A brief survey of modern painting

By Alfred H. Barr, jr

Author

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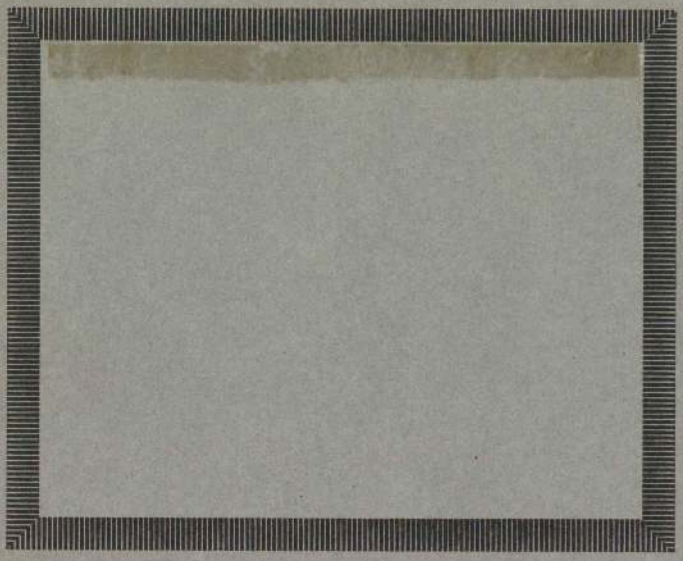

A BRIEF SURVEY OF MODERN PAINTING

BY ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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A Brief Survey of Modern Painting

The Exhibition, A Survey of Modern Painting in Color Reproductions, is available for circulation. During its itinerary, begun in October, 1932, it has been on display in 33 cities in museums, colleges, schools, women's clubs and department stores. For information, please write to the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York.

Many of the color reproductions included in this exhibition may be purchased from the Museum.

The Exhibition is arranged in four sections:

Section 1 Painting Fifty Years Ago: French and American

Section 2 Cézanne and the Post-Impressionists

Section 3 20th Century Painting, Part One

Section 4 20th Century Painting, Part Two

The following catalog contains a short introduction to each section followed by brief notes on each painter and on each picture.

The original of the painting reproduced in miniature on the cover is the *Landscape with Cypresses* by Vincent van Gogh in the National Gallery, Millbank, ("The Tate") London. (See number 26.)

Section 1

Painting Fifty Years Ago: French and American

Art changes gradually. Even radical innovations develop step by step. Much modern art may seem queer and unintelligible to us simply because we may not have followed these successive steps. As a result we are easily shocked by what seems a startling and unreasonable novelty. But we may recall that Fulton and the Wright Brothers were considered fools during their pioneer experiments with the steamboat and airplane.

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We dislike pictures which we do not understand and often condemn them as "radical" or "bolshevik". Fifty years ago there were young revolutionaries in painting just as there are today. In Paris, the art capital of the world, there were Degas, Renoir, Monet, Cézanne, the group which was already known as the Impressionists. They are all dead now and are revered by living "radicals" as well as by the rest of the world as highly respectable pioneer ancestors. But in their day they themselves looked back to the rebels and innovators of a previous generation among whom were Corot and Daumier.

Corot, pronounced "Coro"; painted principally in France between 1820 and 1875.

Camille Corot was not able to sell a picture until after he had been painting for over twenty years. His *Dance of the Nymphs* with its soft, misty lighting and silvery grey foliage, seemed "unnatural" to the public of the 1850's. But today it is perhaps the most popular of all landscapes.

Modern artists, however, admire Corot's figure paintings even more than his landscapes. The grandeur and repose of the *Woman with a Pearl Ring* reminds one of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* but its spirit is simpler and more intimate. It represents the classical spirit in 19th century painting at its best.

1. **Woman with a Pearl Ring,** about 1870, original in the Louvre, Paris.

   The most famous of Corot's figure paintings. A modest and sensitive realism which attains classical dignity through sweep of line and grandeur of pose.

Daumier, pronounced "Domeyay"; worked in Paris from 1830 to 1879.

Honoré Daumier was the greatest of the 19th century cartoonists. He made over 5000 drawings for newspapers and magazines, making fun of all kinds of people but especially lawyers and government officials. One cartoon of the King of France was so radical that he was put in jail for several months.

But Daumier was really more interested in painting than in caricature though during his lifetime only a few friends found his oils of much value. Today the *Crispin and Scapin* and the *Drama* are placed among the masterpieces of 19th century painting.

Daumier is almost the exact opposite of Corot, who used to say that he could paint a woman's breast with the same detachment as a bottle of milk. Daumier was passionately interested in human life and character, in human comedy and tragedy. He painted the excited audience in the "peanut gallery" or the tired washerwoman plodding home at night. But his pictures are equally remarkable for their powerful draughtsmanship, their mastery of movement, their deep color and noble composition.

2. **Drama,** about 1860, original in the New State Gallery, Munich.

   Daumier saw drama not on the stage but in the gallery.

3. **The Bridge at Night,** about 1865, original in the Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington.

   A small picture but grandly designed in form and movement.

4. **Crispin and Scapin,** about 1865, original in the Louvre, Paris.

   These two whispering comedians are not drawn from life but are inventions—powerful masks born of Daumier's imagination and made real by a draughtsmanship of supreme vitality and intelligence.

