



SCRIMMAGE

Football in American Art
from the Civil War to the Present

News Release

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Canton, Ohio - *Scrimmage: Football in American Art from the Civil War to the Present* is the first comprehensive assembly of work by prominent American artists focusing on football. This exciting new exhibition is on view August 1 – October 29, 2017 with a special public reception on August 10 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. *Scrimmage* will allow audiences from around the country to discover and explore football and art in a community steeped in both. *This special exhibition is organized by the Gregory Allicar Museum of Art (formerly the University Art Museum) at Colorado State University, and the Jorden Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon.*

Through works assembled from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Figge Art Museum, Denver Art Museum, The Rockwell Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts - Houston, Yale University, Canton Museum of Art, and numerous other public and private collections, including paintings, prints, sculptures, and new media, *Scrimmage* details the history of football from the end of the Civil War to the present, exploring themes such as race, teamwork, and competition for viewers to examine today. *Scrimmage* features 60 works from American artists including: Winslow Homer, *Holiday in Camp*, 1865; R. Tait McKenzie, *The Onslaught*, 1920; Thomas Hart Benton, *Forward Pass*, 1972; Andy Warhol, *O.J. Simpson*, 1977; and Ernie Barnes, *Fumble in the Line*, 1990.

***Scrimmage* Programming:**

Along with the exhibit, several collaborative events are planned to bring *Scrimmage* to life over three months throughout the Canton community:

- **Pro Football Hall of Fame (August 1 - 6)** will connect Hall of Fame players to audiences with panel discussions of health issues, race in sports, and the linkage of football and art. Dates and times of the presentations will be announced as they are

made available.

- **Arts In Stark 'The Eleven' Art Project (August 4)** will unveil the newest mural, *Super Bowl III*, by artist Dirk Rozich with a free public reception at the Cultural Center for the Arts.

- **AULTCARE Family Field Day (September 9)** will be a free event to engage in outdoor arts and sports activities, and explore the *Scrimmage* exhibit through tours led by local high school football coaches at the Canton Museum of Art. 11AM-3PM

- **Canton Ballet (August – October)** will perform variations of *Touchdowns and Tutus*, a program featuring high school football players paired with dancers to illustrate how players use ballet as a training technique, at various community events.

- **Canton Symphony Orchestra (September 3)** will present a Summer in the Park “Tailgating” *concert* reliving football in music from film and television in advance of NFL season kickoff.

- **Massillon Museum (August – October)** continues an exhibit series with its Paul Brown collection, celebrating Brown as the first coach of the Cleveland Browns and a leader in racial integration of football.

- **Canton Palace Theatre (September 7 – 8)** will present Football Film Days featuring time-honored football favorites from the movies.

- **Stark District Library (August– October)** will be working with the Museum to present programs based on the book “Rudy: My Story,” which was chosen for the Library’s One Book, One Community feature.

***Scrimmage* Origins**

This exhibition developed as curators discovered that a host of prominent American artists had pictured aspects of football and the public culture surrounding the sport, yet no focused art historical study had examined these images; in fact, very little research has addressed the large body of artworks that engage with sports.

The exhibition is not meant to present a history of football – the development of rules and gradual changes in play, the history of teams or players – but instead offers a window to understanding themes central to American life, both past and current. As such, the exhibition explores these images from multiple perspectives and themes. The Canton Museum of Art invites visitors to engage in a dialogue – with works of important American artists as a springboard – about sports, art, and their roles in our history and culture, and to reflect on how these images reveal attitudes and transitions in American life. The exhibition is divided into eight sections:

Football: the Spectator Sport

How did football, which began as a private extracurricular activity for a small group of

young men, become the public spectacle we know today? Early on the sport was embraced by college administrators who saw benefits, including the potential for financial gain – contributions from alumni and institutional giving loyalty – and increased interest from the press. This exhibition examines the public culture of football as spectator sport. Football soon developed a culture separate from play on the field – bands, cheerleaders, mascots, team colors, pep-rallies, homecoming, and parades – were all introduced early in the history of the sport. These remain vital parts of the culture and have led to modern-day fan-driven activities like tail-gating, team merchandising, and extensive half-time extravaganzas brought to super-size scale at the Super Bowl. Artists, as fascinated by these phenomena as the game itself, picture these American obsessions.

Class, Race and Ethnicity

Initially isolated to the campuses of the Ivy Leagues, football began as a sport for upper-class white Americans. The exhibition examines issues of class, race, and ethnicity and football's transition from an Ivy League sport to a mass-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-racial phenomenon. How did this transition happen? Early and frequent press coverage brought football to a mass audience, broadening interest in the sport; at the turn of the century American immigrants began to engage in casual games as a means of assimilation into American life; and, as the American education system democratized, welcoming a wider-spectrum of students to campuses across the country, college football rosters began to reflect a more diverse population. Despite this, the imagery of football reflects ongoing racial and ethnic prejudice and biases. While African American and Native American players distinguished themselves on the football gridiron, their images are rarely seen in the early history of football art; instead they are reduced to racial stereotypes, or parodied in mascot imagery.

