When, seven years ago, Walter Annenberg and his sister merged their splendid Impressionist collections, it was marriage made in art heaven. Now for the first time, these treasures go on public display.

strength of vision

by Hunter Drohojowska

At Sunnylands, his Rancho Mirage, CA, home, Walter H. Annenberg sighs as he contemplates Monet's The Path Through the Irises (1914-17). "I cannot resist beauty," says the 81-year-old publishing magnate. "And while I respect Van Gogh's Irises (1888), it's too tight. This picture is breathing—but it's not easy to hang." In this case, the hues of the painting are complemented by the 275 acres of green grass from the surrounding golf course as reflected through the rooms' windows.

Monet's Irises is among the "Masterpieces of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: The Annenberg Collection," which opens at the Philadelphia Museum of Art May 21-September 17. The exhibition features 50 paintings by the geniuses of late 19th-century art—Monet, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Degas, Renoir, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Braque, Manet, Vuillard, Seurat, Matisse and Boudin, among others.

In this case, the word "masterpieces" is not misapplied. Many of the works can be considered semaphores in the history of art, textbook examples of (CONTINUED ON PAGE 206)

Walter H. Annenberg's priceless collection includes 50 masterpieces of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. But the assemblage owes its breadth to family ties. When his sister Enid A. Haupt, the former editor of Seventeen, decided to sell her art for estate purposes, she initially negotiated with a dealer. When Walter heard, he said, "Sell them to me. I'm your brother." She did, and today he holds what some consider the greatest late 19th-century paintings. *Above, from top:* Camille Monet on a Garden Bench, of 1873, by Claude Monet; Dish of Apples, 1873-7, by Paul Cézanne; The Pink Dress, of 1868-9, by Berthe Morisot; *Opposite page:* La Sieste, of 1891-2, by Paul Gauguin.

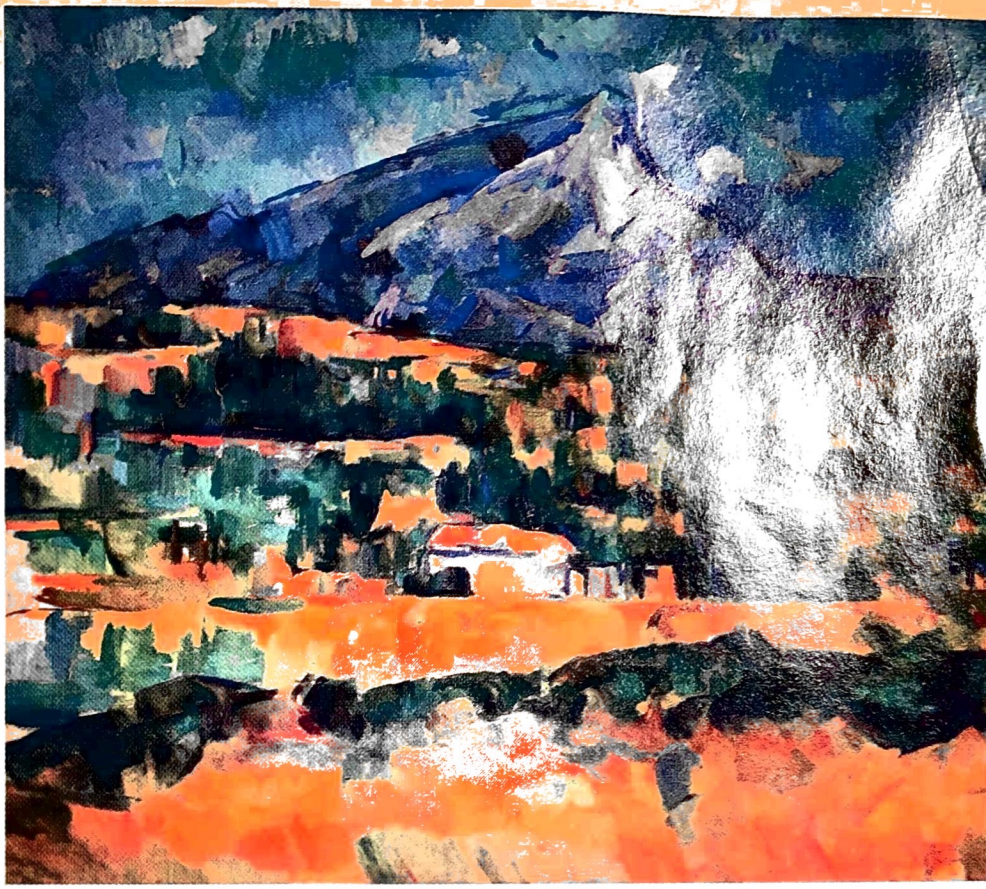
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 204)

