art from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*:

- Frick members receive free admission.
- Adult non-members \$15; Senior/Student/Military \$13; Youth 6–16 \$8; Youth 5 and under free. Groups of 10 or more: \$13 per person.
- Docent-guided tours of *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas* will be conducted on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays during the exhibition at 2:00 p.m. Free with exhibition admission. Groups of five or more are requested to schedule a private tour at an alternate time.
- Group tours of *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas* cost \$16 per person, and reservations must be made two weeks in advance. Call 412-342-4087.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

The exhibition is organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

The Pittsburgh presentation of this exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

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ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

Located on the Pittsburgh estate of late-19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh is the steward of collections left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collections include fine and decorative arts, cars, carriages, historic objects, and buildings. The Frick experience includes The Frick Art Museum, the Car and Carriage Museum, Clayton, the Frick family Gilded Age mansion, and six acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens. Also included are an Education Center, the Frick children's playhouse (designed by renowned architects Alden & Harlow), a large working greenhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), The Café at the Frick, and the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Frick Pittsburgh is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick's off-street lot or along adjacent streets.

The Frick is open 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Friday; and is closed Mondays and major holidays. To make reservations, or for information, the public should call 412-371-0600, or visit the Frick online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

For additional information or images, please contact Greg Langel, Marketing & PR Manager, at 412-342-4075 or GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org

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