The Earth is All I Know of Wonder: Contemporary Responses to Hartley
January 15–February 21, 2015
Opening Reception: Thursday, January 15, 2015, 6–8PM

DRISCOLL BABCOCK GALLERIES presents The Earth is All I Know of Wonder: Contemporary Responses to Hartley, a group exhibition of works inspired by Marsden Hartley curated by Jacob Rhodes. Presented concurrently with Art is Long, Life is Short: Marsden Hartley and Charles Kuntz in Aix-en-Provence, the exhibition explores the lasting impact of one of the greatest American Modernist artists.

Seven contemporary artists whose diverse practices all draw inspiration from Hartley’s oeuvre were invited to preview Art is Long, Life is Short and create an original work in response to it. The resultant works by Katherine Bradford, Jennifer Coates, Holly Coulis, Rachael Gorchov, David Humphrey, Danielle Orchard, and Robin Williams each respond to different aspects of Hartley’s work – the immense mountainous landscape, the portrait-like still life, the vibrant ruby hues. While Hartley’s work serves as the spark of inspiration, demonstrating the impact and enduring influence of Hartley, the artists have each responded in markedly different ways, thus demonstrating in tandem their own creative originality.

This theme of influence versus originality is likewise explored in Art is Long, Life is Short, which shows the confluence of two artists in Aix-en-Provence, France between 1925 and 1928: Marsden Hartley, who was already an internationally known artist and poet, and Charles “Arlie” Kuntz, a young artist who was just beginning to articulate his own significant signature statement with large-scale expressionistic paintings. Their friendship and collaboration was important to both artists, as was the fact that they were living and working in the native ground of Paul Cezanne. It is the staggering achievement and lasting influence of Cezanne that serendipitously linked the two artists as they each produced inspired bodies of work. In the words of both Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, Cezanne was “the father of us all” and his defining influence not only affected Hartley and Kuntz, but modern and contemporary art as it stands today.

But perhaps an even greater inspiration is an over-arching spirituality Hartley found in the natural world around him. To express this connection between nature, spirituality and intellect
he, like Wallace Stevens, chose to represent “not ideas about the thing but the thing itself.” The landscapes and still lifes created by the seven artists in the exhibition similarly search for the magic within the everyday, like Hartley declaring, “I want nothing in the way of artificial heaven – the Earth is all I know of wonder.”

ABOUT DRISCOll BABCOCK GALLERIES
For more than 50 years, Driscoll Babcock has been an authority on the work of Marsden Hartley. The gallery has continually supported research and examination of Hartley’s work. To date, the gallery has staged more than 18 solo Hartley exhibitions and has published several important catalogues on the artist. More than 70 museums have acquired works by Hartley through Driscoll Babcock, including the notable acquisitions of MOUNT KATAHDIN, MAINE by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC and the monumental YLIASTER at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

Founded in 1852, Driscoll Babcock is the oldest gallery in New York City, and the nation’s oldest gallery which from its inception has focused on American art. During the tenure of current president Dr. John Driscoll, the gallery has helped to secure numerous prized works for major private collectors and museums across the country including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, all in Washington, D.C.; The Cleveland Museum; The Detroit Institute of Arts; Minneapolis Institute of Arts; Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina; Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville Arkansas; The Kemper in Kansas City; The Museum of Fine Arts-Houston; Minnesota Marine Art Museum, Winona; and dozens of other museums.

For additional information and images, please contact Tess Schwab, Director
tschwab@driscollbabcock.com