Manet, pronounced "Manay"; painted in Paris from 1855 to 1883.

Edouard Manet combined a fresh and exact observation of the appearance of things with a marvelous dexterity in painting. He tried to simplify what he saw so that one large, flat brush stroke might do the work of five. This made the public of the 1860's laugh at his work which they disliked because like Corot he didn't paint in every detail. The *Boy with a Fife* for instance was refused at the official Salon of 1866.

At first, as in the *Boy with a Fife*, he was satisfied with painting figures in a quiet, indoor light but in his later work, such as *Boating*, he became interested in the more difficult problem of suggesting bright outdoor light by means of flat, high-keyed colors. He thus became one of the founders of Impressionism. He was never, however, content with mere technical problems but continued always to paint pictures as clever in composition and as gay in spirit as they were brilliant in technique.

5. **Boy with a Fife,** 1866, original in the Louvre, Paris.

   Manet suggested roundness not by modelling in light and shade so much as by flat tones or patches of color. Often in his early work his figures are like silhouettes against a flat background.

6. **Boating,** 1874, original in the New State Gallery, Munich.

   The casual, snapshot-like composition, the brilliant out-of-door lighting, the rapid brush strokes, the fresh, pure blues and whites and blacks make this one of the finest paintings of Manet's late, or Impressionist, period. The people in the boat are Manet's friend Claude Monet and his wife.

Monet, pronounced "Monay"; painted in France from 1860 to 1925.

Manet had said: "The principal person in the picture is the light." Manet's disciple and friend, Claude Monet, became the leader of the Impressionists

who attempted to paint light—or, rather, they tried to make paint on canvas seem as brilliant as light, even outdoor sunlight. They broke up Manet's bright patches of color into tiny strokes of contrasting colors. In Monet's *Summer* the trees are painted in yellow, blue and violet so that at a little distance they make a vibrating mixture which comes as near as paint can to an effect of radiating light.

We are so used to this kind of painting now that no one will find *Summer* a hard picture to understand. But in 1874 the first Impressionist Exhibition aroused a storm of rage and laughter because such pictures as *Summer* seemed even less like "nature" than Corot's had twenty-five years before.

7. **Summer,** 1874, original in the Picture Gallery, Stuttgart, Germany.

   The intense, dazzling light of a summer noon suggested by mixing little, vibrating strokes of bright color. A typical Impressionist picture.

Monet continued to paint as an Impressionist during his long career of sixty-five years. But with him were associated three greater artists—Degas, Renoir and Cézanne—who soon broke away from Impressionism because they felt it to be too unsubstantial, too lacking in structure, like shimmering clothes unsupported by a body of flesh and bones.

Degas, painted in Paris from 1855 to 1917.

Even more than most great modern artists, Edgar Degas studied the paintings and drawings of the old masters. He developed a prodigious skill as draughtsman and during part of his career he was continually on the watch for difficult and interesting problems of figures in action such as race horses or dancing girls. He discovered strange, unexpected movements and positions which the public thought impossible until the camera proved that the artist was right. But he did not stop at making sketches of figures in arrested action. He built them into compositions and patterns as original and surprising as the figures themselves.

8. **Race Horses,** pastel, about 1880.

   The nervous, prancing horses and the alert jockeys were problems which interested Degas, a supreme draughtsman of muscular action.

9. **Two Dancers,** pastel, about 1885, original in the Picture Gallery, Dresden.

   A striking composition constructed of figures caught in unexpected attitudes and drawn with merciless precision.

Renoir, pronounced "Renwahr"; painted in France from 1860 to 1919.

For a time Auguste Renoir exhibited with the Impressionists and painted landscapes like the *Paris Boulevard* which recall Corot. Gradually his color grew richer until it burst into a full-throated symphony. To express his joy in the color of trees he turned their yellow greens to emerald with purple shadows; and the pink color of flesh he exaggerated till it became luminous red. His forms, too, whether fruit or trees or women, grew rounder and fuller in harmony with the ripeness of his color. Yet in spite of his love for the sensuous luxuriance of nature his pictures are never mere excesses of sensuality but are compositions put in order through long study and a compelling sense of form.

10. **Paris Boulevard,** 1875, original in Private Collection, Switzerland.

    Tender, yellow greens and soft atmosphere of Paris in the springtime. Impressionism at its best.

11. **Venice,** 1881.

    A sketch done in Renoir's later and richer color scheme. Compare with the early *Paris Boulevard.*

12. **Girl Combing Hair,** about 1885.

    Drawn with a broad, sweeping line and painted with a sensuous delight in the texture of flesh and hair.

13. **Woman and Children,** about 1895.

    One of Renoir's later compositions in which the figures and foliage form a warm, luscious harmony.

Americans

During the last hundred years, French painting has been a dominant influence among the artists of other European countries as well as of America. There were, however, three Americans of fifty years ago who are now considered of the greatest importance, not merely because they were good artists but because they were practically independent of European influence. Homer, Ryder, and Eakins are of the same generation as Degas, Monet, and Renoir, but their art seems to belong to a different period as well as to a different country.

Homer, painted between 1855 and 1910; lived in Boston, New York and on the Maine coast.