Football, Struggle, War and the “Strenuous Life”

President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term “strenuous life,” urging American men and boys to develop strength through athletics in preparation for “the rough work of the world.” In a 1900 article entitled “The American Boy” Roosevelt singled out football as a model. He admonished the American boy to engage in “manly exercises and to develop his body” and concluded by writing: “In short, in life, as in a foot-ball game, the principle to follow is: Hit the line hard; don't foul and don't shirk, but hit the line hard!” For Roosevelt, the “strenuous life” was also preparation for the necessity of war and keeping America strong. This exhibit examines artists' depictions that relate to the promotion of football as a model for masculinity and that suggest analogies to warfare.

Gender in Football: Women's Roles

Despite Title IX legislation and attempts at developing women's football leagues, women have not played a role on the gridiron. Yet women figure prominently in football imagery. The exhibition explores how images both perpetuate and challenge gender stereotypes. While Charles Dana Gibson's *The Coming Game: Yale vs. Vassar*, 1895, places women as protagonists on the field, the majority of artists portray women in passive and objectified roles. As adorned spectators, cheerleaders, drum majorettes, women serve as foils that clearly define play on the field as a masculine realm.

Football and Violence

Current discussions about long-term football injuries and the concussion crisis suggest that these concerns are new. Yet, as early as the colonial period, rudimentary forms of football were outlawed and condemned for their violent nature and for provoking incendiary behavior. And, in the early part of the 20th century, despite his love for football, Theodore Roosevelt bemoaned the lawless nature of the game. The troublesome nature of football, explored by artists from the 19th century through the contemporary period, emerged first in a score of illustrations. In *Scrimmage* artists picture the extreme physical nature of the sport and its ramifications.

The American Sport

Yale Coach, Walter Camp (1859-1925), widely known as the “father of American football,” envisioned a game that mirrored a model of capitalism, industrial strength, and American ingenuity. Creating rules that clearly distinguished football from what he saw as its unruly English antecedents, Camp’s football imitated an American corporate structure with each player fulfilling a specific assignment, a hierarchy of positions, and managerial roles for quarterback and coaching staff. In the exhibition, artwork reflects these ideas and other traditions specific to American ways of life, including the association of the Thanksgiving holiday with football, the quarterback as American hero, and the sport as a rite-of-passage.

Celebrity Culture and the Media

The rise of football as an American sport is directly tied to media coverage. In *Scrimmage*, a number of prints are displayed that were published and widely distributed through a popular press that brought the sport to wide attention. Michael Oriard’s books, *Reading Football*, and *King Football*, trace the arc of media coverage from these early prints, through the rise of radio, newsreels, and movies, to the advent of the televised game, chronicling how our mediated world has promoted the sport and its participants. The first televised game took place on December 28, 1958 and gradually, television coverage accentuated spectacle; the use of slow motion, instant replay, half-time interviews and locker room footage, turned the football contest into high drama, and heightened attention to the celebrity status of individual players. Television also transformed the way that football was seen – allowing fans to follow teams from the comfort of their own homes. In this section we examine artists reacting to celebrity culture and to mediated views of football.

Athleticism

The concept of “muscular Christianity” promoted in the late 19th and early 20th century suggested that vigorous exercise and participation in sports competition, developed positive moral characteristics. Popularized, in great part, because of fears that an urbanized workforce lacked physical fitness, the movement promoted strenuous activity. Football was often a model. Though not always aligned to the movement of “muscular Christianity” American leadership has repeatedly emphasized the need for physical fitness, athletic achievement, teamwork and sportsmanship. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy all

stressed the need for improved physical condition; Eisenhower established the President's Council on Youth Fitness in 1956 and Kennedy urged better physical fitness in light of Cold War competition with a fit Soviet populace. Today, Michelle Obama promotes "Let's Move" as a means towards a healthier, less sedentary life. In this section we examine artists who celebrate the athletic prowess of athletes and the skill and beauty of athletics.

This special exhibition has been made possible with support in part by Stark Community Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, ArtsInStark, Aultcare, Visit Canton, and the Key Bank Foundation.

Media Images

High-resolution images can be downloaded via the provided link below.

DOWNLOAD HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES VIA THIS LINK:

<http://bit.ly/2thuK68>

About the Canton Museum of Art

The Canton Museum of Art (CMA) is one of Ohio's premier museums for an exceptional visual arts experience. CMA is recognized for powerful national touring exhibits; dynamic CMA-original exhibits; an unrivaled Permanent Collection of American watercolors and contemporary ceramics; and innovative education outreach programs, in-Museum classes, and workshops. CMA is one of only two Stark County museums accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. For more information, including hours, exhibits, classes, and special events, call 330.453.7666, visit www.cantonart.org, Facebook at "Canton Museum of Art," or @CantonMuseum on Twitter.

Admission: Regular admission is \$8 Adults; \$6 Seniors and Students (with valid I.D.); Museum Members are Free; and Children 12 and under, Free. Tickets are available at the Museum Ticket Office during Museum hours. For group visits, discounts, and tours, please call 330.453.7666 at least two weeks prior to your visit for reservations and/or to request a docent-led tour.

Canton Museum of Art Hours:

Hours – Monday: Closed; Tues - Thurs: 10am - 8pm; Fri - Sat: 10am - 5pm; Sun: 1 - 5pm

Location: The Canton Museum of Art is located in the Cultural Center for the Arts, 1001 Market Avenue North, Canton, Ohio 44702. Free onsite parking is available around the Museum. Call 330.453.7666 for information and directions or visit our website at www.cantonart.org.