

SEEING NATURE

Landscape Masterworks from the Paul G. Allen Family Collection

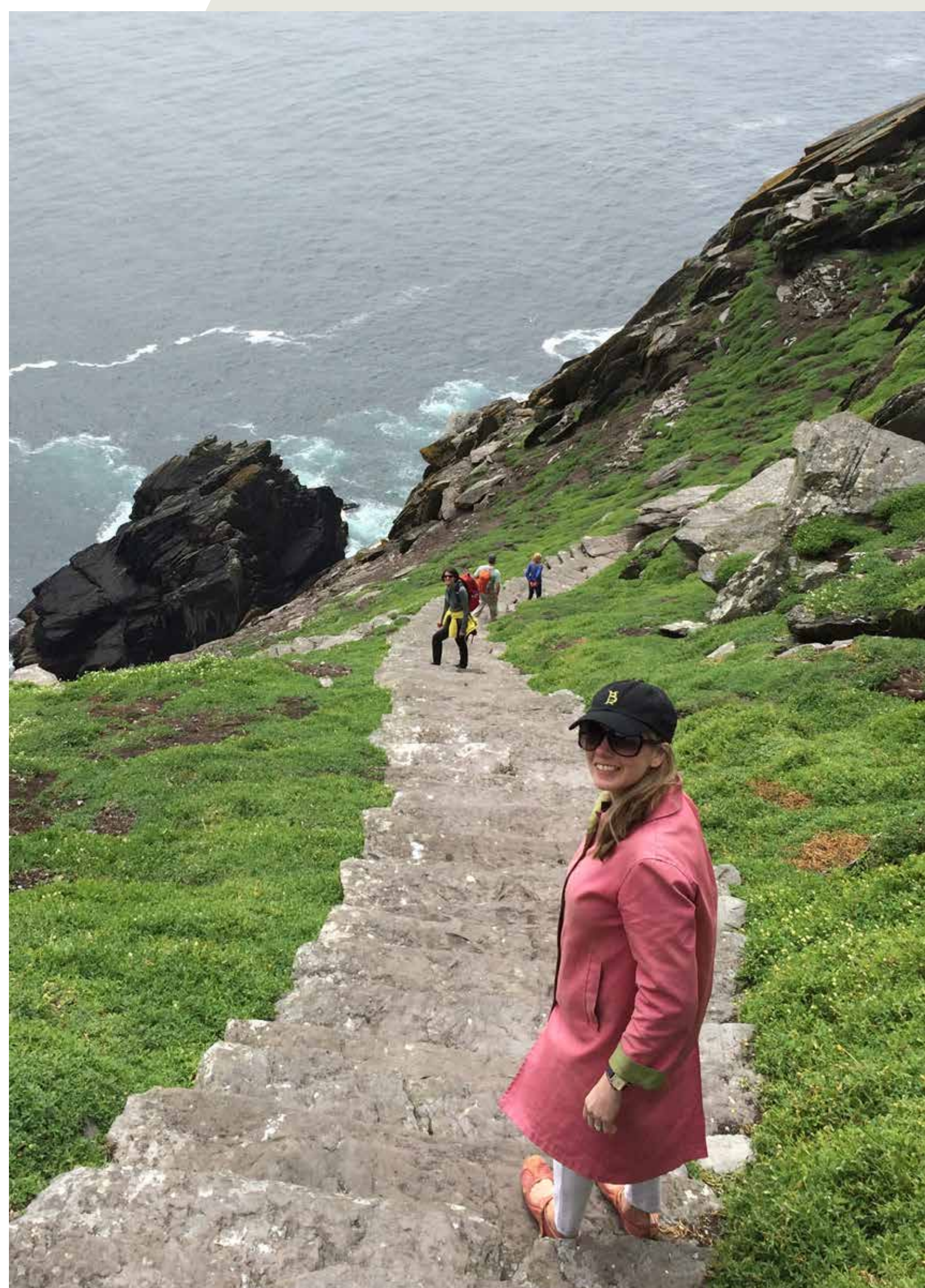
Four hundred years separate the delightfully crowded allegories of Jan Bruegel the Younger from the expansive, emotive landscapes of April Gornik. In that span, landscape painting has become a cherished genre, one that is superbly represented in *Seeing Nature*. The works from the Paul G. Allen Family Collection are lush, lyrical, and luminous, ranging from meticulous topographical records to atmospheric impressions, Surrealist dream worlds to immersive images of near abstraction.