Like Daumier, Winslow Homer made his reputation as an illustrator. Only during his later years was his painting much appreciated.

Homer painted the American out-of-doors: Civil War scenes (as an eyewitness), Virginia negroes, hunting scenes, canoe trips, fishing and yachting off Florida and the Bahamas. But he is most famous for his sea pictures. Like *Nor'easter* they are painted with remarkable directness and realism. He loved the lift and pound of waves on rocks and he recorded his love with such simplicity of vision and vigor of technique that anyone can understand and like his pictures at first glance,whereas those of Renoir or Manet or Degas require more study.

14. Nor'easter, 1895, original in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The surging power of the green sea's assault upon the rust-red rocks of the Maine coast. Painted simply and with a robustness appropriate to the subject.

Eakins, painted from 1865 to 1916, principally in Philadelphia.

Thomas Eakins painted American people with an enthusiasm comparable to that with which Homer painted the American land- and sea-scape but with more science and intellectual penetration. He studied for a time in Paris but his mature work shows very little if any French influence. He painted all kinds of sporting scenes, prize fights, baseball, rowing, sailing. He knew medical men and painted large compositions of surgical operations. His greatest works are perhaps his portraits which are at once ruthless and sensitive.

15. John Biglen in a Single Scull*, 1872, original in the collection of Yale University.

Exact realism built upon profound knowledge of underlying structure. One of Eakin's simplest and finest compositions: three equal horizontal bands with the poised oarsman in the center.

Ryder, painted from 1865 to 1917, principally near New York.

Albert Pinkham Ryder, though equally independent of his European contemporaries, was the opposite of Homer and Eakins. They were respectable citizens who painted what they saw so accurately that their pictures are almost as documentary as photographs. Ryder on the contrary was a bohemian, a poverty-stricken eccentric who painted dreams. They were realists; he was a romantic.

Smugglers' ships in dark inlets, shadowy witches, death riding through the dark, and above all the uncanny mystery of the sea at night; these were the subjects which excited his imagination. From clouds, moonlight, heaving half-seen waves and a black sail he could compose *Toilers of the Sea,* a picture which might so easily have been banal but which instead is as beautiful in design and as authentic in feeling as Daumier's *Bridge at Night.*

*NOTE:—As good color prints of the work of Ryder and Eakins do not exist, photographs have been used as substitutes. The Eakins *John Biglen* and the Ryder *Toilers of the Sea* are to be published in color reproductions the exact size of the originals by Raymond & Raymond, New York, in 1934.

16. **Toilers of the Sea***, about 1900, original in Addison Gallery, Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass.

A small canvas grandly designed in its bold pattern of light and dark and its suggestion of the beauty and terror of the moonlit ocean.

Section 2

Cézanne and the Post-Impressionists

While Renoir and Degas were greater artists than Monet, Impressionism, of which Monet was the leader, became the most influential movement during the 1880's. The Impressionists were interested primarily in painting effects of light by means of tiny strokes of bright, contrasting color. They succeeded in their purpose but often lost sight of other important qualities such as the decorative arrangement of color, the suggestion of texture and quality of surfaces, and above all the construction and composition of solid forms and space. In other words, they sacrificed most of the previously important elements in painting for the solution of a mere technical problem. Much of late 19th and early 20th century painting took the form of a reaction against Impressionism and against the idea, which the Impressionists carried to such an extreme, of painting exactly what one sees.

Among the great French painters who rebelled against Impressionism were Cézanne "the father of modern painting"; Seurat who tried to reduce painting to a science; Gauguin who left Paris to paint deep toned decorative compositions in the South Sea Islands; van Gogh, the Dutchman whose art has the swirling violence of madness; Redon the painter of delicate fantasies; and the self-taught "primitive" Henri Rousseau.

Cézanne, pronounced "Sayzanne"; painted from 1865 to 1906, at first in Paris and then in the South of France.

Cézanne's earlier pictures, such as the *Still Life* and *Railroad Cutting*, are painted with heavy color and vigorous forms. About 1875 he came under the influence of the Impressionists so that his later works, such as the *Bathers* and *The Village*, are light in color, thinly painted with short, parallel strokes. But Cézanne uses these small strokes of color not to give an "impression" of shimmering light but rather to build an effect of space and solid form. At first glance the early *Railroad Cutting* seems stronger than *The Village*, painted many years later. Only after some study does the power and spacious beauty of the later picture appear. Cézanne spent many days of intense effort upon a single picture. To begin to appreciate such a picture, to let it sink in, a few minutes, at least, of careful study is necessary.

*See note to Eakins: *John Biglen in a Single Scull.*

Cézanne was original in his color technique but he was even more important in turning younger artists to the problems of composition and design which the old masters had solved and which the Impressionists had partially forgotten. He said: "I wish to make of Impressionism something solid and permanent like the art of the museums." When he painted the *Bathers* he probably had at the back of his head some composition by Titian or Rubens. But Cézanne omits their delight in the sensuous beauty of flesh and foliage and concentrates upon the aesthetic beauty of line, shape, color, and space. In *The Red Waistcoat* this interest in design leads him to draw with an angular line, and model with facets or planes. These angles and planes made Cézanne one of the ancestors of Cubism (illustrated in Section 4) but his influence extended far beyond Cubism until it fell upon most of the important painters of the first quarter of our own century.

