

UPDATED RELEASE
January 12, 2011

**TWO EXHIBITIONS FEATURE THE WORK OF MODERN
AMERICAN MASTERS PHILIP GUSTON AND DAVID SMITH,
OPENING AT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION ON FEBRUARY 12, 2011**

Press Preview Tues., February 8
9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
To R.S.V.P. contact Cecilia Wagner

Washington, D.C.— This winter, The Phillips Collection showcases the work of modern masters Philip Guston (1913–1980) and David Smith (1906–1965). Both exhibitions shine a spotlight on a pivotal moment in each artist’s illustrious career, revealing the evolution of his personal aesthetic. The exhibitions open on Feb. 12, 2011, and remain on view through May 15.

“From acquiring Guston’s powerfully abstract *Native’s Return* in 1958 to exhibiting his most recent works on paper in 1981, the Phillips has a long history of supporting this complex artist’s periods of exploration and breakthrough,” said Dorothy Kosinski, director of The Phillips Collection. “This exhibition focuses on an important moment of transition in Guston’s career. At the same time we’ll feature an exhibition of works by his contemporary, David Smith, that reveals an equally important moment of artistic evolution.”



Philip Guston. *Rome Garden*, 1971. Oil on paper mounted on panel. Private Collection, Woodstock, NY

PHILIP GUSTON, ROMA

From the films of Federico Fellini to the vestiges of ancient Rome and the works of Italian masters, Philip Guston drew inspiration throughout his career from Italian art and culture. This exhibition features 39 paintings from the early 1970s that Guston created during his tenure as artist-in-residence at the American Academy in Rome. It marks the first time that the work has been gathered together and displayed, and The Phillips Collection is the only U.S. venue.

One of the most celebrated exponents of the New York School, Guston was, with Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning, one of the pioneers of abstract expressionism. Guston, who had been a fellow at the American Academy in Rome in 1949, took refuge there as artist-in-residence in the autumn of 1970. An exhibition of his newest paintings, daring to reintroduce figural form and narrative into the reigning abstract expressionist mode, opened at the Marlborough Gallery in New York to scathing reviews from most of the art establishment.



Philip Guston. *Pantheon*, 1973. Private Collection

It was during this tumultuous period that Guston painted the *Roma* series, experimenting with his newly invented language of isolated figural images, challenging himself to draw inspiration from his environment, not just his imagination. For Guston, Rome was magical—a fertile place where he could meditate on art and escape the pressures of the contemporary art world in New York. Inspired by the paintings of Italian heroes like the Renaissance master Piero della Francesca, as well as the modernists Giorgio Morandi and Giorgio de Chirico, Guston combined a nostalgia for the past with recognizable objects from the Italian landscape.

Saturated in a palette of deep pinks and salmon that recall the city’s sun-drenched surfaces, the *Roma* series embraces figurative painting in its most rudimentary form. As Guston once said, “I imagine wanting to paint as a cave man would...I should like to paint like a man who has never seen a painting.” The series allowed Guston to develop a vocabulary of pared down forms organized into unconventional narrative systems that ultimately provoked new directions in his late paintings. The sophisticated dialogue between stylistic considerations, political ideas, and autobiographical detail created multiple layers of meaning behind seemingly crude cartoon-like imagery.

Guston, born in 1913 in Montreal, moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1919. Interested in art, he was encouraged by his mother to take a correspondence course in cartooning. He attended Manual Arts High School, where he became friends with Jackson Pollock, a fellow student. After he and Pollock were expelled from school for distributing satirical pamphlets, Guston independently pursued his interest in art, including comics, as well as delving into various philosophical theories. He was largely a self-taught artist.

In the winter of 1935–1936, Guston moved to New York, where he worked on murals for the Works Progress Administration on their Federal Art Project. He also combined teaching with his painting career and was, at various times, a member of the faculties of Yale and Columbia Universities and the University of Iowa. From 1973 until his death in 1980 he taught at Boston University.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A 221-page hardcover catalogue accompanies the exhibition. It includes essays by exhibition curator Peter Benson Miller and modern art scholar Dore Ashton. Guston's own diary entries, printed alongside a selection of color reproductions of paintings from the *Roma* series, recount exchanges at the American Academy; pilgrimages to Venice, Arezzo, Sicily, and Orvieto; and observations of the international cultural community in Rome. The book is available in the Museum Shop for \$60.00.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SPONSOR

Organized by the City of Rome and the Museo Carlo Bilotti – Aranciera di Villa Borghese, in partnership with the American Academy in Rome, *Philip Guston, Roma* is made possible by a grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

MEDIA PARTNER

Capitol File magazine chronicles and celebrates the most influential players, cultural connoisseurs, fashion sophisticates, and philanthropic leaders in Washington. As the ultimate source for substantive features and captivating photography, *Capitol File* delivers the latest news in art, fashion, politics, local dining, and design.

