

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE CHRYSLER MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS THE WORK OF M.C. ESCHER IN SPRING EXHIBITION

—The show will feature approximately 150 works by the renowned artist —



Artwork from the Collection of Paul and Anna Belinda Firos. Photo courtesy of Austin Fuller, World Chess Hall of Fame

February 23, 2022 (Norfolk, VA) – The Chrysler Museum of Art is pleased to bring the mesmerizing work of the renowned M.C. Escher to Norfolk. *M.C. Escher: Infinite Variations*, on view April 15–Aug. 28, spans the Dutch artist’s entire career with more than 150 works from the collection of Paul and Belinda Firos of Athens, Greece. Although Escher was the modern period’s most well-known graphic artist, he once puzzled an interviewer by referring to himself as a mathematician rather than an artist.

Escher’s fascination with mathematical theory motivated him to produce imagery that constantly challenged notions of reality and its underlying structures. The Chrysler’s comprehensive exhibition will chronicle his journey as one of the world’s most recognized artists by presenting the full range of media in which he worked. Visitors will see woodcuts, lithographs, etchings and even a lithography stone. Among the objects are some of his most iconic pieces, including *Day and Night*, in which two flocks of birds in flight blend into Holland’s landscape, and *Ascending and Descending*, a 1960 print of an impossible building with a staircase that mirrors a Möbius strip. "Escher taps into our desire to find the order behind reality, and we are thrilled to collaborate with Mr. and Mrs. Firos to present their collection of Escher's art to a new generation. His artistic output was considerable, and his mesmerizing visual puzzles, tessellations and impossible buildings are among the most beloved and popular works of art in the world," said Lloyd DeWitt, Ph.D., the Chrysler Museum’s chief curator and Irene Leache curator of European art.

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898–1972) was born in Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland in the Netherlands, but grew up in Arnhem. Although he studied architecture in Haarlem, he was drawn to graphic art by Samuel Jessurun de Mesquita, a teacher at his school who profoundly influenced his graphic style. When Escher moved to Italy, his early output was dominated by advertising and landscape prints there. He became famous for his tessellated, or tile-like, patterns after seeing Moorish tilework on a trip to the Alhambra and Granada, Spain in 1936. The rise of fascism in Italy forced him to leave Italy for Switzerland, and he abandoned Italian imagery in protest. He made his way to Belgium and returned to the Netherlands after the Nazi invasion. He faced five unproductive years during the occupation, unable to sell his work because he refused to certify his “Aryanness” and was horrified that he was unable to save his teacher de Mesquita from Auschwitz. His own family faced deprivation during the final “hunger winter” of the war.

Escher’s increasingly sophisticated imagery gained an appreciative audience, especially during his first exhibition at Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum in 1954, staged to coincide with the major Global conference of mathematicians. He remained skeptical of the enthusiasm for his work among fans of psychedelia during the 1960s, turning down a request from Mick Jagger to design an album cover. His body of work eventually grew to over 2,000 items before his death in 1972. However, it was not until Douglas Hofstadter’s 1979 publication of *Gödel, Escher, Bach* that Escher’s work became tied in the public’s imagination to quantum physics and advanced mathematics, cementing the hold his work gained over the global audience it still enjoys today.

Support

Local sponsorship at the Chrysler Museum of Art is provided by the Presenting Sponsor Dollar Tree.



Programming

Art Matters

May 13

10:30 a.m. | Free

Individuals with early-stage Alzheimer's disease and their care partners are invited to experience mesmerizing works in *M.C. Escher: Infinite Variations*. The exhibition showcases more than 150 works, including visual puzzles, tessellations and impossible buildings that are among the most beloved and popular works of art in the world. His fascination with mathematical theory motivated him to produce imagery that constantly challenged notions of reality and its underlying structures. Art Matters is a free program presented in partnership with the Southeastern Virginia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. To register, please call (800) 272-3900.

Chess Afternoons

May 22 and Aug. 21

Noon–5 p.m. | Free

The checkerboard pattern is a repeated motif throughout M.C. Escher's work. Drop in for informal chess games in Huber Court. Chess players of all skill levels are welcome. Please note that no instruction will be provided.

The Mysterious M.C. Escher with Lloyd DeWitt, Ph.D., Chief Curator and Irene Leache Curator of European Art

June 11

3 p.m. | Kaufman Theater | Free for Museum members, \$10 for non-members

M.C. Escher was among the greatest 20th-century woodcut printmakers, so why did he consider himself a mathematician and not an artist? Join Lloyd DeWitt, Ph.D., chief curator and Irene Leache curator of European art, to trace the Dutch artist's interest in math that was sparked by a trip to the Alhambra in the 1930s. There, he began exploring the new field of relativity and later the puzzles of quantum mechanics. He sought the underlying order and structure of nature, time, the world and the universe and continually proposed new ways of looking at reality and its conundrums that continue to astound, mesmerize and challenge us today. Registration is required. Prior to theater entry, please present proof of vaccination or results of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of the event. Digital copies are acceptable.