17. Still Life, about 1870.

Painted in Cézanne's early, rather heavy technique. The thick paint and strong contrasts of light and dark give an effect of solidity and power.

18. Railroad Cutting, about 1878, original in the New State Gallery, Munich.

One of the artist's early landscapes with strong, solid color and thick, "fat" paint. An "ugly" subject made into a serene and satisfying composition.

19. The Village, about 1885, original in the National Gallery, Berlin.

Space and solid forms constructed by light toned, thinly painted color planes. Study the picture for five minutes and you will feel the planes gradually taking their place in a beautifully ordered space. Compare this in technique with the early landscape, *Railroad Cutting.*

20. The Red Waistcoat, about 1885, original in Private Collection, Switzerland.

Angular composition; modelling of figure by flat patches or planes of color, a technique which later inspired the Cubists.

21. Bathers, about 1880.

Figures, tent, and landscape composed into simple curves and pyramids. Especially fine in color.

Seurat, Gauguin, and van Gogh were all younger contemporaries of Cézanne. Like Cézanne they all experimented with Impressionism and found it too haphazard and unselective a way of painting. Each wished not merely to paint nature but at the same time to express an emotion and to create a design. Their work is sometimes called Post-Impressionist.

Seurat, pronounced "Sirrah"; painted in France from 1880 to 1891.

Georges Seurat's brief career as an artist was dominated by a passion for system and order. He took the small brush strokes of the Impressionists and made them into dots all of the same size. Each dot is a light or dark shade of one of the six pure "primary" colors—blue, yellow, red, green, violet, and orange. His compositions, among which *Three Models* is one of the finest, are planned with extreme care. Though his method seems over-scientific, Seurat painted several of the most beautiful pictures of modern times. To artists of today he is the supreme example of intelligence and discipline.

22. **Three Models,** 1888, original in Museum of the Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pa.

    Remarkable for the technique of little dots of pure color, the complex and carefully calculated composition, and especially for the cool, almost classical serenity. In the original the figures are almost life size.

Gauguin, pronounced "Goganh"; painted in France from 1880 to 1889, then in the West Indies and South Sea Islands. Died in 1903.

Paul Gauguin threw over entirely the small dabs used by the Impressionists and painted instead in large, flat tones of solid color. His paintings are decorative compositions which make one think sometimes of the Medieval Italian or other primitive pictures. Like primitive painters, Gauguin frequently used simplified outlines and "unnatural" colors in order to achieve the particular aesthetic effect which interested him; for often the shapes and colors which seem beautiful in nature are not so satisfactory in painting—they have to be changed and brought into an artistic, rather than a natural, harmony.

Gauguin's life is a parable of the romantic artist's revolt against the materialism and banality of modern civilization. He gave up a successful career as a stockbroker to become a painter, and finally, disgusted with Europe, left for idyllic Tahiti in the South Seas, where he painted his best known pictures.

23. **Arearea,** 1892.

    Painted in Tahiti, one of the South Sea Islands, where Gauguin had fled to escape civilization. A picture of gentle, unhurried, flower-strewn life painted in patterns of flat, bold colors. Sometimes to increase his decorative effect Gauguin used "unnatural" colors as in the blue tree trunk or the red dog.

24. **Ta Matete,** 1892.

    The subject is Tahitian but Gauguin had in mind the flat patterns made by Egyptian figures with their heads in profile, their shoulders full-face, and their stiff, angular gestures.

25. **Horsemen on the Beach,** 1902, original in the Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany.

    Gauguin preferred large areas of strong, pure color.

Van Gogh, painted in Holland and France from 1880 to 1890.

Throughout his life Vincent van Gogh was devoured by a deep and overwhelming religious fervor. For a time he labored as an evangelist, preaching to Belgian miners, but soon turned to painting as a means of expressing his agony of spirit. He left his native Holland and went to Paris and later to Southern France where he took the small, bright-colored brush strokes of the Impressionists and made them into whirling, vibrating streaks of color. He painted with such passionate ecstacy that his pictures seem almost to quiver and writhe. His torment grew into insanity and finally drove him to suicide. His pictures are beautiful, but sometimes terrible in their intensity of feeling.

26. Landscape with Cypresses, 1889, original in the National Gallery, Millbank ("The Tate"), London. (Reproduced on cover.)

Van Gogh saw clouds, trees and fields as living things and painted them in rippling, swirling rhythms of line and color.

27. The Old Peasant, about 1889.

Van Gogh used the boldest colors to express his enthusiasm for even so drab a subject as an old farmer.

28. Chestnut Blossoms, about 1889.

Van Gogh became so excited when painting that even his flowers seem to quiver and crackle with electric vibrations.

Redon, worked in France from 1880 to 1916.

Odilon Redon's art seems more related to poetry and music than to the painting of the late nineteenth century. Like van Gogh, he was a mystic, but his visions were serene rather than violent. He painted unearthly faces, mists, fantastic flowers, moths and jewels. The dreamlike mystery of his subject matter makes him a forerunner of the Super-realists (Section 4). Redon was famous for his lithographs as well as for his paintings.

29. Dream, the original, about 1905, in watercolor.

A fragile, mysterious vision painted with the colors of moths and exotic birds.

Rousseau, painted in France from 1880 to 1910.