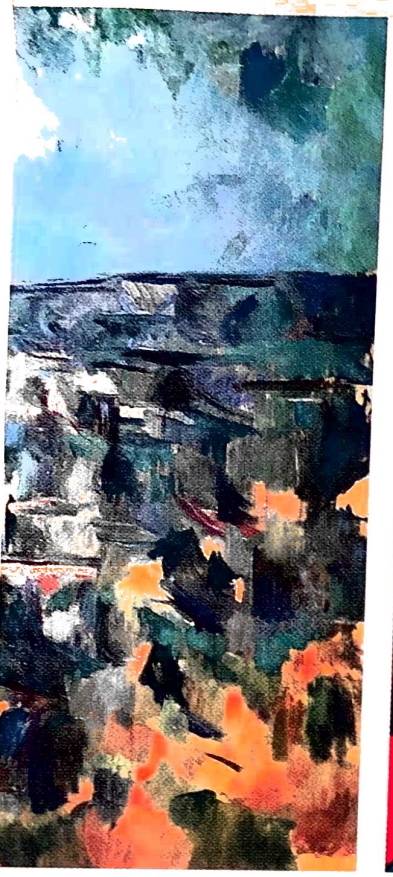
each artist's most important oeuvre. For example, included among the Van Goghs is Woman Rocking a Cradle (1889), a spectacular composition that is probably the first of five portraits the artist made of Madame Roulin. Van Gogh painted numerous pictures of Augustine and her postman husband; they were among his only friends during his 15-month stay in Arles. Their seemingly peaceful marriage offered him some solace during this torturous period of his life, after the savage breakdown that caused him to mutilate his ear. Van Gogh saw Madame Roulin as a great mother figure, symbolized by the unseen cradle she rocks in the picture, and wrote more about the creation of this painting than almost any other. "Whether I really sang a lullaby in colors is something I leave to the critics," he concluded.

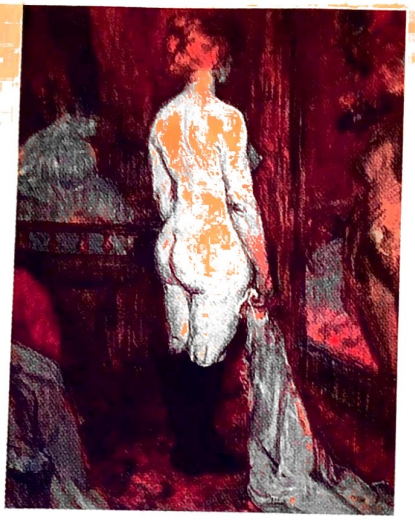
Another exceptional work is Cézanne's Mont Sainte-Victoire (1902-6). He painted the craggy, marble pile that is a symbol of Provence some 55 times. The view in Annenberg's painting was recorded from the studio Cézanne built on the hill of Les Lauves after his mother died. The mountain rises from the north forcefully and dramatically from the quilted, domestic fields, falling off to Mont du Cengle to the south. Through vibrant color and brushstroke, Cézanne successfully melds nature and art.