M.C. Escher Drawing Workshop

June 11 and July 9

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | \$25 for Museum members, \$35 for non-members

Join local artist and educator Rowena Finn for an M.C. Escher-inspired morning of creativity in the galleries. Draw an artwork from the Chrysler's permanent collection that relates to the themes and motifs of Escher's work and receive feedback during a guided lesson. Artists of all levels are welcome. Materials will be provided. The class is limited to 10 participants.

Chrysler Book Club: *Piranesi*

June 12

3 p.m. | Free

Piranesi's house is no ordinary building. The rooms are infinite, the corridors are endless and the walls are lined with thousands upon thousands of statues, each one different from the others. Celebrate our spring exhibition, *M.C. Escher: Infinite Variations*, with the fantastical labyrinth of Susanna Clark's *Piranesi*. Registration is required. The Zoom link will be sent on the day of the event.

Tickle My Ears

June 23

10:30 a.m. | Free

A bored little girl uses a red marker and her imagination to go on an incredible adventure in *Journey* by Aaron Becker. After the story, examine M.C. Escher's *Gazing Globe* and create imaginative artworks with red markers! Recommended for ages 2–5.

Camp Chrysler: 2D & 3D Illusions

June 28–July 1

10 a.m.–3:30 p.m. | \$160 for Museum members, \$200 for non-members

Create mind-bending works of art at the Chrysler Museum this summer! Look closely in the galleries to explore how artists around the world transform images into impossible realities. Deep dive into works by mathematician and artist M.C. Escher in the exhibition *M.C. Escher:*

Infinite Variations, combine shape, color, pattern, repetition and form to investigate illusions and space. Then use your ideas and curiosity to make 2D and 3D works of art like paintings, collages, prints and sculptures. The camp runs Tuesday–Friday. Drop-off begins at 9:45 a.m. Pick-up is at 3:30 p.m. All participants must be signed in and out by a parent or authorized individual. Participants should bring their own lunch. Registration is required. Recommended for ages 11–14.

Chrysler Book Club: *The Queen's Gambit*

July 10

3 p.m. | Free

Artist M.C. Escher, whose work is on view at the Chrysler in *M.C. Escher: Infinite Variations*, and Beth Harmon, the lead character in *The Queen's Gambit* have something in common—chess. Escher was an avid player and a member of several chess clubs. Harmon was a quiet, withdrawn 8-year-old until she played her first game of chess. Before long, she was playing in competitions across the country. Follow her journey when the Chrysler Book Club discusses *The Queen's Gambit*, a *New York Times* Bestseller and the inspiration for a top Netflix series. Registration is required. The Zoom link will be sent on the day of the event.

Tickle My Ears

July 21

10:30 a.m. | Free

Each of us, from the day we're born, is accompanied by a special companion—the Yet. Can't tie your shoes? Yet! Can't ride a bike? Yet! After reading *The Magical Yet*, we will look at art in the galleries and create our own artwork. Recommended for ages 2–5.

Family Day: Topsy-Turvy World of M.C. Escher

Aug. 6

10 a.m.—3 p.m. | Free

Illusion is the name of the game for this family experience. Explore the world of M.C. Escher with games, activities, crafts, and stories. We invite you to challenge your perception and explore the intersections of art and math. Supported by the Bunny and Perry Morgan Family Fund. Sponsored by Dominion Energy.

Tickle My Ears

Aug. 18

10:30 a.m. | Free

Imagination is important, but what is it exactly? How does it work? Find out in Marta Arteaga's *Inside My Imagination*. Then look at an artwork in the galleries and make a craft. Recommended for ages 2–5.

About the Chrysler Museum of Art

The Chrysler Museum of Art is one of America's most distinguished mid-sized art museums, with a nationally recognized collection of more than 30,000 objects, including one of the great glass collections in America. The core of the Chrysler's collection comes from Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., an avid art collector who donated thousands of objects from his private collection to the Museum. The Museum has growing collections in many areas and mounts an ambitious schedule of visiting exhibitions and educational programs each season. The Chrysler has also been recognized nationally for its unique commitment to hospitality with its innovative gallery host program.

The Perry Glass Studio is a state-of-the-art facility on the Museum's campus. The studio offers programming for aspiring and master artists alike in a variety of processes, including glassblowing, fusing, flameworking, coldworking and neon.

In addition, the Chrysler Museum of Art administers the Moses Myers House, a historic house in downtown Norfolk, as well as the Jean Outland Chrysler Library. For more information on the Chrysler Museum of Art, visit chrysler.org.

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For more information, interview assistance, or a high-resolution image suitable for publication, please contact Jordan Fontenot at The Meridian Group at (757) 340-7425 or jordanf@themeridiangroup.com