Henri Rousseau was a customs house officer who learned to paint in his spare time without any official training. During the last decade of his long life, he was discovered by young artists such as Picasso who loved his naively simple spirit and the instinctive perfection of his design. Rousseau was a genuine modern primitive.

30. The Customs House

A picture of the place where Rousseau worked, painted perhaps on a Sunday afternoon. Although it lacks technical skill in drawing, perspective, and brushwork, it possesses a fine sense of design and a charming, childlike quality.

Seurat and van Gogh died about 1890, Cézanne and Gauguin about 1905, Rousseau in 1910, but their ideas survived them and developed in the work of their successors whose paintings are shown in the two succeeding sections.

Section 3

20th Century Painting, Part One

The twentieth century paintings have been divided somewhat arbitrarily into two groups. In this first group (Section 3) are artists who may be described in a general way as Expressionists together with a few men who still work in an Impressionist manner.

The previous section (No. 2) was devoted to six painters of the late 19th century: Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Seurat, Henri Rousseau and Redon. Four of these men were at one time in their careers Impressionists, that is, they tried to paint the fleeting impression of light and atmosphere. But they were not satisfied with Impressionism. Cézanne, in his own words, tried to "make of Impressionism something solid and permanent like the art of the museums"; Gauguin turned from Impressionism to the study of decorative simplified forms; Seurat tried to make Impressionism systematic and scientific; van Gogh transformed Impressionism into a vehicle for violent emotional expression. Redon painted dreamlike fantasies of extreme sophistication; and Henri Rousseau's work seems like that of a self-taught primitive.

Different as these men were in their attitudes toward art, they had one feeling in common. None of them believed that the exact representation of nature in a painting was necessary or even desirable. Each of the six was influential in the early years of the 20th century during which this divorce of "art" from "nature" became more self-conscious and deliberate.

Our Older Contemporaries

Many of the important painters in this section—Matisse, Rouault, Bonnard, Munch—are over sixty; Derain and Utrillo are about fifty while Modigliani has been dead ten years. These facts are mentioned lest it should be supposed that these paintings are the work of youthful rebels. On the contrary they represent the achievement of the older generation, of artists who are generally considered to be among the foremost of our time.

Expressionism

Expressionism is a convenient general term for the art movements which broke new paths twenty-five years ago. Expressionism is, broadly speaking, the opposite of Impressionism. The Impressionist was the humble student of nature. He painted the momentary impression of the outside world without much care for composition and without much use of his imagination, his intellect or his emotions. The Expressionist, in contrast, looked within himself, not out, for guidance and often for subject matter, depending upon his inner eye, because he wished to create a new vision rather than to record the familiar world. The Expressionist's art is more personal and therefore more difficult to understand without some tolerance and sympathy on the part of those unaccustomed to his attitude.

Psychological and Decorative Expressionism

There are of course many varieties of Expressionism. The face of a woman shrieking is naturally distorted; Rouault, in his picture, carries this distortion to a grotesque extreme but without loss of conviction or power. Chagall uses green and yellow flesh tones to express his uncanny vision of an old *Rabbi.* But Matisse in his *Nasturtiums and "The Dance"* distorts nature for very different reasons. He is not interested in the psychological qualities present in the pictures of Rouault, Munch and Chagall but rather in the aesthetic qualities of decorative pattern. Derain's *South French Landscape* shows a similar concern with emphatic pattern. These two pictures are excellent illustrations of how the advanced artists of about 1910 succeeded in transforming their impressions of nature into decorative patterns even more completely than had van Gogh or Gauguin twenty years before.

"The Wild Animals", the "School of Paris"

Matisse, Rouault, and Derain were leaders among the Parisian group which about 1905 was called *les fauves,* "The Wild Animals". "The Wild Animals" drew with bold black outlines and used brilliant flat color. They combined in varying proportion both Decorative and Psychological Expressionism. They shocked the public, which did not understand their work, just as had Monet and Renoir in the 1870's. Since 1905 the work of all three has grown less "wild", less Expressionist, as one may see by comparing Matisse's *Seated Odalisque* (1928) with his *Nasturtiums* (1910), or Derain's *Pine Trees* (c. 1920) with his *South French Landscape* (c. 1908).

Bonnard and Utrillo, standing outside this group, carry on the traditions of Impressionism to which each adds his own personal sentiment.

The secondary French painter, Marie Laurencin; the Italian, Modigliani; the Bulgarian, Pascin, and the Russian Jew, Chagall, have all helped form the contemporary "School of Paris".

Bonnard

Pierre Bonnard (pronounced "Bonnarh") has been painting in France since 1890. His art is quiet and gentle but sumptuous in color. He is regarded, especially in his own country, as one of the finest living painters.

31. The Farmyard, about 1915.

Painted in an Impressionist technique of small, irregular brush-strokes but with more care for color harmony than is present in the original Impressionists. There is also present a subtle and intimate gaiety which is peculiar to Bonnard.

Utrillo

Maurice Utrillo (pronounced "Ootrilyo") has been painting since about 1908 in Paris. He paints architecture and street scenes exclusively. Sometimes he has used colored postcards as a starting point for his pictures which, at their best, are remarkable for their quiet harmony and feeling for local atmosphere.

