



APPLETON ART CENTER

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Appleton Art Center Celebrates City's Sesquicentennial with New Exhibition *1857/2007: Then/Now*

(APPLETON, WI) – *1857/2007: Then/Now* brings together photographs and paintings from the time of Appleton's founding with works of art by local and regional artists from the present day. Featuring over 45 works, some exhibited publicly for the first time, the exhibit is scheduled in conjunction with Appleton's 150th birthday celebration activities. A free public reception is scheduled for Friday, July 20, 9am–5pm, in conjunction with Appleton Downtown Inc.'s popular *Art on the Town* event.

A highlight of the exhibition is a portrait of Boston philanthropist, abolitionist, and Lawrence University founder, Amos Lawrence, which was painted around 1885 by Adelaide Cole Chase. The surname of Lawrence's wife, Sarah Appleton, is the genesis of our city's moniker.

Chase, a Boston native, studied with celebrated American painter Winslow Homer and finished the portrait of Lawrence when she was a teenager. "The work was painted early in Chase's career and toward the end of Amos Lawrence's life," says art center intern and researcher, Jessica Justmann. "Chase studied painting at a time when women were permitted limited access to art academies. She was fortunate that Winslow Homer was a family friend." The painting is on display after extensive restoration of the work's original 19th-century frame by the Frame Workshop of Appleton.

The earliest images in the exhibition date from 1857, the year of Appleton's founding and Lawrence University's first commencement ceremony, when the college graduated seven individuals—three women and four men. Two ambrotypes depicting the graduates are on display. "Lawrence is the second-oldest co-educational college in the country," says Julia Stringfellow, Lawrence University Archivist, who helped secure some of the historical material in the exhibition. "Those men and women were pioneers in American higher education." This marks the first time that these images are on public exhibition.

Among the other highlights from the 19th century are several rare maps of Appleton. On loan from private collectors, maps from 1876, 1877, and 1895 reveal the early growth and development of Appleton on the Fox River. Some of the first organized city plans were concentrated around the Lawrence campus, but by the end of the 19th century, Appleton had grown in all directions on both sides of the Fox River.

Also included in the exhibition is a special display of photographs and documents related to the building itself and the first businesses housed at 111 West College Avenue—the current downtown home of Appleton Art Center. "Many veterans in the community will remember with fondness the Brettschneider Furniture Store," said art center director, Timothy Riley. "Members of the Brettschneider and Trettin families hired Hoffman Company to build this edifice in 1922. Appleton Art Center is proud to be a good steward of that legacy, as we display materials that bear witness to this building's history."

Works of art from the current century include photographs, paintings, and found-object installations inspired by Appleton and its history. Works by Fox Cities artists John Luke, Caren Benzer (who will also be exhibiting at Appleton Art Center's *Art in the Park* on July 29), Karen Lee, Ben Geyer, RaeAnn Blom, Thomas H. Sutter, and Ruth Rex are included in the show. "The contemporary material on exhibit is rich and diverse, much like our community today," says Timothy Riley. "There is some cutting-edge collaborative and non-objective work along with some first-rate representational material." Works by the late Thomas and Margaret Dietrich, long-time



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Appleton artists, are also included. “A thematic common thread that weaves through the exhibit is the Fox River,” says Riley. “For 150 years, the river has inspired artists and sparked the economy of Appleton. We owe much to the Fox River.”

By special arrangement with Wisconsin’s first Poet Laureate and Appleton resident, Ellen Kort, Appleton Art Center is pleased to display in the exhibition Kort’s new poem, “The Fox River.” Riley comments, “I heard Ellen read her poem when she gave an inaugural reading last week. Upon hearing her prose, I was struck by the fact that her words echo perfectly many of the visual themes in the exhibit. Ellen graciously permitted us to use her words to help paint a picture of the Fox River—then and now—in this exhibit.”

Benefit Exhibition and Art Sale Also Scheduled This Weekend

Appleton Art Center has received hundreds of works of art from artists and collectors, who have given these works on one condition: that they be sold and the proceeds benefit Appleton Art Center, its mission, and its programs. A benefit exhibition and sale is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, July 19–20 (with a members-only preview occurring Thursday evening, July 19, 5pm–9pm). Important works—all originals and many unframed—by local, regional, and national artists will be on view and offered for sale. Pieces by Lester Schwartz, Charles Mitchell, Ellen Kort, Margaret Dietrich, Jack Lembeck, and Michelle Grabner will be included in the exhibition and sale. “I know that these works will find good homes. Every purchase benefits the visual arts in the Fox Cities,” says Timothy Riley. “Artists and collectors have been exceedingly generous with contributions to this sale. We are counting on the community to show its support by making a purchase or two—to further endorse the notion that the visual arts are important here.”

The *1857/2007: Then/Now* reception on July 20 and the Benefit Art Sale and Exhibition on July 19–20 are free and open to the public.

Appleton Art Center was established in 1960 to promote, teach, and nourish the creation and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, educational programming, and information resources. From its five-story, 25,000-square-foot gallery and teaching facility in downtown Appleton, Appleton Art Center offers exhibitions, classes, cultural programming, special events, and other initiatives that draw people from throughout the Midwest.

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