

The Terra Foundation for American Art is supporting four major exhibitions now in the UK. *The American* caught up with its President and CEO Elizabeth Glassman to ask more about their plans and objectives

Profile: The Terra Foundation for American Art's

Elizabeth Glassman

PHOTO: NATHAN WEBER

The Terra Foundation for American Art is supporting four exhibits currently in London: *George Catlin: American Indian Portraits*; *George Bellows: Modern American Life*; *Lichtenstein – A Retrospective*; and *Through American Eyes: Frederic Church and the Landscape Oil Sketch*. We began by asking Elizabeth Glassman, *Which of these exhibitions stand out as something the Foundation feels art-goers here deserved to see?*

Much of the credit for this fortuitous convergence of American art in London belongs to our wonderful partners: the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal Academy of Arts, and Tate Modern. I'd encourage people to see all four exhibitions if they can. However, if I had to select just one exhibition that strikes me as particularly well suited for art-lovers here it would be *George Catlin: American Indian Portraits* at the National Portrait Gallery. Many of the paintings in this exhibition were shown in London 173 years ago, shortly after they were created. I think that seeing these paintings today, with the benefit of hindsight and a drastically different cultural landscape, will introduce some very

poignant and thought-provoking ideas. What people sometimes forget is that these are portraits of actual people, not just idealized figures. They were intended to illustrate a robust society and serve as ambassadors to the world's many different cultures, and I think that's precisely the role they are fulfilling today.

To what extent do you think the work of the Foundation has enhanced respect for American art in the eyes of the European art landscape?

To a significant extent, I believe. One of the most important things we do at the Terra Foundation is think about our audiences very carefully and deliberately. Ours is not a simple export model whereby we send American art across the globe and hope it's well received. Instead, we work closely with curators and directors of partner institutions to employ the historical art of the United States in ways that will resonate meaningfully with the people who see it. For example, *Through American Eyes: Frederic Church and the Landscape Oil Sketch*, co-organized with the National Gallery, seeks to situate the American artistic tradition in a new context and stimulate fresh

Terra Foundation Facts

- Founded in 1978 by businessman and art collector Daniel J Terra
- Headquartered in Chicago with a satellite office in Paris, France
- Devotes approx. \$12 million / year to support American art exhibitions
- In 2012-2013, \$7.5 million is dedicated to grant programmes
- The Foundation's art collection includes 725 works
- Web: www.terraamericanart.org



George Catlin, *Medicine Man Performing his Mysteries over a Dying Man Blackfoot/Siksika, 1832*

© SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

interpretations of the works in the show. A similar dynamic is occurring through our collaborations with the Musée du Louvre, where the focused exhibition, *New Frontier II. American Art Enters the Louvre – The Origins of American Genre Painting*, will be on view through April 22.

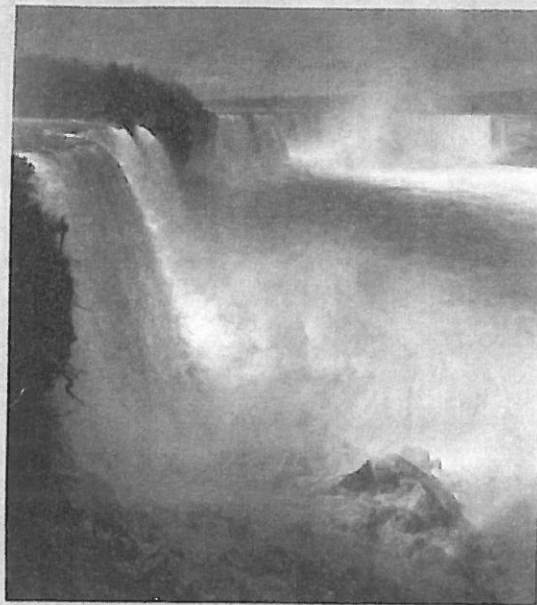
What changes have you see globally in the appreciation of American art?

If the number of grant requests we receive is any indication, I'd say there is a growing demand for exhibitions of American art worldwide. Our partnership with the Solomon R Guggenheim Foundation resulted in the first major survey of American art ever presented in the People's Republic of China. The exhibition, *Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation*, traveled to Beijing and Shanghai, drawing more than half a million visitors in roughly five months and generating enough international interest to extend its run for another nine months at venues in Moscow, and Bilbao, Spain.

Daniel J Terra perhaps didn't start out to champion American artists, but to collect European art, switching later to promoting American art around the world. Would you say that Daniel's discovery of and love affair with American art is reflected in the Terra Foundation's objectives?

Absolutely. Dan Terra believed that American art vigorously expressed the nation's history and identity, but not for the sake of exclusivity. Instead, he held that art had the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them, and this position is reflected in every initiative we undertake.

To what extent does being a 'museum without walls' make the Terra



Frederic Edwin Church, *Niagara Falls, from the American Side, 1867*
© NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND

Foundation a proactive rather than passive museum?

Well, it enables us to be a tremendously nimble organization – we're better positioned to capitalize on newfound opportunities and be more malleable in how we approach them.

How can smaller galleries get involved with the Terra Foundation?

The first thing they should do is visit our website (www.terraamerica-nart.org/grants), where they'll learn that our grants are available to any qualified not-for-profit organization, regardless of size. In the UK, we've sponsored exhibitions at venues that range in size from the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, to the Tate. There's also a variety of other opportunities for funding and support for individuals, including grants to scholars – especially scholars based outside the US who are working on American art – and teaching fellowships at The Courtauld Institute of Art.

How much time do you spend in Paris and Europe vs the US?

Given the nature of the Terra

Foundation's work, I spend roughly five to six months per year traveling internationally. Approximately half that time is spent in Europe.

Do you miss being on the ground in the US more often?

Yes. As anyone who travels that much will tell you, there's nothing quite like sleeping in your own bed. Nonetheless, it's a great thrill to work with so many enthusiastic and intelligent people all over the world.

The Frederic Church exhibition is also visiting Edinburgh. Did the Scottish National Gallery make any specific approach?

In part it's because the Scottish National Gallery owns one of the most compelling Church paintings I've ever encountered, *Niagara Falls, from the American Side* (1867), which is included in the show. Moreover, we've had an ongoing relationship with the museum for a couple of years now – in fact, we're partnering with them on an exhibition of American Impressionism in 2014. Everyone there has been such a lovely partner in this endeavor. ★

Coffee

QUIZ

Musical April

- 1 Which Canadian singer's name translates from French as 'April Vine'?
- 2 Name the National Anthem adopted after being a rallying call during the French Revolution.
- 3 Name the 1986 album by Prince and The New Power Generation that includes the tracks *Sometimes it Snows in April* and *Kiss*?
- 4 Tom Jones and The Art of Noise had a hit with a

SUDOKU

6			
	5		
			7
8			
		4	5
	1		
		5	
	9		