32. Banks of the Seine, original painted in gouache on paper.

A sensitive impression of a Paris suburb on a dull winter's day.

Munch

The Norwegian, Edvard Munch, (pronounced "Moonkh") has been painting in Northern Europe since 1885. Together with van Gogh he inspired German Expressionism. Today in his old age he is considered one of the pioneers of modern European art.

33. Girls by the Sea, about 1905.

The figures are simplified and grouped as if in a dance, forming an almost architectural design, with an atmosphere of strange, northern melancholy.

Matisse

Henri-Matisse (pronounced "Mateece") has painted principally in Paris and the South of France. During his youth he copied old masters and subjected himself to severe discipline which formed a basis for later, bold experiment which in 1905 put him at the head of the Fauve (Wild Animal) movement in Paris. His original sense of composition and his distinctive color cause many critics to call him the greatest living painter.

34. Nasturtiums and "The Dance", 1910, original in Private Collection, Massachusetts.

The corner of a studio with a chair and pot of flowers and a large picture of dancers against the wall, all composed into a bold pattern of flat, bright colors: three large areas of blue, green

and pale red with small concentrated accents of strong dark blue, dark green, and dark red, heightened by a single line of light violet. The original is over six feet high and is really designed as a mural decoration.

35. The Pumpkin, about 1910, original in Private Collection, Berlin.

Primarily a decorative arrangement.

36. Seated Odalisque, 1928, original in Private Collection, Baltimore.

A recent work by Matisse, more elaborate and close knit in pattern, and more realistic in treatment.

Derain

André Derain has painted in Paris since 1900. After an early period of rather violent color (illustrated by *South French Landscape*) his work grew more somber and severe. *Pine Trees* was painted shortly after the War when Derain held a very strong central position in contemporary painting, because of his powerful classical design and the "old master" atmosphere of his work. Today he paints brilliantly but perhaps less seriously.

37. South French Landscape, about 1908.

Bright colors, straight lines and angular design are characteristics of Derain's early work when he was a member of the group called "Wild Animals".

38. Pine Trees, about 1920.

A fine composition restrained and disciplined in color and design. Compare with *South French Landscape* of a dozen years earlier.

Rouault

Georges Rouault (pronounced "Roo-oh") has been working in Paris since 1890. He uses deep blues and reds surrounded by heavy black lines, a style which suggests early Gothic stained glass. His subjects are often ugly but his power is undeniable. With Matisse he was a leader of the "Wild Animals" of 1905.

39. Shrieking Woman, about 1910.

A grotesque head drawn with savage power. Characteristic of the emotional, psychological side of Expressionism.

Chagall

Marc Chagall was born in Russia but has painted most of his life at first in Germany and more recently in Paris. He is famous for his humorous and fantastic pictures of Russian Jewish folk tales.

40. **The Rabbi,** 1918, original in gouache.

An old rabbi painted with intense vividness. Compare with Rouault's *Shrieking Woman.*

Modigliani

Amedeo Modigliani was an Italian but worked principally in Paris from 1905 until, after years of poverty and disappointment, he killed himself in 1920. Since his death his reputation has increased enormously. His style, based upon Italian primitives and negro sculpture, is remarkable for its severely simplified drawing.

41. **Portrait of a Girl,** about 1918, original in Private Collection, New York.

Contours of head, shoulders and eyes are reduced to simple oval shapes.

Laurencin

Marie Laurencin, who has been painting in Paris since 1910, is the best known of living women artists.

42. **Girl,** about 1925, original in Private Collection, New York.

The pretty, feminine color scheme of pinks, pale blues, pale greens and blacks, is characteristic.

Pascin

Jules Pascin became an American citizen but was born in Bulgaria and lived most of his life in Europe where in his later years he became one of the international School of Paris. He killed himself in 1930.

43. **Seated Girl,** about 1927, original in Private Collection, New York.

Pascin first won fame for his satirical illustrations but during the years before his suicide in Paris he painted a long series of young girls, sensitively drawn and painted with transparent, opaline colors.

Section 4

20th Century Painting, Part Two

Picasso and Cubism, Futurism, Abstract Design, Super-realism and the Return to Realism

"—istic"

"Impressionistic", "Futuristic", "Expressionistic", "Modernistic", "Cubistic" are used almost interchangeably by the general public when referring to the

novel, strange or often misunderstood aspects of modern art. Most of these terms, however, have fairly specific meanings and are applicable to definite movements or periods.

Impressionism, which reached its climax about 1880, was illustrated by the paintings of Monet and Renoir in Section 1.

Expressionism was defined on page 12 and is illustrated by the work of van Gogh in Section 2, Rouault, Munch, Matisse and Chagall in Section 3, and of Marc and Marin in the present exhibition.

Futurism developed in Italy about 1908 and perished as a West European movement during the War, though its popularity as a word still continues. The note on Severini's *Dancer* gives a brief explanation of the aims of the Futurists.

Modernistic refers particularly to certain superficial decorative fashions in commercial, industrial and architectural arts of the past decade.

Cubism

Cubism, which Picasso invented and developed during the decade after 1907, marks a very important phase in the progressive withdrawal of pre-war painters from the imitation of nature. We have already seen in Section 1 how in their later works Degas and Renoir sacrificed realism for a more complete unity of design. In Section 2 the work of Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Seurat and Henri Rousseau marked a further removal from realism, a removal carried still further by the flat, brilliant patterns of Matisse between 1905 and 1910 (Section 3).

