

MEDIA CONTACT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Millard Sheets: The Early Years (1926-1944)
February 14, 2010 – May 30, 2010



LEFT-RIGHT: Millard Sheets, *Beer For Prosperity*, 1933, watercolor on paper, 15 x 21 inches, The E. Gene Crain Collection. Millard Sheets, *California*, 1935, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches, Collection of Peter and Gail Ochs

Pasadena, CA - The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is proud to present *Millard Sheets: The Early Years (1926-1944)*, the first cohesive survey of this remarkable period in the oeuvre of Millard Owen Sheets.

Arguably Sheets was at his creative zenith as a painter during this chapter of his career. The exhibition features a cross section of eighty outstanding oils, watercolors, drawings and lithographs, a number of which have not been publicly displayed since the 1930s. The exhibition illustrates how Sheet's personal style captures Southern California's rise to prominence through the lens of the Roaring 20s and the Great Depression; as well as his powerful influence on many of the other important artists of the time. The featured works are from the years before the end of the Second World War during which Regionalist Art and American Scene Painting was in its heyday and Sheets was considered the West Coast leader of the movement. After the war, his creative sensibilities changed and Sheets reinvented himself, shifting his both his aesthetic and his media. This exhibition

features seminal works from that golden age that established Millard Sheets alongside the other premier American artists of the era, Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood, and Edward Hopper.

Millard Sheets: The Early Years (1926-1944) will be divided into four sections. The first section will feature oil paintings produced during his early career, including some of his student works and award-winning paintings from exhibitions in France and California in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. The second section features key watercolors from the 1930s when Sheets rose to national prominence with the American Scene Art movement. Most of these works are considered Regionalist art and are among the finest to have been produced on the West Coast. The third section will feature a series of watercolors that visually trace the development and evolution of Sheet's watercolor painting style from 1926 to 1944. The fourth section will feature 1930s era watercolors by students of Millard Sheets including works by Milford Zornes, Lee Blair, James Patrick and Tom Craig. Also included in the exhibition will be black and white lithographs Sheets produced after studying in France with master lithographer Gaston Dorfinant in 1929.

The period from the 1920s to 1940s represents the development of Millard Sheets from an exceptionally gifted art student to a mature and important artist and teacher and parallels the boom years for California Art. During this time, Sheets gained unprecedented national and international recognition throughout the United States and abroad. Sheets' art was a beacon of light during the Great Depression, as he chose to primarily focus on the positive elements of Southern California's optimism and vibrancy rather than on the turmoil of the Great Depression. Between the years of 1929 and 1939 he mounted 42 solo exhibitions. At the same time, Sheets was a leading force behind the California Style Watercolor movement and taught at the Chouinard Art School, Southern California's foremost art school at that time. He was appointed head of the art department at the Claremont Graduate Schools and developed Scripps College's small art department into a major and influential art center.

A committed educator, Sheets sought to bring art to people of all backgrounds. He became involved in the Los Angeles County Fair, which brought high quality work to the public, as a teenager when his work was exhibited. In the 1930s, he became director of the Fair and held that position until the 1950s. The curator, Gordon McClelland, is a seminal figure in advancing the field of research in California Style watercolors; *The California Style, California Watercolor Artists, 1925-1955*, Gordon McClelland and Jay Last's book, has been the number one reference book for California School watercolor collecting ever since it came out in 1985. The exhibition about Millard Sheets' early years

will present new research and expand upon the visual story of the artist with further visual and written analysis of Sheets' art, life, and the period in which he painted.



Millard Sheets, *Spring Street*, 1930, oil on canvas, 32 x 36 inches, Collection of Howard and Roberta Ahmanson

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

OPENING RECEPTION

Saturday, February 13, 2010

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Opening Reception for *Millard Sheets: The Early Years (1926-1944)*

\$5 admission

Free for PMCA Members

RSVP: 626-568-3665, ext. 14

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About the PMCA:

The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is dedicated to the exhibition of California art, architecture, and design from 1850 to the present. Informed by the state's rich mixture of cultures and inspired by its impressive geography, California art has long been defined by a spirit of freedom and experimentation. PMCA exhibitions and educational programs explore the cultural dynamics and influences unique to California that have shaped and defined art in all media.

Hours:

Wednesday – Sunday, 12:00 - 5:00 pm.

The Museum is closed July 4th, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas and New Year's Day.

Admission:

\$7 for Adults, \$5 for Seniors (65+) and Students with valid ID; free to PMCA Members and children under 12. Access for people with disabilities is provided.

Location/Parking:

The Museum is located at 490 East Union Street. From the 210 Freeway, take the Lake Avenue exit. Go south and take a right on Union Street. From the 110 Freeway/Downtown Los Angeles, follow the freeway until its end, then take Arroyo Parkway and turn right at Colorado, then left at Oakland to get to Union Street. Parking is available at the Museum.

PMCA Tours:

At this time, the museum does not offer regularly scheduled docent tours of our special exhibitions. However, docent tours are available to private groups for a fee of \$75. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is due two weeks prior to the scheduled date in order to guarantee a tour. We regret that we are unable to accommodate tours for groups smaller than 10 or larger than 50 people. Before requesting a tour, please check the exhibition calendar to see which exhibitions will be available during your visit.

A discounted group rate of \$4 per person is available for groups of 20 or more, and free admission is offered to school groups of K-12 public school students. Please call to notify us at least one week in advance for these special admission rates.

For any questions or to make reservations for a tour or group rate, please call Shirlae Cheng at 626-568-3665 x17.

PMCA Information:

For information, the please call 626-568-3665 or visit the website: www.pmcaonline.org