



MEDIA RELEASE

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Artists of “Cleveland’s Infamous Kokoon Klub” Headline Four New Exhibitions Opening at Canton Museum of Art *New Exhibitions On View November 26, 2024 – March 2, 2025*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (November 11, 2024, Canton, OH) — The Canton Museum of Art (CMA), one of Northeast Ohio’s premier American art museums, will open its Winter exhibition season on Tuesday, November 26, with four new offerings: the collaborative, featured original exhibition ***Bohemian Chrysalis: Unveiling Cleveland’s Infamous Kokoon Klub***; ***Night Visions: Nocturnes in American Art***, a themed original exhibition from CMA’s Collection; ***Arriving Somewhere, But Not Here***, featuring the art of Kit Palencar; and ***El Albañil***, featuring printmaking work by J. Leigh Garcia. These new exhibitions will be on view November 26, 2024 through March 2, 2025.

CMA Director and CEO Max Barton II said, “CMA’s winter exhibitions are a thrilling ride through diverse artistic processes and developments in the American art scene. Visitors will especially enjoy the feast for the eyes and the storylines in ***Bohemian Chrysalis***.”

“Between roughly 1911 and the 1940s, the Cleveland arts scene was exploding with the introduction of so-called new art and artists bringing color and bold looks to an otherwise muted palette of American art at the time. Of course, this was influenced by the modern art movements taking shape in Europe, and Cleveland artists embraced it! The Kokoon (Arts) Club was indeed outrageous and avant-garde, and its short-lived run produced some of the most celebrated artists not only in our region, but also across our country.

“We are pleased to welcome everyone to experience these can’t-miss exhibitions, so we hope you will include CMA in your winter getaway plans!”

Bohemian Chrysalis: Unveiling Cleveland’s Infamous Kokoon Klub

This special exhibition “unmasking” the Kokoon Klub and its notable artists and contributions is drawn from the Canton Museum of Art’s Collection, as well as numerous collaborators. These include, among others, the Cleveland History Center / Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland Public Library, Kent State University, and numerous private collections. ***Bohemian Chrysalis*** is meant to be a feast for the eyes, an enjoyment of all-things outrageous and over-the-top from early 1900s, and a celebration of artists and artistic development not only in our region, but also across our country.

In the early 1900s, Cleveland, Ohio was an industrial powerhouse. The city led the second Industrial Revolution due to the production of electric light and power, steel, and automobiles, among other resources. So much so that in 1909, Cleveland hosted an Industrial Exposition to showcase the city's industrial advancements and inventions.

At the turn of the century, Cleveland was a leading arts center with print production at the core of the city, home to the headquarters of *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life* magazines, with the capacity to print 55 million posters per month. Hundreds of artists were flooding the city to work in the largest commercial printing hub that even surpassed New York City. In 1911, a group of those artists from the Otis Lithograph Company got together and formed the Kokoon Arts Klub with Carl Moellmann as president and William Sommer as vice president.

The aim of the Kokoon Klub was to encourage interest in modern art, a new movement growing in Europe that was bright, colorful, and controversial. The art in America at the time was primarily painted in muted colors, whereas modernism was full of color. The organization was modeled after the Kit Kat Klub in London where artists would gather and create. The founders wanted to mirror the alliteration of the Kit Kat Klub and decided on the term “kokoon” to symbolize an awakening for both the artists and the city of Cleveland – like butterflies from a cocoon. Although the club sought to follow the spelling of the Kit Kat Klub, the press never came to a consensus and spelled “Klub” both with a “K” and a “C.”

The Kokoon Klub was a fixture of the Cleveland arts scene and members expressed their artistry through classes, exhibitions, and productions — and their events predate the groundbreaking of the Cleveland Museum of Art. However, of all events, none were as memorable as their celebration of self-expression: the Kokoon Klub Bal Masque. Created in 1913, the Bal Masque was part fundraiser for the Klub and a way to attract fellow free spirited bohemians; handmade costumes based on the annual theme played a central role in and requirement for the celebration. Early Bals saw attendance in the low hundreds, but by the late 1920s guests numbered in the thousands.

As modern art became more widely accepted and mainstream, the Kokoon Klub lost some of its intellectualism and became more of a social fraternity. As the Great Depression began in 1929, so did the onset of the end for the Kokoon Klub. The club began a slow but steady decline, but managed to continue with the last Bal Masque taking place in 1946.

Numerous Kokoon Klub members were integral to the introduction of modernism to Cleveland. Many were influenced by European modern art movements taking shape in Europe, and brought these brighter, bolder, styles back to Cleveland and to the artists who embraced radical forms of art-making. William Sommer, often heralded as one of America's greatest modern artists, is more significantly recognized for his contributions to Cleveland art. Many of these artists later became part of the "Cleveland School," an arts community associated in part with founding the Cleveland Museum of Art, The Cleveland Institute of Art, and the City's annual May Show.

Some significant Kokoon Klub members and featured artists in the exhibition include: August Biehle, Joseph Jicha, Henry Keller, Walt Scott, Abel Warshawsky, and William Zorach.

