

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 39
FOR RELEASE:
JUNE 13, 1974

Press Preview:
June 11, 11am-4pm

MAJOR DRAWING SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART THIS SUMMER

The Museum of Modern Art will present one aspect of its considerable collection of drawings -- work done in France by an international group of artists from Seurat in the 1880s to Matisse in the 1950s -- in a major exhibition on view from June 13 through September 8.

Selected by William S. Lieberman, Director of the Department of Drawings, from more than 2,500 works on paper owned by the Museum, the 184 drawings in Seurat to Matisse: Drawing in France include recent acquisitions as well as promised gifts, many of which are seldom seen by the public.

More than half the artists represented were foreigners in France, perhaps because, as Mr. Lieberman quotes Gertrude Stein as explaining, "Paris was where the twentieth century was." The exhibition mirrors the development of the modern movement in France.

"Drawings, as it has so often been said, are the most intimate expressions of an artist," Mr. Lieberman observes.* "They can reveal the very act of creation, a first idea, the first spontaneous stroke. They can tell much about an artist himself -- for instance, that van Gogh in the south of France remembered an etching by Rembrandt, or that Picasso reinterpreted a composition by Millet. Also, it should be realized that the concept and the appreciation of drawings as independent works of art are relatively recent. However, the exhibition often demonstrates how frequently drawings relate to works by the same artist in other media -- painting, sculpture, and prints -- which, to the general public, are usually more familiar.

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*SEURAT TO MATISSE: DRAWING IN FRANCE edited by William S. Lieberman. 104 pp. 91 illustrations. \$3.95 paperbound. Designed by Carl Laanes. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, and available only at The Museum of Modern Art.

"Occasionally during the twentieth century, traditional attitudes toward draftsmanship have been shattered by various innovations. Of these the most radical were the techniques of collage illustrated in the exhibition with works by Archipenko, Braque, Duchamp, Matisse, and Picasso. The Surrealists, in addition, were particularly resourceful and developed techniques of drawing exploiting automatism, accident, and collaboration.

"The exhibition offers glimpses of France from the tide-washed beach at Deauville to the palm-spiked Croisette at Cannes. Most often, however, it is the architecture and urban life of the capital which are described. The Eiffel Tower is twice seen from Delaunay's apartment window. It is celebrated again by Delmarle, the single French Futurist....Seurat and Gleizes visit the city's environs, as does Feininger, who at Meudon first saw the viaduct which was to become a motif in his art. Modigliani hastily sketches an elderly artist seated alone at a table on the terrace of La Rotonde on a chill autumn evening. Brancusi, Dufy, Giacometti, and Matisse describe their own ateliers.

"Paris is a city of night, and the exhibition does not ignore its entertainments -- Seurat's gaslit view of a café concert, Severini's Spanish cabaret, Grosz's happy clowns Poitu and Chocolat. The glamor of the stage sparkles in souvenirs of Isadora Duncan; in opulent designs by Bakst and Gontcharova for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes; in Léger's decors and costumes for The Creation of the World and Skating Rink; in elegant designs commissioned from Berman and Bérard for the Parisian premieres of the Brecht-Weill Three-Penny Opera and Giraudoux's Madwoman of Chaillot.

"During the decades surveyed by this exhibition, the principal painters and sculptors in France were seldom concerned in their art with the catastrophic events of their time. Léger and Severini documented the new machines of the

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First World War, but little more. The Spanish Civil War, however, provoked visual responses from several artists, notably four fellow countrymen, Dali, González, Miró, and Picasso, whose studies for and after the Guernica are one of the greatest tours de force in the history of draftsmanship. In the exhibition, introspective yet forbidding premonitions of a Second World War are evoked by three drawings: Picasso's rooster, the very symbol of France; González's anguished woman tearing her hair; and Lipchitz's allegories of the rape of Europe, which have little to do with classical mythology."

This exhibition and the publication have been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

Only twice before, in 1947 and 1960, has the Museum displayed such substantial selections from its holdings of original works on paper.

 Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department
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