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Memphis Brooks Museum of Art features the work of major modern sculptors Lachaise, Laurent, Nadelman, and Zorach

Memphis, Tenn., September 7, 2017—This fall visitors to the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art will experience extraordinary masterpieces of modern American sculpture by Gaston Lachaise, Robert Laurent, Elie Nadelman, and William Zorach. These sculptors are the focus of *Coming to America: Lachaise, Laurent, Nadelman, and Zorach, 1914-1945*, co-organized by the Portland Museum of Art in Portland, Maine and the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas. The exhibition explores how this group of artists—all of whom were European immigrants—became preeminent figures of modernism in the United States.

“This exciting exhibition shows us that modern American sculpture was essentially invented by four immigrant artists,” said Brooks Museum executive director Emily Ballew Neff.

“These artists took the lessons of their cutting-edge training in Paris, and applied them to their experiences of modern life in the United States to create something new and enduring in American culture. Rarely have we seen the human figure so expressively—and joyously—interpreted as in this exhibition.”

Between 1900 and 1914, and before their arrival in the United States, Lachaise, Laurent, Nadelman and Zorach all studied in Paris, which at the time was the center of the art world. Here they absorbed crucial ideas about sculpture: smooth harmonies of curve, line and mass; serene

compositions; innovative surfaces; and the vibrancy of non-Western art. Spurred by the tensions of pre-World War I Europe—with Nadelman and Zorach both being Jewish, and from areas often subjected to pogroms—the four artists came to America looking for new opportunities. In the United States, known to each other but working independently, they developed a new style of sculpture rooted in novel depictions of the human form. Fascinated with America’s bristling energy, consumerism, urban life and industrialism, they melded their European training with contemporary performance culture, particularly vaudeville and modern dance, as well as American folk art.

Between the two World Wars, Lachaise, Laurent, Nadelman, and Zorach continually experimented with new approaches to making sculpture, and explored innovative techniques and materials.

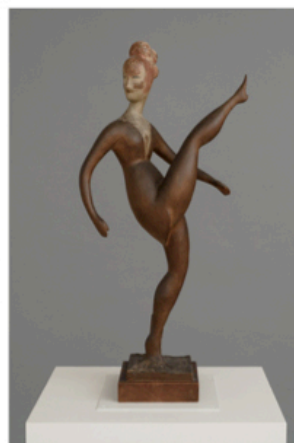
"One of the most remarkable things about *Coming to America* is the way that each of these artists approached their media—whether wood, bronze, or marble—to reveal the elemental vitality of those substances," explained Brooks’ site curator Stanton Thomas. "Nadelman's sculptures in cherry, for instance, suggest the lively growth of the tree itself, but wonderfully transformed into images of dancers and acrobats. In contrast, Lachaise uses the cold sensuality of bronze to heighten the exquisite lines and flowing curves of his grand, monumental figures."



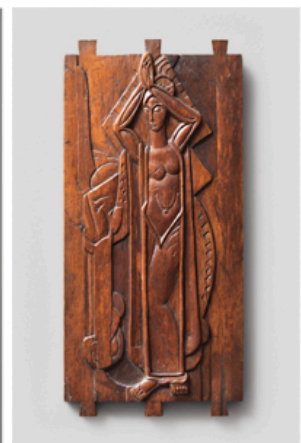
Gaston Lachaise, United States, born France, 1882-1935, *Two Floating Nude Acrobats*, 1922, Bronze, 11 1/2 x 2 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches, Private collection, Courtesy of Gerald Peters Gallery © Gaston Lachaise Foundation



Robert Laurent, United States, born France, 1890-1970, *The Bather*, circa 1925, Alabaster, 26 3/4 x 22 1/16 x 13 9/16 inches, Brooklyn Museum, Carl H. de Silver Fund, 35.1009, © Estate of Robert Laurent, Image Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N.Y.



Elie Nadelman, United States, born Poland, 1882-1946, *Dancer*, 1921-1924, Cherry, mahogany, gesso, stain, and paint, 28 1/4 inches (height), Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Philip L. Goodwin Collection, Gift of James L. Goodwin, Henry Sage Goodwin, and Richmond L. Brown, 1958.224 © Estate of Elie Nadelman Photo by Allen Phillips | Wadsworth Atheneum



William Zorach, United States, born Lithuania, 1889-1966, *Waterfall*, 1917, Butternut, 15 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches, Lent by the Estate of Dr. Samuel and Adele Wolman, © Reproduced with permission of the Zorach Collection, LLC Photo by Bruce Scharz

Depicting their friends and family members, as well as performers and mythological characters, they celebrated the expressive potential of the human figure in artwork that blended formal simplicity, consummate craftsmanship, and transcultural sources. Writing in reference to Lachaise and Nadelman—though in words that could describe all four artists, the famed critic Lincoln Kirstein noted that they “helped to create a national tradition—stemming from Europe, but independent.”

Through over 60 sculptures and a select group of drawings, the exhibition reveals their common artistic sources, while at the same time reveling in their stylistic individuality. *Coming to America* is a rare opportunity to explore the works of four major masters who redefined the expressive qualities of the human form in the modern age.

Coming to America will be on view at the Brooks from October 14, 2017 through January 7, 2018. The exhibition will then travel to Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas.

Mission:

Founded in 1916 and located at 1934 Poplar Ave. in historic Overton Park, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art is home to Tennessee’s oldest and largest major collection of world art. More than 10,000 works make up the Brooks Museum’s permanent collection, including works from ancient Greece, Rome and the Americas; Renaissance masterpieces from Italy; English portraiture; American painting and decorative arts; contemporary art; and a survey of African art. The Brooks Museum enriches the lives of our diverse community through the museum's expanding collection, varied exhibitions, and dynamic programs that reflect the art of world cultures from antiquity to the present. For more information about the Brooks and all other exhibitions and programs, call 901.544.6200 or visit brooksmuseum.org.

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