

P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 2010

Williams College Museum of Art Presents
Charles Prendergast: In Search of "Innocence"
through November 28, 2010

Photos available upon request.

Press Contact: Suzanne Silitch, Associate Director of Communications for the Arts; 413-597-3178; suzanne.silitch@williams.edu.

Williamstown, Mass. — The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is pleased to present ***Charles Prendergast: In Search of "Innocence,"*** an exhibition that views the artwork of Charles Prendergast in the light of the medieval, Indian, folk, and "primitive" art that inspired his career. This exhibition was organized by Nancy Mowll Mathews, Eugénie Prendergast Senior Curator of 19th and 20th Century Art and Lecturer in Art, with Allison Pappas, Graduate Student in the History of Art, Class of 2010.

Charles Prendergast (1863–1948), brother of the American painter Maurice Prendergast (1853–1924), was steeped in the Arts and Crafts culture of Boston as a young man, producing highly prized hand-carved frames for the greatest artists of his day such as John Singer Sargent. He turned to pictorial fine art in 1912, bringing non-Western and pre-Renaissance styles into his carved panels. By 1940, he turned to American folk art and subjects. His search for

innocence—the aesthetics of pure forms and child-like vision—was the product both of his time and of his unique personality.

This exhibition explores Charles Prendergast's lifelong aesthetic search by juxtaposing works by the artist with objects drawn from the museum's collection. Prendergast studied art primarily through the museums and libraries near him in Boston and New York, and, no doubt, imagined his own objects side by side with those of the past. "A terrific piece," states Cate McQuaid from the *Boston Globe*, "'Circus' (1940) hangs near an early 19th century Indian painting, 'Lakshmi with attendant winged elephants rising from the ocean.' 'Circus' represents Prendergast at the height of his powers; deftly composed, it captures a crowd and two elephants, each waving its trunk in the air, exactly like Lakshmi's attendants."

On view through November 28, 2010, this exhibition features seldom seen works of art from the museum's collection that span diverse cultures and periods, in addition to special archival materials from WCMA's Prendergast Archive and Study Center, including Charles Prendergast's sketchbooks and wood carving materials.

For the full article in the *Boston Globe*, please visit:

http://www.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/articles/2010/10/05/the_innocence_project/

About the Prendergast Archive and Study Center

WCMA's Prendergast Archive and Study Center was established with gifts and bequests of archival materials from Charles Prendergast's widow, Eugénie, and funded through the Prendergast Trust. Founded in 1990, the Prendergast Archive and Study Center houses letters, photographs, books, and other research materials pertaining to the American artists Maurice and Charles Prendergast and their era (American and European art, 1850–1950). Under the direction of Nancy Mowll Mathews, Eugénie Prendergast Senior Curator of 19th and 20th Century Art and Lecturer in Art, the PASC conducts ongoing research and maintains current information on the complete works of the Prendergasts. The center is home to the catalogue raisonné project which continually updates

the 1990 publication, *Maurice Brazil Prendergast, Charles Prendergast: A Catalogue Raisonné*. Scholars and collectors from around the world consult the PASC for information from its files and opinions concerning the authenticity of works attributed to the Prendergasts.

Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 am to 5 pm, and on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm. Admission is free and the museum is wheelchair accessible. Publicity images for this exhibition and other current exhibitions are available for use by the press. Contact: Suzanne A. Silitch, Associate Director of Communications for the Arts, 413.597.3178; suzanne.silitch@williams.edu; www.wcma.org.