The cubists in Paris, led by Picasso, were conscious of this tendency and step by step they extended it until there were few traces of any recognizable object in their pictures. But even in the *Still Life* of Picasso or the *Cubist Composition* of Léger one can discover fragments of familiar objects—a table, a lemon, an eye, a cup—but the painters have made it quite clear that their chief interest is in the design, in aesthetic qualities of line, color and texture, rather than in the objects portrayed.

Abstract Design

Meanwhile other artists outside of France carried the idea of "pure" or "abstract" design to a logical extreme. Kandinsky in Germany about 1913 began to paint entirely without any reference to nature. He improvised in color with a free, rather fluid technique. Mondriaan in Holland invented compositions of rectangles drawn with a ruler and painted in primary colors of yellow, red and blue. In Russia, also before the War, Rodchenko used compass and ruler to construct brightly colored geometrical compositions. Kandinsky has been called an "Abstract Expressionist"; Mondriaan and Rodchenko might be called "Geometrists".

The principles of Cubism and Abstract Design spread all over the world and influenced many of the artists in this exhibition, for example, the Germans, Marc and Klee, the Americans, Marin, Demuth and Dickinson, the Italians, Chirico and Severini. Cubism and Abstract Design have also had an immense influence upon "modernistic" furniture, textiles, architecture, printing and advertising.

Two Americans

Since 1915 many American painters have been influenced by the European Cubists and Expressionists. An interesting contrast is provided by John Marin's *Downtown New York* and Demuth's *For Sir Christopher Wren.* Both pictures are very much removed from realistic paintings of architecture though in both the buildings are easily recognizable. Here the resemblance between them stops for the Demuth is designed with precise sensitive calculation, while the Marin watercolor seems to have been splashed upon the paper with a sudden explosive fury. Demuth is on the side of the Cubist, Marin on the side of the Expressionist. If Demuth were to turn his back entirely upon nature he might, by following his method of design, arrive at something like Mondriaan's *Rectangles;* but Marin would perhaps approach the spontaneous lyrical *Improvisation* by Kandinsky.

Super-realism

Super-realism, the most conspicuous movement in post-war European painting, came as a violent reaction to the Cubists' exclusive interest in the problems of aesthetic design and color. The Super-realists asserted the value of the astonishing, the fantastic, the mysterious, the uncanny, the paradoxical, the incredible — whatever is above (super) reality. The paintings by de Chirico and Klee in this exhibition have considerable aesthetic value but much of their interest depends upon their curious and fascinating subject matter.

The Return to Realism

In 1910 Matisse painted the Expressionist *Nasturtiums;* but in the *Seated Odalisque* of 1928 he turned to a kind of decorative realism. About 1908 Derain painted the Cubistic *South French Landscape;* but a dozen years later he produced the serenely classical *Pine Trees.* In 1914 Picasso painted the Cubist *Still Life;* but a few years later in 1921 we find him working on a series of comparatively realistic compositions such as the *Mother and Child.* Picasso has not abandoned radical and startling experiments such as Cubism but much of his work as well as that of Matisse and Derain shows a return to an interest in a more realistic kind of painting.

Even the Super-realists such as de Chirico often use a realistic technique to enhance their fantastic and mysterious effects.

Since the first edition of this catalog it has been possible to add to the Brief Survey reproductions of frescoes by the Mexican Diego Rivera whose work best illustrates the revival of interest not only in a more realistic technique but also in a more broadly human subject matter. It is natural that Rivera who wants to interest everyone in his work should be the leader of the recent world-wide revival of mural painting.

Variety of Contemporary Painting

Modern painting may seem confusing but it must be remembered that the whole history of art as well as much scientific and psychological knowledge is available to the contemporary painter. He picks and chooses whatever he wishes. Side by side today are artists who paint exactly what they see in nature, and artists who paint story-pictures, romantic landscapes, sociological and political problem pictures, sentimental portraits, dreams—or merely squares and circles.

To enjoy the work of these artists it is well to forget prejudices, both modern and old-fashioned. Give the picture, itself, a chance to live!

Picasso

Pablo Picasso was born in Spain but has painted in France since 1900. The *Absinthe Drinker* was painted at the beginning of his career. Soon after, in 1908, he invented Cubism of which the *Still Life* is an example. The *Mother and Child* belongs to his post-war "classic" period.

Picasso is the most versatile and inventive and one of the greatest of living artists. He has started a dozen different movements. Through Cubism alone his influence has been enormous, not merely in painting but in decorative and industrial arts throughout the world.

44. **Absinthe Drinker,** about 1903, original in the Art Museum, Hamburg.

    A strong example of Picasso's "Blue Period" with its firm, sweeping drawing and pathetic sentiment.

45. **Still Life,** 1914, original in Private Collection, Berlin.

    This is a Cubist picture composed in pencil, watercolor, and crayon with bits of pasted paper. It forms a halfway point between the angular lines and planes in Cézanne's picture (Section 2) and the pure, geometric compositions of Mondriaan and Rodchenko in the present exhibition. It may be enjoyed as an arrangement of fragments into a sensitive design of line and color and texture.