As the art historian Kenneth Clark observed, great works of art change the way we see the world. In these galleries you will visit majestic mountains, a Midwestern farm, glittering cities, and stormy plains. You will travel to London,

Arizona, Cape Cod, and Rome. The outsized artistic talents in this show won't merely transport you to these places, they will challenge your memory or expectation of them—and reshape what you thought them to be.

“Venice has been painted and described many thousands of times, and of all the cities of the world is the easiest to visit without going there,” the American novelist Henry James quipped. That might be true of the Venice depicted by Canaletto—or the gardens at Giverny by Monet. Yet every landscape here is its own world, a construction animated by the artists' singular vision and their appreciation of the quality of light glinting off a distant horizon, the ripples in the water, or the tiny leaves of a massive tree.

FROM THE CURATOR



Summer is here. The season we seek the sun, get outdoors, take vacation. The landscapes in *Seeing Nature* deliver on all counts. Most are summer scenes, set in nature, and inspired by artists' holidays—to Venice, the Grand Canyon, the countryside, or the seashore.

It is Paul Signac's pointillist masterpiece *Morning Calm, Concarneau* that transports me to my happy place. The Brittany harbor, dotted with small fishing boats, sparkles with light and warmth. It could be a sunny summer day on any Minnesota lake.

Summer offers a break in the routine. Signac's mentor and friend Georges Seurat only painted landscapes in the summer, traveling to Normandy to "wash the studio light" from his eyes. The outdoorsy summer holidays taken by Gustav Klimt, represented here with *Birch Forest*, may have led to his radical break with the age-old horizontal, or "landscape," format in favor of square canvases and a fresh, compressed, focused view of nature.

For many artists in the show, travel was clearly exhilarating, exposing them to novel scenery, foreign light and atmosphere, unfamiliar sounds and smells. Their senses were awakened. When the British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner traveled to Italy for the first time, in 1819, he filled 23 sketchbooks, executing some 1,500 drawings and watercolors in and around Rome alone. A stranger in a strange land is intensely receptive, especially attuned to a place's unique qualities. That kind of acute sensitivity is on display here.

This summer, as your va-(or stay)-cation gets underway, take a cue from the artists in this show. Savor the Minnesota landscape, and let your smartphones and televisions idle. It may stir the imagination.

—Rachel McGarry
Associate Curator
Minneapolis Institute of Art

PAUL G. ALLEN

Innovator and Philanthropist



Photo by Beatrice de Gea, courtesy of Vulcan Inc.

Paul G. Allen co-founded Microsoft in 1975, pioneering the software that brought personal computers into millions of homes and offices around the world. Today, he focuses on tackling a broad range of hard problems—working to save endangered species, improve ocean health, fight climate change and advance research into the human brain.

Mr. Allen traces his passion for art to his childhood. As a boy growing up in Seattle, he drew constantly and spent many happy hours exploring local museums, including the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, whose collection of Native American art explored connections between natural history, art and culture.

Some fifty years later, *Seeing Nature* focuses on one aspect of these connections: how different artists depict landscapes. “I hope *Seeing Nature* will help people look at art and nature

with a renewed sense of emotional connection,” Mr. Allen said. “At a time when our planet’s natural systems are under such pressure, I hope it will also inspire people to renew their commitment to protecting Earth’s natural beauty for generations to come.”

Mr. Allen supports public art and traveling exhibitions, has opened three museums in Seattle, and last year launched the inaugural Seattle Art Fair. His own art collection includes a wide range of works spanning centuries, genres and media.

In addition to his philanthropic endeavors, Mr. Allen owns the Seattle Seahawks and the Portland Trailblazers, and continues to invest heavily in research and technology.