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“Gauguin & Polynesia: An Elusive Paradise”

Beginning today, Seattle Art Museum presents the only United States stop for the highly-anticipated *Gauguin and Polynesia: An Elusive Paradise*.

Elusive as it is exclusive, the exhibit features nearly 60 of Gauguin’s brilliantly hued paintings, sculptures and works on paper, which are showcased alongside 60 major examples of Polynesian sculpture.

A leader in the Post-Impressionist movement, Paul Gauguin (1848—1903) is considered one of the most influential and celebrated artists of the late nineteenth century. Gauguin sought to bring a timelessness and poetry into his artwork, as a rejection of the Impressionism’s emphasis on visual observation. His distinctive palette follows his romantic desire of a simpler and more “natural” way of life—a paradise.

Gauguin yearned for the exotic in both his personal and professional life. From his days as a conservative stockbroker to a full-time artist, he led two significant expeditions in French Polynesia – a two-year stay in Tahiti and later, a more remote visit to Marquesas Islands. It was there Gauguin would spend the final years of his life searching for the elusive, naturally primitive life.

“The Seattle Art Museum presents its collections in ways that encourage you to look at history while breaking down barriers of time and culture,” said Chiyo Ishikawa, Deputy Director for Art at SAM, in a press release. “For us, this exhibition provides a wonderful opportunity to continue our mission, fostering a deeper understanding of seemingly disparate cultures through the art that brought them together.”

Gauguin and Polynesia aims to contribute not only to a deeper understanding of the man himself, but also to further an understanding of Polynesian culture. A total of 18 international and 21 U.S. museums, along with four private collections lent objects for this showing. International lenders include museums from Denmark, England, New Zealand, Scotland and France, to name a few.

“We are so excited to be a promotional partner for this amazing exhibit and even more excited about what it means for Downtown Seattle,” said Kate Joncas, president & CEO of the Downtown Seattle Association. “Thousands of people will be drawn to the Seattle Art Museum to see these magnificent pieces of work and while their Downtown, we hope they continue to explore the city. As we saw last year with Picasso, exhibits of this size and importance can act as an economic driver for the area and make a significant impact for area businesses.”

Tickets for Gauguin and Polynesia are on sale now, and include a free audio guide via smartphone applications. Tickets are free for SAM members and otherwise cost \$23 for adults. There is a \$3 discount on Thursday and Friday evenings. Members are required to reserve their tickets in advance to guarantee entry during days and times that may otherwise sell out.

Gauguin and Polynesia will be on display February 9 through April 29, 2012.