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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

14 WEST 49TH STREET, NEW YORK

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MASTERS OF POPULAR PAINTING
Exhibition of Modern Primitives
of Europe and America
Apr. 27, 1938 - June 27, 1938

European painters shown:

ANDRE BAUCHANT, born, Châteaurenault, 1873. Grade school education; worked as field hand; military service; travelled on business through France and became interested in local sights and antiquities, which inspired him to read French and foreign history. Ancient glories became his passion and after serving in the war as an accountant behind the lines and in 1918 as a draughtsman in Rheims, he spent most of his time painting his version of historical scenes such as The Battle of Carthage, Proclamation of American Independence, Treachery of Judas, and flower pictures.

As Gauthier writes: "Bauchant speaks to us about history in a very intimate and gentle tone. His simple landscapes, his charming flowers shine in the light of the spirit of St. Francis and we can imagine him in his Touraine garden delivering a sermon to the birds."

CAMILLE BOMBOIS, born, Venarey-les-Laumes, on the Côte d'Or, 1883. Began life on his father's barge. At the age of 12 he left school to labor in the fields and at 16 began to sketch. Very robust and pugnacious, he became a champion wrestler and joined a circus in that capacity. After travelling about France he left the circus and, to make his way in Paris where he wanted to paint, he turned day laborer and helped dig the Paris subway in 1907. He heard that strong men were needed to run newspaper presses, obtained a job and re-planned his life, devoting his daytime to painting. He served four and a half years and won three decorations in the war. In 1922 he was recognized as a painter.

His pictures are vigorous, vivid in color, and, according to Gauthier, derive "from what he has learned through his muscles and his nerves.... The figures he sets in his circus scenes and on the banks of his rivers make gestures and assume postures that are those of Bombois himself."

ADOLF DIETRICH, born, Berlingen, on the Swiss side of Lake Constance, 1877. After spending 14 years in a factory he returned to his village and became a parish woodsman. Paints chiefly forest scenes and portraits.

JEAN EVE, born, Somain in the north of France, 1900. Has night job in toll-house, paints daytimes, principally landscapes.

DOMINIQUE-PAUL PEYRONNET, born, Talence, near Bordeaux, 1872. Until retirement in 1920 was a successful printer, specializing in color lithography. Many of his paintings are of the sea or rivers.

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RENE RIMBERT, born, Paris, 1896. "Now a chief postal clerk...he draws and paints with admirable precision, without blurring his outlines or sacrificing literal color to atmospheric effects. He likes calm compositions, wide, luminous skies, pure rhythms and delicate color harmonies. He is above all the painter of the Left Bank and, particularly, of Saint-Sulpice, that quarter of Paris whose calm recalls the austere grace we sometimes find in Rome." --Gauthier.

HENRI ROUSSEAU, born, Laval, 1844; died, 1910. Probably most famous for his half-realistic, half-fantastic jungle scenes, Rousseau did most of his painting after he had become a customs collector. He has written of himself: "Because of his parents' poverty he was obliged to follow a career other than that to which he was impelled by his feeling for art. It was only in 1885, after long vexation, that he started to paint: all alone, with nature for his only teacher--and a little advice from Gérôme and Clément."

"Rousseau painted landscapes, still lifes, portraits and large compositions. He gave himself up to the problem of painting the world and its creatures exactly as he saw them. His was a good and simple heart, and his soul was the pure soul of a man to whom poetry and nature are one and the same thing. Yet this was not the primary basis of his art....This dreamer was a capable workman, able to build his dream into a solid and marvelously balanced reality. This supposed ignoramus knew all that he needed to know about proportions, rhythms, colors and forms;...and through the very intensity with which he attacked the problem of literal representation he achieved at one and the same time the particular and the general, the actual and the symbolic." --Gauthier.

SERAPHINE LOUIS, called Séraphine de Senlis, born, Assy in the Oise district, 1864; died, 1934. Was "discovered" in 1912 by Wilhelm Uhde, who admired a still life in the home of some friends at Senlis where he was stopping for the summer. His friends told him that the artist was Séraphine, his charwoman.

From her early days a drudge, Séraphine "was very pious, even mystic: a votive light burned always before the image of the Virgin. The joys which existence denied her she found in a marvelous world of her own, and she learned to transfer this world to canvas, using translucent colors, like those in stained glass windows, which yet possessed the perfect quality of enamel. Sometimes she painted trees with shells instead of leaves, flowers with staring eyes, fruits like living animals, water as deep as infinity." --Gauthier.

