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**HIGH TO PRESENT EXHIBITION EXPLORING THE INSPIRATION AND
INNOVATION OF AMERICAN FRAME DESIGN**

*Beaux Arts & Crafts: Masterpieces of American Frame Design 1890–1920
from the Private Collection of Edgar O. Smith*

September 25–November 27, 2011

ATLANTA, September 21, 2011 –The High Museum of Art is hosting “Beaux Arts & Crafts: Masterpieces of American Frame Design 1890–1920,” on loan from the noted New York frame collector Edgar O. Smith. This exhibition brings together 15 frames by American makers from the late 19th and early 20th centuries—a golden era for innovations in frame design in the United States. Works of art in their own right, this selection of frames from the Arts and Crafts and Beaux Art periods perfectly embodies the spirit of turn-of-the-century aesthetic in America by celebrating hand-crafted, elegant and useful design. Frame designers and makers represented include Stanford White, Charles and Maurice Prendergast, Max Kuehne, E. I. Couse, Frederick Harer, Foster Brothers, Newcomb-Macklin, Walfred Thulin, Hermann Dudley Murphy and Carrig-Rohane.

“The selection of American frames presented in this exhibition are masterpieces,” commented Tracy Gill of Gill & Lagodich Fine Period Frames, New York. “Though originally designed and crafted to harmonize with specific paintings, a century later the frames stand as independent works of art. Brought together, they form a historically important and truly beautiful collection of picture frames.”

“Beaux Arts & Crafts: Masterpieces of American Frame Design 1890–1920” showcases the care and attention American artists had begun to give to their frames by the late 1880s. The renaissance of the American frame gained momentum at the turn of the twentieth century, when the luxuriously ornamented, grand, classical and academic Beaux Arts aesthetic overlapped with the more straightforward, reformist and hands-on Arts and Crafts style. Artists wanted frames that were individually crafted for each work of art and both approaches to frame design were embraced. In frame-making this meant new interpretations of traditional handcraftsmanship and centuries-old motifs.

Careful attention was paid to both frame construction—made by hand, not machine—and surface treatment, such as variations in gold tonality, patina and colors chosen to complement an artist’s palette. The fluent eclecticism of Beaux Arts and the reductionist ornament of Arts and Crafts both freely incorporated a number of historical influences, resulting in truly original frames that were unique and modern for their time. During this golden age, frame design and manufacture garnered the attention of tastemakers, artists, collectors and craftsmen. The frame gained prestige and importance, and careful consideration of how a frame would integrate with a work of art became paramount. Many artisans signed and dated their hand-carved and -gilded frames as a testament to the artistry of their creation.

Exhibition Organization, Support & Catalogue

“Beaux Arts & Crafts: Masterpieces of American Frame Design 1890–1920” is organized by Gill & Lagodich Fine Period Frames, New York, and is on view at the High through the generous support of Edgar O. Smith. A 52-page, four-color exhibition catalogue written by Tracy Gill (with an additional essay by Virginia Couse Leavitt) explores the linkage of these frames with American artists, dealers and collectors, connecting them to original paintings or specific frame designs used on the works of specific artists. Artists represented include Frank W. Benson, Frederick S. Church, Abbott H. Thayer, E. I. Couse, William McGregor Paxton, Dwight Tryon, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, Joseph Davol, G. Ruger Donoho, Max Kuehne and Daniel Garber.

High Museum of Art

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; significant holdings of European paintings and decorative art; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High’s Media Arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005 the High opened three new buildings by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum’s size, creating a vibrant “village for the arts” at the Woodruff Arts Center in Midtown Atlanta. *For more information about the High, please visit www.High.org.*

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is the largest arts center in the Southeast as well as one of the four largest in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines five visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art, Young Audiences and the 14th Street Playhouse.

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