



HIRSCHL & ADLER GALLERIES

## THE ART SHOW 2019

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# A MODERN SISTERHOOD

The Rise of American Women Artists, 1900–1950

*The period ... was a time of significant change for all artists in America. The arrival of modernist styles, the waning authority of the National Academy of Design, and the evolution of new exhibition places and policies affected all artists. For women artists, these developments suggested a chance for equal recognition.<sup>1</sup>*

— Gail Levin



Suzy Morris Frelinghuysen (1912–1988),  
*Composition: The Ring*, 1943. Oil and  
collage on Masonite,  
29 1/4 x 25 1/4 in.

While a handful of American women carved out successful careers as professional artists during the 19th century, it wasn't until the 20th century that more women artists began to enjoy the same opportunity and recognition as their male counterparts. Yet, parity was not easily won. It took a new wave of artistic independence, suffrage, social and sexual upheaval, hard-won battles against opinionated critics and a conservative art establishment, and a preoccupation with a world war to clear the way for acceptance, admiration, and ultimately, acclaim. Women artists' battle for parity is still being waged today, but the first skirmishes after the turn of the 20th century firmly set its course.

For its booth at The Art Show 2019, Hirschl & Adler Galleries will document the rise of the female artist in America from 1900 to 1950. Three generations of women born between 1850 and 1920 — author Eleanor Munro's so-called “First Wave”<sup>2</sup> — were well positioned to reap the benefits of the era's changing mores and attitudes, from the “old guard” of Mary Cassatt, born before 1850, to avant-garde cubist Suzy Morris

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<sup>1</sup> Gail Levin, “The Changing Status of American Women Artists, 1900–1930,” in Eleanor Tufts, *American Women Artists, 1830–1930*, exhib. cat. (Washington, D.C.: The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1987), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). Munro's book was an outgrowth of the popular eight-part PBS television series, “The Originals: Women in Art,” which aired in 1979.

Frelinghuysen, born in the 1910s. The Hirschl & Adler stand will endeavor to tell the story of women artists' struggle and rise to equanimity over the first 50 years of the 20th century.

Hirschl & Adler's survey at The Art Show will commence with a figural work by an American stalwart of the Gilded Age, Mary Cassatt. Cassatt wholeheartedly embraced the impressionism to such a great and thorough extent that she exhibited with the French Impressionists beginning in 1879. Cassatt's work may have been firmly grounded in the aesthetics and sensibilities of the late 19th century, but she was thoroughly modern in her beliefs. Cassatt was an avowed Socialist, rallied for woman's suffrage, and was profoundly devastated by what she called the "moral disintegration" of Europe in the aftermath of the First World War.



Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), *Sara in a Bonnet with a Plum Hanging Down at Left (No. 2)*, c. 1906–07. Pastel on paper, 17 x 15 in.

If Cassatt turned to creating art after growing up in a rarified atmosphere of wealth and privilege, opera soprano Suzy Frelinghuysen turned to painting by marriage. In 1935, she married George L. K. Morris, art collector, abstract artist, and critic. With her husband's encouragement, Frelinghuysen adopted cubism and, over the next three decades, created brilliant compositions in the milieu of Picasso, Braque, and Leger, which were exhibited at such venues as American Abstract Artists at the Squibb Gallery in New York.

Women artists made great strides during the first decades of the 20th century in the face of complex challenges, both in the art world and in the socio-political climate largely defined by two world wars and a paralyzing depression. Hirschl & Adler will show how women, over three generations, gradually shed the restraints of a conservative and traditional male-oriented art establishment, thus enabling the free expression of their unique interpretations of subjects, themes, and aesthetics.



Honoré Sharrer (1920–12009), *Soldier, Wife, and Child*, 1949–51. Oil on Masonite, 26 1/8 x 27 1/4 in.