

Her travel companion? One Edward Hopper

Fitchburg Art Museum staffer flying to Paris to bring back loaned painting

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PHOTO / CHARLES STERNAIMOLO "Two Lights Village," an Edward Hopper painting from 1927, has been on loan to the Grand Palais in Paris since the fall. It will soon return to its home at the Fitchburg Art Museum.

FITCHBURG -- Having to travel to Paris to bring back a piece of artwork could be a tough part of any job, but Janice Goodrow is more than happy to take on the responsibility. The director of membership and special events for the Fitchburg Art Museum will be embarking on her weeklong journey to the City of Light on Tuesday to retrieve "Two

"Two Lights Village," an Edward Hopper painting that has been on loan to the Grand Palais since the fall.

The piece has been part of a Hopper exhibition running from October through next week, which Goodrow says may be poised to equal or even surpass the largest art exhibit in the history of Paris, a Claude Monet exhibition that drew close to one million visitors about two years ago.



SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE / JOHN LOVE Janice Goodrow, director of membership and special events for the Fitchburg Art Museum, will fly to Paris next week to retrieve "Two Lights Village," an Edward Hopper painting that has been on loan to the Grand Palais.

According to a Dec. 13 article in the Wall Street Journal, the exhibit had already attracted more than 365,000 people less than half-way through its 100-day run, putting it on track to overtake 2009's "Picasso and the Masters," which drew 783,000 visitors. The only other French art exhibit, the article noted, to receive more visitors was a Monet retrospective ending in January 2011 that drew 910,000 visitors. The popularity of the Hopper exhibit has surprised many, as France does not have a single piece of the American realist artist's work hanging permanently in any museum in the country.

"It doesn't come up very often, that a painting from the Fitchburg Art Museum's collection has such international fame," Goodrow said. "This is great for us, great for exposure and great for me personally to be able to travel and meet people in other museums, but on a whole different scale. I'm enchanted, I'm delighted."

"Apparently, the Parisians are crazy for Edward Hopper. This is not something they usually do about American artists," said Fitchburg Art Museum Director Nicholas Capasso. "We're very proud to have been able to contribute this loan of our one Edward Hopper painting to this very important exhibition."

The 1927 watercolor on paper, sized 13 1/4 inches by 19 1/4 inches, features one of Hopper's favorite subjects: the coastline of Maine.

"He was very interested in New England landscape and architecture," Capasso said. "He was also interested in these visual qualities that evoke the sense of silence and solitude. That's what this painting says to me."

The painting was escorted to Paris in September by Fitchburg Art Museum Director of Corporate Membership

Jane Keough, who, like Goodrow plans to do, made a vacation out of the trip. The lucky courier was chosen at random by picking a name out of a hat, Goodrow said.

Both times, Goodrow's name was picked second, as a backup to go in case the first chosen could not go for some reason, she said. For the return trip, Building Supervisor Mel Bailey decided he did not want to go, she said, despite Goodrow's attempts to convince him otherwise.

Goodrow, however, is gladly going in his place.

"It's the opportunity of a lifetime," she said.

Goodrow is excited to go behind the scenes at a large, famous museum like the Grand Palais, and to have a chance to visit friends in Paris for a few days before she must oversee the packing of the artwork and escort it home to Fitchburg. With the exception of the personal portion of her trip, everything else is paid for by the Grand Palais and arranged through Masterpiece International, she said, including travel, three nights lodging and a meal stipend.

On Goodrow's return flight, she will be joined by couriers from other museums escorting Hopper paintings back to the U.S., including the Bowdoin College museum in Maine, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy in Andover.

"Two Lights Village" was donated to the Fitchburg Art Museum in 1974 by Bernadine K. Scherman of New York City in a bequest made through the Crocker family. There were 20 other objects in the bequest, including pieces by well-known artists Charles Sheeler, Charles Burchfield and William Zorach.

A welcome-home party for the painting is being planned for members of the museum, Goodrow said, and coffee mugs and refrigerator magnets of the painting have been made for

the museum's gift shop. "Two Lights Village" will go on display for the public beginning Feb. 9 in the museum's Merriam Parkway entrance.

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