

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale Announces New Exhibition: *Louis M. Glackens: Pure Imagination*
On view from April 14 to March 30, 2025, the show glances into the life and work of artist Louis M. Glackens

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA. — Beginning May 14th, [NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale](#) will present *Louis M. Glackens: Pure Imagination*, an insider's look into the life and work of artist Louis M. Glackens (b.1866, Philadelphia, PA, d. 1933, Jersey City, NJ). Louis Glackens was a trailblazing figure who became one of the first illustrators of animated cartoons from 1915-1920, creating characters for production houses such as Bray and Pathé Studios. His fantastical depictions of mermaids, anthropomorphic beasts and pie-faced grown-ups carved a path for what would become the wonderful world of Walt Disney. Regrettably, Louis Glackens was out of step with the fashion of his time and bore the curse of the avant-garde. As such, his vast contribution to the history of cartoons has remained largely unexplored.

Until now, he has been relegated aside within the narrative of his younger brother, Ashcan School artist William J. Glackens. While both brothers “drew in the cradle,” a compulsion that stayed with them throughout their lives, it seems that Louis Glackens had the misfortune of being “born too soon.”

Like his brother William, Louis Glackens had a discerning eye through which he observed the human condition. However, while his brother was rooted in the realism of the Ashcan School, Louis Glackens chose to deliver his take on reality through a more fable-like world, in which the absurdity of life was captured through an economy of line and an abundance of wit.

For over 20 years, Louis Glackens served as a staff artist for the weekly magazine *Puck*, the first widely disseminated political humor periodical in the United States. The artist was prolific in creating his satirical scenes, doused in acerbic wit, combining his childlike fantasies with a hearty dose of jaded cynicism.

A *Puck* magazine cover from April 1912 is illustrative of this attitude. Set within a quaint, pastoral scene is a little cottage with a charming front yard, tended to by a matronly woman wearing a striped frilly dress and sunbonnet. Upon closer inspection, it appears that the woman has a hook mustache and looks an awful lot like the 27th President William Howard Taft. The President is wielding a watering can, emblazoned with the word “PATRONAGE”, which he pours over a bed of flowers, blossoming with the heads of gentlemen in top hats. This rare breed of flower is called, “DELEGATES: HARDY QUADRENNIAL”. Below the cartoon is a caption reading, “THE FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN SPRING, TRA-LA!”, a satirical nod to Gilbert & Sullivan’s operetta, *The Mikado* (1885). Glackens’ commentary on Taft’s ill-fated run for re-election and his quid-pro-quo exchange with future President Harding and his cronies reads like a New Yorker cartoon of now. The image is rendered with the masterly draftsmanship that Louis and William both inherited “from an untraceable source,” according to William’s son, Ira Glackens. Their distinct ability to conjure a scene brimming with vitality unites this unlikely pair, complicating the narrative of what constituted realism and social critique in the Progressive Era.

Over 100 years after the folding of *Puck* magazine in 1918, and the consequent diminishing of Louis Glackens’ career, we may come to appreciate the artist’s uncanny ability to convey the sentiments of his time with the brevity and grace of a great comic artist.

Curated by the Museum’s Bryant-Taylor Curator, Ariella Wolens, *Louis M. Glackens: Pure Imagination* seizes the opportunity to reevaluate Louis Glackens’ cultural contributions through the gift of hindsight and wealth of illustrations generously gifted to the Museum and sponsored by the Sansom Foundation.

Situated midway between Miami and Palm Beach, NSU Art Museum is located in the heart of Downtown Fort Lauderdale. The Museum is a premier destination for exhibitions and programs encompassing all facets of civilization's visual history and is widely known for its significant collection of Latin American art, contemporary art with an emphasis on art by Black, Latin American and women artists, as well as works by American artist William Glackens and the European CoBrA group of artists. For more information, please visit <https://nsuartmuseum.org>.

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About NSU Art Museum

Founded in 1958, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale is a premier destination for exhibitions and programs encompassing many facets of civilization's visual history. Located midway between Miami and Palm Beach in downtown Fort Lauderdale's arts and entertainment district, the Museum's 83,000 square-foot building, which opened in 1986, was designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes and contains over 25,000 square feet of exhibition space, the 256 -seat Horvitz auditorium, a museum store and café. In 2008, the Museum became part of Nova Southeastern University (NSU), one of the largest private research universities in the United States. NSU Art Museum is known for its significant collection of Latin American art, contemporary art with an emphasis on art by Black, Latinx and women artists, African art that spans the 19th to the 21st-century, as well as works by American artist William Glackens, and the European CoBrA group of artists. Two scholarly research centers complement the collections: The Dr. Stanley and Pearl Goodman Latin American Art Study Center and the William J. Glackens Study Center.

Major support for NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale is provided by the David and Francie Horvitz Family Foundation Endowment, the City of Fort Lauderdale, Wege Foundation, Community Foundation of Broward, Lillian S. Wells Foundation, the Broward County Cultural Division, the Cultural Council, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the State of Florida through the Division of Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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