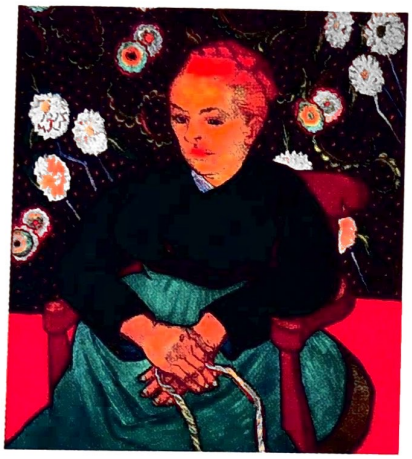
Do these masterworks give us a sense of Annenberg, the collector? Perhaps not so much as a portrait by his friend Andrew Wyeth, a profile of determination, discipline, drive. The painting gives us the man who once said, "My personal definition of life is that it is constant warfare with occasional pleasant interludes."

Certainly, those pleasant interludes involved buying pictures of flowers, beaches and pretty girls. As the family has been collecting Impressionist paintings since the 1940s. "It became an overwhelming ambition," says Annenberg. "I love my pictures dearly. I have a (CONTINUED ON PAGE 238)









Annenberg still isn't sure if he will keep his collection intact in the future or divide it among various museums. *Opposite page, clockwise from far left:* Odalisque of 1927, by Henri Matisse; Mont Sainte-Victoire of 1902-6, is one of Paul Cézanne's masterworks; The Daughters of Catulle Mendès, 1888, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir is one of the finest paintings of its time. *Counterclockwise from above:* The Little Curious Girl, 1850-60, by Camille Corot; Nude Woman Before a Mirror, 1897, by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; Woman Rocking a Cradle (Madame Augustine Roulin) of 1889 was Vincent Van Gogh's ode to the woman who offered him great comfort after he dismembered his ear; Temps Gris à la Grande Jatte, 1888, by Georges Seurat; Estaque of 1906, by George Braque.

rength
of
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STRENGTH OF VISION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 206

great respect for art in general, and I was first attracted to Impressionism and Post-Impressionism for its vibrancy of feeling. You first have to be moved by the work."

Besides being moved by the work, Annenberg is equally aware of the cleansing, healing capacities of high culture. He has made it his lifelong mission to bring respect to his family name through philanthropy and good works. He most admires those who have triumphed in the face of public scorn, figures such as William Randolph Hearst and Richard Nixon. He would also include the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists in that category. "I've always had great respect for talented people who are determined and able, yet are pushed around by the public and the press. The Impressionists were roundly denounced by the well-fed housedogs who sat in judgment upon them," he says.

The spirit of this remark comes from traumatic incidents of Annenberg's youth. His father Moses worked for Hearst before going into business for himself, eventually coming to own *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Daily Racing Form*. The bulk of the fortune was acquired through ownership of a racing wire that transmitted horse race results to bookmakers around the country.

In 1939, Moses was indicted for federal income tax evasion, the largest case against any individual in U.S. history. He pleaded guilty so that the government would not indict his son Walter, who, though not involved, was listed as director of the company. Moses was convicted, served one year in prison, then died of a brain tumor shortly after his release. Suddenly, Walter had responsibility for his mother and seven sisters as well as the family businesses. "Tragedy will either destroy you or it will inspire you," he says.

By the early '50s, he had started *TV Guide* and *Seventeen*, under the company name of Triangle Publications. His was one of the first publishing houses to own radio and TV stations and his Philadelphia station pioneered a number of broadcasting firsts, including the presentation of college-level education via TV. "I'm proud of developing course material for the day when boys and girls will be priced out of college education," he explains. "As an alternative source, it is perhaps the most important legacy I want to leave."

Today, though the family no longer owns *The Inquirer* or TV stations, the estimated worth of each Annenberg sister exceeds $50 million. And Annenberg himself seems to have succeeded in restoring respectability to the family name. On any desk he uses, whether in his Philadelphia offices or the Sunnylands compound, he keeps a plaque that reads: "Cause my works on earth to reflect honor on my father's memory." The most profound honor came, ironically, from Richard Nixon who appointed him as Ambassador to the Court of St. James from 1969 to 1974.

Initially, Annenberg was received coolly in London. But, by the end of five-and-a-half years as ambassador, he had earned the hard-won respect of the British royal family. Perhaps they admired his gentlemanly gesture of giving $300,000 toward the purchase of Henri Rousseau's *Surprised!* for the National Gallery in London. (He'd considered buying it himself until he heard they were interested.) Also, he underwrote the cost of a book on Westminster Abbey. In any case, Annenberg is the only U.S. ambassador upon whom knighthood has been bestowed.

