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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Autry Presents

California Impressionism: The Gardena High School Collection

Opens Saturday, September 12, 2015

Los Angeles, CA (August 17, 2015) — The story of the Gardena High School art collection is an enduring example of the power of art to rally a community and to shape people's lives. On view at the [Autry National Center of the American West](#) beginning September 12, 2015, *California Impressionism: The Gardena High School Collection* features a selection of paintings from Gardena's art collection, one of the finest collections of California Impressionism in existence. Between 1919 and 1956, Gardena seniors took part in a tradition of purchasing contemporary art of the time and gifting the work to the school upon graduation. The school's resultant collection reflects the state's scenic diversity as well as the vitality of the school's program and the Impressionist movement that once flourished in California. The exhibition at the Autry will feature nine paintings, including major works from artists Maurice Braun, Maynard Dixon, John Frost, Joe Duncan Gleason, Jean Mannheim, Edgar Payne, and Jack Wilkinson Smith.

"Bridging art, history, and tradition, this exhibition highlights the visual beauty of Western landscapes while unveiling the story of an innovative collaboration between high school students and their community that produced lasting impact," explains **W. Richard West, Jr.**, the Autry's President and CEO.

The collection originated in 1919 when Gardena High School Principal John Whitely suggested that the graduating class purchase artwork as a parting gift to the student body. This undertaking became an annual tradition that included an art exhibition, a dinner, and a series of teas and studio talks in which artists, alumni, students, faculty, and advisors participated. The students' opportunity to engage directly with artists and original paintings further inspired some students to become artists themselves, while instilling in others a lifelong appreciation for art. Many of the students' selections are now recognized as emblematic examples of California Impressionism.

About the Autry National Center of the American West

The Autry is a museum dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future. The museum presents a wide range of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and performs scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry's collection of more than 500,000 pieces of art and artifacts includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, one of the largest and most significant of Native American materials in the United States.

Museum admission is \$10 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors 60+, \$4 for children ages 3–12, and free for Autry members, veterans, and children age 2 and under. Admission is free on the second Tuesday of every month.

Hours

Museum and Autry Store:

Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Crossroads West Cafe:

Tuesday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The museum, store, and cafe are closed on Mondays, except for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 20, and Presidents' Day, February 17. Visit TheAutry.org for more information.

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IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST