NEW BRITAIN MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

TO DISPLAY MONUMENTAL MASTERPIECE BY SAMUEL F.B. MORSE

New Britain, Conn., June 1, 2017—The New Britain Museum of American Art is pleased to present the forthcoming exhibition *Samuel F.B. Morse’s “Gallery of the Louvre” and the Art of Invention,* on view in the Don and Virginia Davis Gallery from June 17–October 15, 2017. This exhibition showcases Morse’s monumental painting *Gallery of the Louvre* (1831–1833), on loan from the Terra Foundation for American Art in Chicago, following its extensive conservation treatment in 2010 and two years of scholarly investigation. Also included will be Morse’s preparatory work *Frances I, Study for “Gallery of the Louvre”* (1831­–1832). The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue published by the Terra Foundation and distributed by Yale University Press.

Known today primarily for his role in the development of the electromagnetic telegraph and his namesake code, Samuel F.B. Morse also had a successful painting career. Created in Paris and New York, *Gallery of the Louvre* is Morse’s masterwork and the result of his studies in Europe. According to Peter John Brownlee, curator at the Terra Foundation, “Morse’s ‘gallery picture,’ a form first popularized in the seventeenth century, is the only major example of such in the history of American art. For this canvas, Morse selected masterpieces from the Musée du Louvre’s collection and imaginatively ‘reinstalled’ them in one of the museum’s grandest spaces, the Salon Carré.” In addition to highlighting renowned works by the Old Masters, *Gallery of the Louvre* serves as a painted treatise on artistic practice, positioning Morse—who depicted himself as the centrally placed instructor in the work—as a link between European art of the past and America’s cultural future.

In 2010, *Gallery of the Louvre* underwent a six-month conservation treatment in the studio of Lance Mayer and Gay Myers, specialists in American painting who have restored such major works as Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851; Metropolitan Museum of Art) and Rembrandt Peale's *The Court of Death* (1820; Detroit Institute of Arts). The conservation repaired damages that had occurred over time and yielded insight into Morse's working methods. "The conservation treatment greatly improved the overall look of the *Gallery of the Louvre* and confirmed that Morse was as fearless an experimenter with painting media as he was with the daguerreotype and the electromagnetic telegraph later in his career," notes Brownlee. Mayer and Myers, based in New London, Connecticut, will discuss this extensive project at the Museum’s program *An Evening with Gay Myers and Lance Mayer* on September 14, 2017, at 5:30 p.m. Their conservation process is also documented in the film *A New Look: Samuel F.B. Morse and the Gallery of the Louvre,* which will screen at the Museum on June 29, 2017, at 1 and 4 p.m. Visit www.nbmaa.org for more details about related programming.

The New Britain Museum of American Art is the exhibition’s eighth stop in its multi-year tour of the United States, having previously been displayed at the Huntington Library’s Art Collections and Botanical Gardens (San Marino, California), the Amon Carter Museum of American Art (Fort Worth, Texas), the Seattle Art Museum (Seattle, Washington), the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, Arkansas), the Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit, Michigan), the Peabody Essex Museum (Salem, Massachusetts), and the Reynolda House Museum of American Art (Winston-Salem, North Carolina).

This exhibition is made possible through the support from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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**About the Terra Foundation for American Art**

Established in 1978, the Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering the exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States. With financial resources of more than $350 million, an exceptional collection of American art from the colonial era to 1945, and an expansive grant program, it is one of the leading foundations focused on American art, and devotes approximately $12 million annually in support of American art exhibitions, projects, and research worldwide.

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**About the New Britain Museum of American Art**

The New Britain Museum of American Art is the first institution dedicated solely to acquiring American art. Spanning four centuries of American history, the Museum’s permanent collection is renowned for its strengths in colonial portraiture, the Hudson River School, American Impressionism, the Ash Can School, as well as the important mural series *The Arts of Life in America* by Thomas Hart Benton. The singular focus on American art and its panoramic view of American artistic achievement, realized through the Museum’s extensive permanent collection, exhibitions, and educational programming, make the New Britain Museum of American Art a significant resource for a broad and diverse public.

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