



Smithsonian American Art Museum loans Moran masterpiece to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming

Buffalo Bill Historical Center's press release, April 7, 2009. For more images from the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Flickr stream, click here:

<http://eyelevel.si.edu/2009/05/picture-this-morans-on-the-move.html>

A masterpiece by one of America's most renowned 19th-century landscape artists will soon make its way west from the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

Thomas Moran's *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* (1893 – 1901) will be on loan from the Smithsonian American Art Museum as part of the Whitney Gallery of Western Art's 50th Anniversary celebration. The massive painting—more than eight feet high and fourteen feet long—arrives in early summer for a four-month stay and will be unveiled June 21.

“This is truly a glorious, iconic painting of Yellowstone that first appeared in Chicago at the 1893 Columbian Exposition,” says Alan Simpson, former U.S. Senator from Wyoming and the historical center's chairman of the board of trustees. “What a rare and extraordinary privilege for our visitors to connect with Thomas ‘Yellowstone’ Moran's *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* and then to see the landscape that inspired it as they travel in Yellowstone.”

Indeed, Moran (1837 – 1926) is often considered the pivotal figure in efforts to make Yellowstone a national park. In 1871, he accompanied F.V. Hayden's geological survey of the area as guest artist and worked closely with photographer William H. Jackson. Ostensibly, Moran painted the extraordinary sights of Yellowstone, and Jackson's images proved they existed—in case there was any question about Moran's interpretation.

“. . . Yellowstone retains its hold upon my imagination with a vividness of yesterday,” Moran would say about this unique landscape to which he often returned. “The impression then made upon me by the stupendous and remarkable manifestations of nature's forces will remain with me as long as memory lasts.”

Moran returned to Yellowstone in 1892 and was determined to once again paint the Grand Canyon. Unlike his first *Grand Canyon of Yellowstone* completed in 1872, Moran painted no humans in his later depiction. A tiny bird flying low over the canyon floor—right of center—is the only evidence of life beyond the canyon's rocks and trees. Experts call the later version more “painterly” since by 1892, both Yellowstone and Moran were equally well known.

In a letter to his wife dated July 26, 1892, Moran wrote about Yellowstone, “It is as glorious in color as ever and I was completely carried away by its magnificence. I think I can paint a better picture of it than the old one after I have made my sketches. I will not attempt to say anything about it as no words can express the faintest notion of it.”



Smithsonian Affiliations

The renovated gallery opens June 21, 2009. *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* will be on view through October 31, 2009.

Follow the countdown toward the opening of the Whitney Gallery of Western Art by visiting the historical Web site at www.bbhc.org/wgwa.

Start any journey into the American West at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, currently open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily. On May 1, the summer schedule goes into effect: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. daily. Devoted to western cultural and natural history, the center is comprised of the Buffalo Bill Museum, Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Plains Indian Museum, Cody Firearms Museum, Draper Museum of Natural History, and McCracken Research Library. For general information, visit www.bbhc.org or call 307.587.4771.