

Retrospective: When ARTnews Went to the Armory Show

BY *THE EDITORS OF ARTNEWS* POSTED 02/26/13

And other excerpts from our coverage 100, 75, 50, and 25 years ago

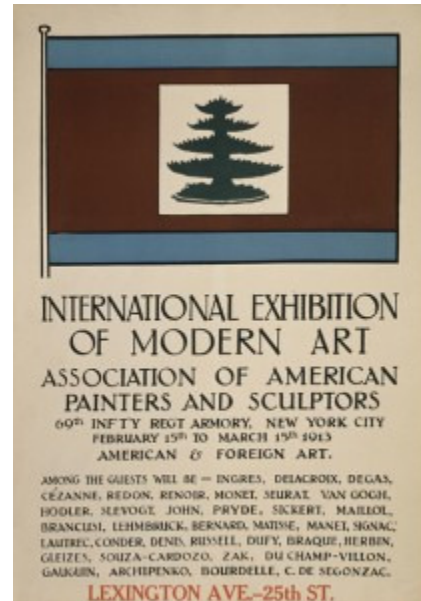
100 YEARS AGO

“Taken as a whole, the exhibition is a clean, a strong, and a varied one and of vast artistic, educational interest and importance, and, if I mistake not, will have as a result, and despite the unquestionably skeptical and even hostile attitude towards the merits of the new foreign movements, or an indisposition to accept them as being worthy of the title of art movements in general—the most marked effect upon the cause of art in America, and upon the coming production of American painters and sculptors, than anything that has occurred since the first exhibition of the so-called Munich band of young American painters in the old American art galleries in 1878, and of the work of Monet and his contemporaries and followers held here in 1883.”

— “*A Bomb from the Blue.*” by James B. Townsend, February 22, 1913

75 YEARS AGO

“Any exhibition of Mexican painting restricted to fifteen contemporary artists is bound to exclude some of the large number of notable painters who are contributing to the so-called Renaissance of Mexican art. But the current exhibition at the Valentine Gallery covers a fair ground including most of the leading figures and thus presenting a legitimate survey of the various trends that, since the Social Revolution of 1910, have been developing in a country newly awakened to its national artistic heritage, newly



Armory Show Poster, 1913, Elmer McRae Papers. From “The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show, 1913” [exhibition](#) at the Montclair Art Museum.

COLLECTION ARCHIVE, HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C. GIFT OF THE JOSEPH H. HIRSHHORN FOUNDATION, 1966. PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEE STALSWORTH.



José Clemente Orozco,
Zapata, 1930, oil on
canvas.

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(ARS), NEW YORK / SOMAAP,
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50 YEARS AGO

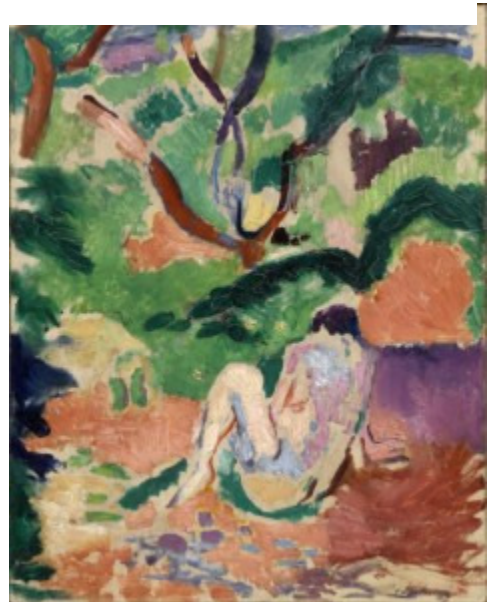
“The ‘International Exhibition of Modern Art’ held at New York exactly fifty years ago, at the 69th Regiment Armory, was, on its own terms, a failure; yet this very same show has since come to be looked upon as a major landmark and watershed in American art. Originally intended to advance avant-garde American artists by showing them side by side with the best modern work that Europe had to offer, it in fact advanced only the Europeans.”

— *“Reconstructing the ‘whirlwind of 26th Street,’ ”*
by Samuel Sachs, II, February 1963

aware of its own popular motifs to be found in immediate surroundings, and conscious of demands leading to political and thus to artistic freedom.

The exhibition is fittingly dominated by the painting *Zapata*, executed in 1930 by José Clemente Orozco who stands, both as an individual and as an artist, as one of the symbolic figures of the tremendous movement that has surged through Mexico during the past decades. Dramatic, stirring and monumental, *Zapata* combines an austerity of subject matter and a severity of forms indigenous to Mexican art with an incredible beauty of color and surface that, because of a complete subordination to the drama of the subject, escapes casual observation.”

— *“Mexican Artists of Today,”* by Martha Davidson,
February 19, 1938



Henri Matisse, *Nude in a Wood (Nu dans la forêt; Nu assis dans le bois)*, 1906, oil on board mounted on panel. From “The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show, 1913” [exhibition](#) at the Montclair Art Museum.

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YORK.

25 YEARS AGO

“In retrospect, the ’70s can be seen as the decade in which a combination of forces—the women’s movement, a growing interest in early modernist painting and photography, and the broad appeal of her iconic images—helped make O’Keeffe into a larger-than-life figure. By the beginning of the ’80s, she had achieved star status. Oddly, in that regard she had something in common with Andy Warhol, another American master attention-getter. Although Warhol was a much more visible figure, a member of the media-conscious jet set, like O’Keeffe he used a certain indifference as a conceit. While

Warhol’s indifference took the form of an amoral passivity, O’Keeffe cultivated the aura of an exotic, stoic recluse—always in black, always with a touch of white at her throat (particularly melodramatic during the ’20s, an era of frivolous color and fashion). If Warhol endures through his iconic portraits of others, Stieglitz’s legacy of more than 500 photographs of O’Keeffe constitutes not only his greatest statement, but perhaps also hers.”

— *“O’Keeffe’s Misfocus,”* by John Yau, *February 1988*

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Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O’Keeffe—After Return from New Mexico*, 1929, gelatin silver print.

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