Night Visions: Nocturnes in American Art

Whether inspired by the artistic potential for rendering subjects at night, or drawn to understand its many mysterious elements, artists have long found their voice in the dark, and have used their creativity to guide them. The works featured in ***Night Visions*** reflect the broad range of subject matters that attracted artists to night scenes — including the surreal, city nightlife, restful respite, and loneliness/isolation. From the CMA Collection, experience artistic visions of the night — including city nightlife, restful respite, and loneliness/isolation, and beyond.

The nighttime has long inspired artists of all disciplines, who use our apprehension of the dark unknown to their advantage. For them, it's the perfect backdrop for depicting unsettling themes, creating mystery, and setting a mood. Night paintings are often called "nocturnes," a term originally applied to certain types of musical compositions before artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler began using the word within the titles of his works. Whistler titled works as such to distinguish those paintings with a "dreamy, pensive mood" and to emphasize the overall feeling of the work rather than its narrative.

Artists use the dim and mysterious lighting of nighttime to their advantage, illustrating the illuminating effects of the light's reflection on their subjects. By 'shining a light' on certain elements in a painting, and leaving other elements in darkness, a story is constructed and symbolic effects are created. The darkness of night can make the inclusion of light more noticeable and appealing, for instance with the reflections on water and the neon lights of city signs.

Night Visions explores the dreamy composition of art and stories shrouded in the mystery, menace, inspiration, and promise of the night.

Arriving Somewhere, But Not Here: Painting by Kit Palencar

Artist Kit Palencar's body of work, titled ***Arriving Somewhere, But Not Here***, delves into the enigmatic realms of life and death, exploring the profound mysteries that both unite and distinguish these two facets of existence. "Each image becomes a portal through which I navigate the intricate interplay between light and shadow, presence and absence, beginnings and endings," says Palencar.

"Our existence is all about balance, hierarchy, and gravity, and we cannot traverse through this landscape alone. Amidst the surface of these images, there lies a veil of uncertainty, a whisper of the unknown that haunts the edges of perception. It is within this liminal space that the true essence of my work resides — an exploration of the profound mysteries that lie beyond the boundaries of comprehension: Spiritualism, religion, and faith."

Born in Fairview Park, Ohio in 1992, Kit Palencar currently resides in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, and has received a Masters of Fine Arts degree from Kent State University in the spring of 2018 with a major in painting and drawing. Graduating from The University of Akron in 2016 with a

Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, Palencar was awarded the top-honor scholarship at the Myers School of Art as well as receiving an additional private scholarship for his watercolors through the Frederic Whitaker and Eileen Monaghan Whitaker Foundation.

El Albañil: Artwork by J. Leigh Garcia

As a biracial Latina, a seventh-generation Texan of European descent on her mother's side and granddaughter of Mexican immigrants on her father's side J. Leigh Garcia has followed the roots of her ancestry to shape her artistic practice. Major events in Texas history such as the Mexican-American War, Battle of the Alamo, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and Bracero Program have created a complex relationship between Garcia's two cultures: white Texans and mestizo Mexicans. Products of these historical events—particularly undocumented immigration and the racialization of Mexicans—are both the context and focus of her work.

Using printmaking, papermaking, and sculpture, she explores her biracial identity and familial history while highlighting aspects of racial and generational privilege/oppression. With an MFA and MA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and BFA from the University of North Texas, Garcia currently works as an Associate Professor of Printmaking at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

"My grandfather, Narciso "Chicho" García, worked as a tile setter in Monterrey, Mexico and Harlingen, Texas for most of his life," says Garcia. "Two generations later, I work as an artist and art professor. I often feel that my life is completely different from my grandfather's because of our differences in professions, education, socio-economic statuses, languages, religion, and gender. However, I have found a connection with him through making."

Museum Hours

The Museum is open Tuesday – Thursday, 10am – 8pm; Friday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm; and Sunday, 1 – 5pm. CMA is closed on Mondays and major holidays. Museum members are admitted free. CMA regular admission is: \$8 Adults; \$6 Seniors (60+) and Students with ID; Children 12 & under are free. We offer free admission every Thursday, courtesy of support from PNC Foundation. We are also a Blue Star Museum and Museums for All participant for free or reduced admission. Please inquire at the Patron Services Desk or visit CantonArt.org for details.

About Canton Museum of Art

Recognized for powerful original exhibitions focused on American art and its influences, the Canton Museum of Art makes the discovery and exploration of art accessible to all, with more than 50,000 visitors each year. The Museum's education outreach programs, School of Art classes, and workshops bring art and creative spark to thousands of students of all ages, while its art therapy program promotes health and well-being partnering with social service and health agencies across Stark County. CMA's acclaimed Collection focuses on American works on paper, primarily watercolors, and contemporary ceramics. The CMA Shop, featuring curated local and regional artisan made gifts, is open during regular Museum hours. Founded in 1935, CMA is celebrating its 90th Anniversary during 2024-2025. Visit CantonArt.org and follow the Museum on Facebook® and Instagram® for updates.

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