

THE ART OF THE CLASSICAL GUITAR BRINGS STUNNING INSTRUMENTS AND BEAUTIFUL MUSIC TO THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG

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St. Petersburg, Fla.--*The Art of the Classical Guitar* draws on the impressive collection of Robb and Susan Hough of St. Petersburg and highlights memorable achievements in the history of the instrument. Stellar examples from the 1840s to the 1990s will be on view from Saturday, February 13, through Sunday, May 29. This is the first time the MFA has presented an exhibition of musical instruments, made possible by the Hough Family Foundation and The Margaret Acheson Stuart Society.

These guitars can be admired for their beauty alone, but that is only the beginning of the story. The sound produced and interpretations by talented musicians are central to their full enjoyment. Recordings made on the very instruments on view will allow visitors to hear how they actually sound. In addition, the MFA Guitar Festival from February-May will offer a host of concerts by world-class musicians.

Classical guitars, also known as Spanish guitars, combine aesthetically pleasing forms and finely crafted woodwork to produce both intricate and gorgeous sound. Handmade, the finest guitars take a month or more to create. The makers of stringed instruments, called luthiers, spend years perfecting their craft, and their names—Torres, Ramírez, Hauser, Simplicio, Friedrich, Fleta, Bouchet—have become well known among musicians and collectors around the world.

Stringed instruments, the precursors of today's guitar, have been made and played for centuries, but the acoustic guitar, as it is known today, is a relatively modern creation. Changes and developments in the guitar's design in the nineteenth century led to a rich, powerful, and delicate sound that expanded the repertoire for performers. The guitar was transformed from a minor or supporting instrument to the center of attention in concert halls.

The Spanish luthier Antonio de Torres (1817-1892) is considered the father of the modern guitar, and among collectors, his work is likened to Stradivarius in the violin market. He brought together alterations in size, shape, scale distance, internal construction, and bridge design still found in guitars today. Of the approximately 300 guitars he made, less than 100 have survived. This exhibition features an impressive example made entirely by Torres from birds-eye maple for the sides and back and Spanish pine for the soundboard.

Luthiers followed Torres's lead, making further refinements, but few achieved the fame of Germany's Hermann Hauser I (1882-1952). The legendary Andrés Segovia, who was very particular about his guitars, received his 1937 Hauser as a gift from the luthier. He called it "the greatest guitar of our epoch" and played it for most of his career. It was a perfect match—an historic guitar in the hands of the musician who took the instrument to new heights. It is now

in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The MFA will display another 1937 Hauser that has been called “the sister guitar” to Segovia’s famous instrument.

Segovia once noted: “Among God’s creatures, two, the dog and the guitar, have taken all the sizes and all the shapes, in order not to be separated from man” and he felt that his favorite Hauser had a mystical quality, which he called “soul.” *The Art of the Classical Guitar* pays tribute to one of our most beloved instruments.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Please visit www.fine-arts.org for the latest information on public programs.

Gallery Talk by Hazel and William Hough Chief Curator Dr. Jerry N. Smith on Saturday, February 13, at 3 p.m. Free with MFA admission.

Dr. Smith, who joined the MFA in October, was formerly Curator of American and European Art to 1950 and Art of the American West at the Phoenix Art Museum. During his tenure, he curated and supervised nearly 40 exhibitions that spanned art of the Renaissance to American modernism through contemporary art of the American West.

His diverse exhibitions in Phoenix included *Leonardo da Vinci’s Codex Leicester and The Power of Observation*, *Cézanne and American Modernism*, *Georgia O’Keeffe: Ingénue to Icon*, and *Andy Warhol: Portraits*.

In addition, he was instrumental in selecting and recommending art for the collection, which numbers more than 18,000 works. He has written a number of catalogues, most recently *Don Coen: The Migrant Series. Cézanne and American Modernism*, for which he wrote an essay on the artist and the American West, was published by Yale University Press. Dr. Smith holds his BA *magna cum laude* and his MA from Arizona State University and his PhD from the University of Kansas, all in art history.

MFA: Make and Take Saturday, March 5 and 19, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Inspired by *The Art of the Classical Guitar*, participants will use everything from shoe boxes to rubber bands to make their own musical instruments. Free with MFA admission. No registration is necessary. Activities are designed for ages five and older, but entire families are encouraged to explore art together.

GENEROUS SPONSORS

Major support for the Museum’s exhibitions and educational programs comes from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; The Margaret Acheson Stuart Society; Duke Energy; City of St. Petersburg Office of Cultural Affairs; and Media Sponsors *Tampa Bay Times* and WUSF.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive N.E. has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Gauguin, Renoir, Morisot, Cézanne, Rodin, O'Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast.

Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. **Admission is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.** Regular admission is \$17 for adults, \$15 for those 65 and older, and \$10 for students seven and older, including college students with current I.D. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$12 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. For more information, please call 727.896.2667 or visit www.fine-arts.org.