



**Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust**

**The Sackler Wing**

4 July – 27 September 2015

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In July 2015, the Royal Academy of Arts will present an exhibition of works by American artist Joseph Cornell (1903-1972). *Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust* will offer an overview of the artist's inventive oeuvre, surveying around 80 of Cornell's remarkable box constructions, assemblages, collages and films.

The last major solo exhibition of Cornell in Europe took place nearly 35 years ago, originating at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1980, and travelling to the Whitechapel Gallery in the UK. With very few works on permanent display in European museums, the exhibition will be an opportunity to see rarely lent masterpieces from public and private collections in the United States, Europe and Japan.

Cornell himself never left America and hardly ventured beyond New York City, yet through his art he set out to travel through history, the continents of the globe and even the spiritual realm. His works are manifestations of a powerful 'wanderlust' of the mind and soul.

Collecting was central to Cornell's creativity; he amassed a vast and eclectic personal archive of paper ephemera and found objects, eventually numbering tens of thousands of items. This material revealed his wide-ranging interests from opera, ballet, cinema and theatre to history, ornithology, poetry and astronomy. Europe held a special place in Cornell's imagination, and many of the works selected for this exhibition highlight his love of its historic cultures, from the Belle Époque to the Italian Renaissance. Inspired by these interests, he incorporated his collected materials inside glass-fronted wooden box constructions creating miniature worlds known as his 'shadow boxes', as well as producing collages and film.

Cornell was entirely self-taught and has often been characterised as an outsider to the New York art scene. In reality, he was highly engaged with the art movements and artists of the time, exhibiting regularly alongside the Surrealists and Abstract Expressionists, whilst carefully maintaining his independence from any one group. He counted many vanguard artists among his friends including Marcel Duchamp, Robert Motherwell, and Dorothea Tanning.

The exhibition will be arranged thematically in four sections that reflect the artistic processes expressed in Cornell's diaries and notes; Play & Experiment, Collecting & Classification, Observation & Exploration and Longing & Reverie. The selection will bring together key works from his major

series: Museums, Aviaries, Soap Bubble Sets, Palaces, Medici Slot Machines, Hotels and Dovecotes. *Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust* will introduce this extraordinary artist to a new generation who, from the basement of his family home on Utopia Parkway, Queens, New York, quietly assembled one of the most original bodies of work in twentieth century art.

## Organisation

*Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust* has been organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London in collaboration with the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (exhibition tour: 20 October 2015 – 10 January 2016). The exhibition is curated by Sarah Lea, Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts, and Jasper Sharp, Curator at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, with Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, as Academic Advisor. In London, the exhibition has been designed by Carmody Groarke.

## Supporter

The Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognising the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To further cross-cultural dialogue on American art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, research, and educational programmes. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.

## Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Sarah Lea, Jasper Sharp, and Lynda Roscoe Hartigan with a chronology by Ben Street.

## Dates and Opening Hours

**Press View:** Tuesday 30 June, 10am – 2pm

**Open to public:** Saturday 4 July – Sunday 27 September 2015  
10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)

**Late night opening:** Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

## Admission

£11.50 full price (£10 excluding Gift Aid donation); concessions available; children under 16 and Friends of the RA go free.

## Tickets

Tickets for *Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust* are available daily at the RA or online at [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk). Group bookings: Groups of 10+ are asked to book in advance. Telephone 020 7300 8027 or email [adultgroups@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:adultgroups@royalacademy.org.uk).

## Images

Publicity images for *Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust* can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at [www.picselect.com](http://www.picselect.com) and once registered go to the Royal Academy folder in the Arts section of Picselect.

## **Social Media**

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

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## **About the Royal Academy of Arts**

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

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