

Art

Rare Whistler show opens at Boca Raton Museum of Art in Mizner Plaza

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STAFF WRITER

Just about everyone has heard of "Whistler's Mother," but there is a lot more to the career of American expatriate painter James McNeill Whistler, and you can learn about it in an informative new show at Boca Raton Museum of Art in Mizner Plaza.

"James McNeill Whistler: Selected Works from the Hunterian Art Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland" has a dozen extremely valuable paintings as well as personal artifacts and more than 40 prints, most never seen before in America, that span 40 years of Whistler (1843-1903).

"This is the first show in America to show Whistler's development from his early career right up to the end," said museum executive director George Bolge. "His estate was given to Hunterian Art Gallery,

so they have the most complete collection in the world. We have two other beautiful shows that go well with the Whistler exhibit: the Japanese prints from our own collection and the nudes of Milton Avery. Whistler introduced Japanese prints to Europe, and his own work was influenced by Japanese art. The abstract nudes of Milton Avery complement the Japanese art well."

"Milton Avery: A Retrospective of Nudes" and "A Floating World: Japanese Prints from the Collection" both continue through April 2, along with the Whistler show.

Bolge describes James Whistler as a "kind of dandy" who attended West Point but failed to qualify for the U.S. Army. He left America in 1855 and traveled through Europe, visiting France, the Netherlands, Venice, the resorts of England and finally Scotland. Whistler's career was abruptly and perhaps

unjustly derailed in 1878 when he had the cheek to take British critic John Ruskin to court for an insulting review, and lost. The court awarded Ruskin just one penny, but Whistler was effectively ruined, financially.

"I'm a real fan of Whistler," says Bolge. "He's an underrated artist and a real thinker and problem-solver, like a Leonardo da Vinci. I tried to get a New York collector to lend us a Whistler portrait, but it was valued at \$3 and a half million, and it would just cost too much to insure and ship it. You can imagine how valuable this show is, but it stands in contrast to the Impressionism show (at Norton) and the King Tut extravaganza (in Fort Lauderdale). In January we bring in the Toulouse-Lautrec show, which is really fine. We are a small museum, but we are offering people the unique opportunity to better appreciate and learn more about these important artists."



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

One of many Japanese prints from the Whistler collection.

The 22-minute film "James McNeill Whistler: His Etchings" will be shown at 2 p.m. Sunday to complement the show.

Senior curator Wendy Blazier will lead a tour of the Japanese woodblock prints at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, and "The Nude in Art:

The Classical will be shown at 2 p.m. Wednesday.

Admission is \$15 adults, \$12 students with ID, \$7 groups of ten or more and \$10 members and children 12 and under. Call 392-2500 or visit www.bocamuseum.org. ♦