

Press Release

Loving Art The William & Anna Singer Collection 13 September 2006 to 7 January 2007

Singer Laren is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The second anniversary exhibition, *Loving Art, The William & Anna Singer Collection*, is devoted to the original art collection of the American couple William and Anna Singer. Thanks to unique loans from Norway and the United States, Singer Laren will be showing masterpieces from this international collection, which includes work by American impressionists like Walter Griffin, Robert Miller and Willard Metcalf, a large group of sculptures by Auguste Rodin, work by French artists such as Corot, Fantin-Latour and Millet, and Oriental art.

American benefactors

Like other American industrialists from Pittsburgh, such as Carnegie and Frick, William and Anna Singer used their wealth to collect art, establish museums and lend support to artists and other social projects. Between 1900 and 1940 the Singers collected more than three thousand paintings, works on paper, sculptures and other works of art. They founded two museums, built a hospital, supported poor Norwegian farmers and donated money for the convalescence of victims of the First World War. Their collection is now distributed among four locations: Singer Laren, Villa Dalheim Olden in Norway, where they lived for a long time, the Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum (Permanenten) in Bergen, Norway, and the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, the museum that the Singers founded in 1931 in Hagerstown, Anna's place of birth in the United States. In 1956 Anna Singer opened a museum and a concert hall in Laren as part of the *Singer Memorial Foundation*, in memory of her husband who died in 1943.

International collection

For the first time Singer Laren has undertaken comprehensive research into the background and motives behind the collection of its American founders and recorded the entire collection. Alongside the better known works by Laren painters and the Barbizon School in the exhibition there are also works from the original Singer collection by other French artists, such as Corot, Fantin-Latour, Lhermitte, Millet and La Touche. The Singers were friendly with American impressionists amongst whom were Walter Griffin, Jonas Lie, Robert Miller and Willard Metcalf, and they bought their paintings for the collection, which also has a unique portrait of the German artist Max Liebermann. The couple's interest in sculpture is notable. The exhibition includes a large group of works by Auguste Rodin, as well as pieces by Meunier, Bourdelle and Bugatti, and there are large and fascinating statues by American sculptors such as Paul Bartlett and Gutzon Borglum. Borglum became famous throughout the world for his four monumental heads of American presidents carved in the rocks in South Dakota. A special room is devoted to the Singers' love of art from the Far East. With the help of artistic friends like Willem Dooijewaard they bought sculptures, ceramics, textiles and ritual objects direct from Japan, China, Mongolia and Tibet. As well as contemporary art the Singers also bought a few old Dutch and Italian masters, including Egbert van der Poel and Paolo Veronese, particularly for the benefit of the later museum collections. All of these works are now brought together in Laren.

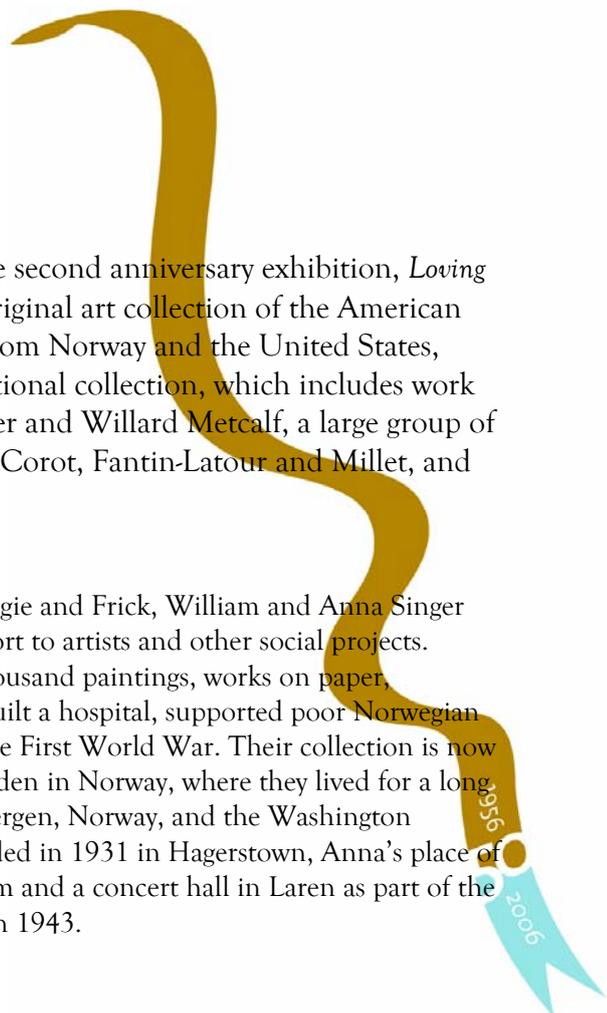
The exhibition will transfer to the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagerstown.

Publication

The research also led to the first biography of the collectors William and Anna Singer, which offers a glimpse into the cosmopolitan life of this unique couple with a great feeling for the community particularly in the fields of art and culture.

Loving Art. The William & Anna Singer Collection by Helen Schretlen with a contribution by Jean Woods is published in Dutch and English.

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*Note for editors: for information and / or visual material please contact
Saskia Bekke, SBekke@singerlaren.nl, 00 31 (0) 35 – 539 39 50 and / or
Martine Willekens, MWillekens@singerlaren.nl, 00 31 (0) 35-539 39 35 or 00 31 (0) 6-53600431*