LOUIS VIVIN, born, Hadol, a small village near Epinal, 1861; died, 1936. Began as letter carrier and retired at 62 from position of postal inspector. Before he became known in 1932, he sold his pictures to passersby in the market place. His paintings include pictures of Parisian life, still lifes, interiors, hunt meetings and family gatherings. In exquisite colors he transforms the common world into a marvelous new world.

American painters shown:

EMILE BRANCHARD, born, New York, of French parents, 1881; died, February 1938. Worked at various jobs: truck driver, stevedore.

VINCENT CANADE, born, Cosenza, Italy, 1879. Art school for only one day. Was barber, plasterer, house painter.

ROBERT CAUCHON, born, 1915. Lives at La Malbaie, Murray Bay, in the Province of Quebec. Father is blacksmith and carriage and sleigh maker. Works in father's shop; paints evenings and Sundays.

PEDRO CERVANTEZ, born, Arizona, 1915. At present employed WPA Federal Art Project in New Mexico. Father works as a section hand for the Santa Fe Railroad.

CHESTER DALSON, born, Canada, probably about 1906. His mother painted. He worked as laborer, sometimes in United States, sometimes in Canada. In 1936 he was working in a lumber mill at Melanson, Nova Scotia. Has not been heard of since.

EDWARD HICKS, born, Attleborough, Bucks County, Pa., 1760; died, 1849. Quaker preacher, made his living as a coach maker and painter and a house and sign painter. Very religious, he writes in his memoirs that he considered painting "one of those trifling, insignificant arts, which has never been of any substantial advantage to mankind. But as the inseparable companion of voluptuousness and pride, it has presaged the downfall of empires and kingdoms, and in my view stands now enrolled among the premonitory symptoms of the rapid decline of the American Republic." But his love for the worldly art of painting was too strong and he was furthermore encouraged to continue it by his Quaker friends. Hicks' principal subjects were allegorical and historical pictures, the former taken chiefly from the Bible and the latter scenes and events of his native state. His prime favorite of all subjects was The Peaceable Kingdom. He is thought to have made more than 40 variations of this subject.

THORVALD ARENST HOYER, born, Copenhagen, 1872. Son of a well-to-do coal dealer. Started to draw at age of 7. At the age of 19, he and a friend teamed up as acrobats. His vaudeville career lasted for 24 years and took Hoyer all over the world. Now employed on WPA Federal Art Project in Illinois.

"PA" HUNT, born, New York, 1870; died, 1934, Provincetown, Mass. At the age of 60 he painted his first picture on a piece of sheeting tacked into an old picture frame. From that time until his death he was a well-known figure in the art colony at Provincetown, Mass.

JOHN KANE, born, West Calder, near Edinburgh, Scotland, 1860; died, 1934 in Pittsburgh, Pa. Worked in coal mines of Scotland. Came to America and lived in Pittsburgh. Worked in furnaces at McKeesport, etc., laid cobblestones in the streets of Pittsburgh, for seven years. In his 60's he started to paint on canvas.

LAWRENCE LEBDUSKA, born, Baltimore, of Bohemian parents, 1894. His father was stained-glass maker. Lebduska's first job was painting decorative murals for the firm of Elsie de Wolfe; made stained glass and mural paintings for many New York houses. Now with WPA Federal Art Project in New York

JOSEPH PICKETT, born, New Hope, Pa., 1848; died, 1918. Spent his life in New Hope, Pa. Carpenter, canal boat builder; small country grocer. Began to paint late in life. His ambition was to paint a history of his native town. Without being taught even the rudiments of art, invented his technique and devised his tools and materials making his own brushes and using ordinary house paint which he mixed with sand, earth, rocks, and shells to reproduce various textures.

HORACE PIPPIN, born, West Chester, Pa., 1888. Disabled Negro war veteran. Worked as hotel porter and in storage warehouse before the war. He writes of his work: "The pictures...come to me in my mind, and if to me it is a worth while picture, I paint it. I go over that picture in my mind several times and when I am ready to paint it I have all the details that I need. I take my time and examine every coat of paint carefully and to be sure that the exact color which I have in mind is satisfactory to me. Then I work my foreground from the background. That throws the background away from the foreground. In other words bringing out my work....My opinion of art is that a man should have love for it, because my idea is that he paints from his heart and mind. To me it seems impossible for another to teach one of Art."

PATRICK J. SULLIVAN, born, Braddock, Pa., 1894. Now lives in West Virginia. Has worked at various jobs; house painting is his trade today.