The Philadelphia exhibition is the first time the Annenberg Collection has been displayed in its entirety since an early showing at the Tate. Not only has it been expanded but edited as well. "Unless I am excited by something, I don't want it in my house," Annenberg says.

A few years ago, he sent Picasso's *Woman with Mandolin* (1925) to auction, where it was bought by Norton Simon. "I couldn't wait to get rid of that dumb woman," Annenberg told art critic John Russell. In addition, he acquired many paintings from his sister Enid A. Haupt the former editor of *Seventeen*—who motivated his early collecting.

Bringing together the two collections was like a marriage of two compatible beauties. Haupt's Van Gogh, *Women Picking Olives* (1889), complements Annenberg's *Olive Trees: Pale Blue Sky* (1889). (Wistfully, he remembers paying $24,000 for that picture, one of the first he purchased in the mid-'40s.) Renoir's *Reclining Nude* (1883), once owned by Haupt, offers a sensuous counterpoint to the painter's societal study *The Daughters of Catulle Mendès* (1888) owned by Annenberg.

As to the future of the paintings, Annenberg has considered leaving the Sunnylands estate, with its 32,000-square-foot house by architect A. Quincy Jones, as a museum to insure the Annenberg name passing unsullied into the future. But he also considers leaving the pictures to other institutions or possibly selling the entire collection.

"If I'm faced with the poorhouse, I may have to go to Christie's or Sotheby's," he says. "A dealer called me last week offering $50 million for Gauguin's *La Sieste*. I told him, 'Thank you for the compliment but it would be like selling a member of my own family.' " □

UNIQUE STAR QUALITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 208

deified the most exaggerated forms of artifice—platinum-blonde bombshells—here in the twilight of the 1980s, we accept the complexities and contradictions of the unmanufactured image.

But there's more to it than that. The women's movement has played its role, sotto voce, in broadening the horizons of "The Beautiful." The idea that intellect and personality are as much a part of a woman's attractiveness as her face and figure is a lesson we've learned from feminism. The "bimbo" is definitely out. Instead, truly beautiful women are those whose hearts, minds and souls irradiate their faces.

Most importantly, we've been taught the value of being who we are and loving it. We're moving away from contrivance and deception and learning to cherish candor and vulnerability. We want a closer connection between form and content—books that *can* be judged by their covers because what is contained within is so clearly expressed without.

Is it any surprise that we now expect our movie stars to be what they appear to be, since we're starting to expect the very same from ourselves? —*Yona Zeldis McDonough*

MEXICAN JUMPING SCENES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 222

Mexico that was ingrained in Texas before the U.S. claimed the Lone Star state. The Real Mexico offers a meld of Spanish and Aztec dishes from its central area, exotic stews like molé from its southern tip, and spicy crab soup and fish marinated in limes, tomato and olives from its gulf states. From the Yucatán peninsula come delicately seasoned Mayan dishes such as pork braised in banana leaves and chicken smothered in achiote.

You won't find these at El Torito's. And, according to Rick Bayless, Frontera Grill is crowded with devotees: "We allowed a three-month period for the restaurant to reach a break-even point after we opened," he says. "It took only three weeks and within three months, we were doing 200 percent of the volume we'd hoped for."

In New York, Zarela maintains a brisk trade. In Los Angeles, long dominated by the barrio cooking of East L.A., The Border Grill is packed with a crowd hungry for swordfish tacos and pulled pickled beef. Real Mexico is welcome in La-La Land.

In fact, the authentic cooking of Mexico is in step with the times. Not only are the flavors far-ranging, the style of cooking is also in line with health consciousness: Mexico-from-Encino featured pinto beans refried with lard, heavy doses of salt and deep-fried flour tortilla baskets and the ever-present cheese-melt that sounded cholesterol alarms. Real Mexico can be leaner, relying on the tastes of roasted chilies instead of salt, and olive oil instead of lard.

The shift toward a (CONTINUED ON PAGE 240)