LA DOLCE DC CITYWIDE FESTIVAL

Philip Guston, Roma is part of La Dolce DC, a citywide festival in partnership with the Embassy of Italy. It showcases the international aspect of Washington, D.C., celebrating all things Italian, from classic art to contemporary culture.

DAVID SMITH INVENTS

David Smith is widely considered one of the most important American sculptors of the 20th century. He was the first American to make welded steel sculpture, infusing this industrial material with a fluidity and imaginative creativity that is at once beautiful and muscular. In doing so he transformed the nature of sculpture in America and won for sculpture the respect in American art previously reserved for painting.

David Smith Invents, the first exhibition in Washington of the artist's work in more than 25 years, explores Smith's creative process from the early 1950s into the early 1960s through 39 works. Featuring six sculptures, the exhibition takes its inspiration from Smith's welded steel *Bouquet of Concaves* (1959), a recent gift to the Phillips. This work is shown for the first time with Smith's *Bouquet of Concaves II* (1960) and *Black Concaves* (1960), a group which Smith saw as seminal experiments with, in his words, the mystery of concave and convex. These sculptures are displayed with works on paper and paintings from the same period. In addition, the exhibition showcases the artist's own photographs of these sculptures on his property in the Adirondack Mountains near Lake



David Smith. *Black Concaves*, 1960. Steel, painted. The Honorable Ann W. Brown and Donald A. Brown

George, N.Y., revealing how Smith invested them with new meaning by placing them in the natural landscape. The exhibition highlights how Smith, working in a variety of media, explored ideas over time in both two and three dimensions.

Smith grew up in Indiana, the son of an engineer, and from an early age was enthralled by trains and railroads. By age 19, he worked as a welder and riveter in a car factory, an experience that would later influence his work as he tried to capture the spirit of America's transition from a rural society to an industrial one. He ran his studio like a factory, stocked with large amounts of raw material. On steel as a medium, he said: "What it can do in arriving at form economically, no other material can do. The metal itself possesses little art history. What associations it possesses are those of this century: power, structure, movement, progress, suspension, destruction and brutality."

The 1950s marked an extraordinarily fertile period for Smith. After working on an assembly line welding locomotives and tanks during World War II, Smith received a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1950 that enabled him to devote himself to his sculpture full time. His engagement with steel, bronze, oil paint, commercial aerosol spray enamel, ink, and tempera allowed ideas and images to follow from one medium to another. He once said, "In my own case, I don't know whether I make some pieces as painted sculpture or paintings in form."

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A 112-page catalogue accompanies the exhibition. Curator Susan Behrends Frank opens a window onto Smith's unusual working process. Featured throughout the book are extraordinary photographs taken by Smith of his sculptures. Published by Yale University Press in association with The Phillips Collection, it also includes essays by Sarah Hamill, assistant professor of modern and contemporary art at Oberlin College, and Peter Stevens, executive director of the estate of David Smith. The book is available in the Museum Shop for \$29.95.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION

The exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection; the curator is Susan Behrends Frank, Ph.D., associate curator for research.

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection is one of the world's most distinguished collections of impressionist and modern American and European art. Stressing the continuity between art of the past and present, it offers a strikingly original and experimental approach to modern art by combining works of different nationalities and periods in displays that change frequently. The setting is similarly unconventional, featuring small rooms, a domestic scale, and a personal atmosphere. Artists represented in the collection include Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Claude Monet, Honoré Daumier, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Mark Rothko, Milton Avery, Jacob Lawrence, and Richard Diebenkorn, among others. The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, has an active collecting program and regularly organizes acclaimed special exhibitions, many of which

travel internationally. The Intersections series features projects by contemporary artists, responding to art and spaces in the museum. The Phillips also produces award-winning education programs for K–12 teachers and students, as well as for adults. The museum’s Center for the Study of Modern Art explores new ways of thinking about art and the nature of creativity, through artist visits and lectures, and provides a forum for scholars through courses, post-doctoral fellowships, and internships. Since 1941, the museum has hosted Sunday Concerts in its wood-paneled Music Room. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Phillips Collection is located in the heart of Washington’s historic Dupont Circle neighborhood, at 1600 21st Street, NW, near the Dupont Circle Metro (Q Street exit). Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursdays until 8:30 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Mondays and New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

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