

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR RELEASE

Thursday, April 3, 1958

No. 28

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EARLY KANDINSKY PAINTING ACQUIRED BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announced today the acquisition of a capital early painting by Wassily Kandinsky, called Picture with an Archer, as the gift of Mrs. Louise R. Smith. It is now on view at the Museum.

Kandinsky, credited with painting the first entirely abstract picture, is an important precursor of the abstract movement so prevalent today. Picture with an Archer, according to Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum of Modern Art Collection, is one of his most magnificent canvases. It was painted in 1909, not many months before his first abstract composition.

"Here natural forms are still fairly explicit," Mr. Barr notes. "In the foreground, galloping in from the right, a horseman twists in his saddle as he draws his bow to shoot at some pursuer; to the left is a group of orientals, one of them black-bearded, with an enormous turban; beyond are trees, a domed tower, and curious vertical rock formations such as appear in Cappadocia or the Dolomites or in Russian icons."

"Picture with an Archer is perhaps the culmination, though not the last, of many fantasies which Kandinsky painted in the spirit of the romantic oriental tales which inspired so much Russian poetry, music and ballet of the period. Indeed this painting could be described as lyrical, musical, dramatic. Yet the literary associations, as well as the landscape and figures, are overwhelmed and absorbed by vehement brushing, turbulent form and sumptuous, resonant color."

The painting was probably painted at Murnau near Munich. It was exhibited in Darmstadt, Munich, Hamburg, Odessa and the Hague between 1910 and 1916. Thereafter it seems to have dropped from sight for over 40 years until its present exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. (It is listed in Kandinsky's record book (Hausbuch) as Bild mit Bogenschützen, 1909, No. 75. Kandinsky's first "improvisation" was No. 76.)

Kandinsky was born in Moscow in 1866. He lived in Munich and other parts of Europe from 1896 until 1914 when he returned to Russia where he stayed until 1921. He was Professor at the Bauhaus in Weimar and then in Dessau from 1922 to 1932. In 1933 he went to Paris where he lived until his death in 1944.