46. **Mother and Child,** 1921, original in Private Collection, Berlin.

A monumental composition painted during Picasso's "classic" period. An illustration of Picasso's ability to take over certain elements of a past style such as Roman sculpture and transform them into something new.

Léger

Fernand Léger (pronounced "Layzhay") has been, since 1910, one of the foremost French Cubists. His work suggests an interest in polished or enameled surfaces of machinery.

47. **Cubist Composition,** 1922, original in Private Collection, New York.

A powerful design in flat, brilliantly colored semi-mechanical shapes.

Rodchenko

Alexander Rodchenko, a Russian, has been painting since 1905. By 1914 he had completed his first purely geometrical picture. After the revolution his painting was looked on with favor by Soviet critics, but since 1922, feeling that painting was useless, he has devoted himself to photography, the theatre, and movies.

48. **Composition with a Black Circle,** about 1918, original in the Artist's Collection, Moscow.

A geometrical design in compass-drawn circles and ruled diagonals which swing like a clock's pendulum. As abstract as Mondriaan's rectangles, but much more dynamic.

Mondriaan

Piet Mondriaan is a Dutchman who now lives in Paris. His paintings while they may seem over-simple have had considerable influence upon architecture and typography in Holland and Germany. He is now the leader of a revived interest in "Abstract" painting in Paris.

49. **Composition in Rectangles,** about 1922.

Rectangles in yellow, blue, red, and different shades of white divided by heavy, black lines, drawn with a ruler. Pictorial design reduced to clean, precise, reposeful, geometric purity.

Severini

Gino Severini was one of the original Italian Futurists of 1909. He has left Futurism behind him and now paints figures of a decorative elegance.

50. The Dancer, about 1913.

This is the only Futurist picture in the exhibition. The Futurists tried to suggest the continuous movement and instability of life by painting the same figure in several different positions in the same picture. The effect is of confetti seen through a kaleidoscope.

Kandinsky

Vassily Kandinsky, the founder of "Abstract Expressionism", is a Russian who has painted in Germany during the last twenty years. His present work is more geometrical in character.

51. Improvisation, 1914.

Kandinsky was one of the first to paint pure abstract designs without any kind of subject matter. They are really improvisations in line and color made without any preconceived plan and depending upon the free play of imagination.

Klee

Paul Klee (pronounced "Clay") was born a Swiss but has worked in Germany since about 1905. He is now considered one of the foremost living masters of fantastic, imaginative design. Much of his work is allied with Super-realism, but is more childlike.

52. Plan for a Garden, about 1922, original in gouache.

More abstract than the Picasso *Still Life* and more nearly a whimsical invention than a construction.

Marc

Franz Marc was one of the most promising of the younger German painters till his death at Verdun in 1916. *Red Horses* is perhaps the best known German painting of the 20th century.

53. Red Horses, 1909, original in the Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany.

The outlines of the horses are made into great swinging curves and their color into bright red to contrast more brilliantly with the green of the grass—a decorative composition of great vitality and elegance.

Marin

John Marin became known in the early 1900's as an etcher. Since the War his reputation as a watercolorist has increased until some think him the foremost American painter. He paints in New York and along the Maine Coast.

54. **Downtown New York,** 1921, original in watercolor, Private Collection, New York.

To the sensitive vision of the artist New York skyscrapers seem to rock as if from the shock of a blinding shattering explosion. He has painted what he feels more than what he objectively sees. This picture illustrates very clearly what is meant by "Expressionism".

Demuth

Charles Demuth, one of the most distinguished younger Americans, lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, since about 1915. He has painted there and in New York.

55. **For Sir Christopher Wren,** about 1922, original in the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts.

Demuth uses here a more superficial kind of Cubism than we see in the Picasso *Still Life* or the Léger *Composition.* He has taken the straight lines and gable angles of the architecture and continued them into space so that architecture and sky are unified by criss-cross diagonals. Demuth, of course, did not actually see these lines; he has used them simply as a means of organization. Demuth dedicated this painting of the 18th century New England church tower to Wren, the great English architect.

Dickinson

Preston Dickinson's death in 1930 was a severe loss to American art. He was an artist of the greatest integrity and refinement. He had been at work, principally in New York, since about 1915.

56. **Harlem River Bridge,** about 1922, original in watercolor.

Remarkable for its sparse but effective use of color and its delicate precision of design and execution.

De Chirico

The Italian, Giorgio de Chirico (pronounced "Kiriko"), at a time when most advanced painters were concerned more or less with pure design, was experimenting with a new kind of subject matter which was to make him an important member of the Parisian Super-realist group. (See the introduction to Section 4). He has now returned to Italy.

57. **Evangelical Still Life,** 1917.

Influenced by Cubism in composition but very different in purpose. In Picasso's Cubist *Still Life* the design, the aesthetic effect, is everything, but in de Chirico's *Still Life* an effect of

mystery and paradox is intended. This enigmatic and surprising quality, as if the objects in the picture had been assembled in a dream, makes it an excellent illustration of Super-realism.

Rivera

Diego Rivera, the most famous of the Mexican mural painters, studied for many years in Europe and was for a time a Cubist in Paris. Since 1921 he has painted frescoes in and near Mexico City. In 1927 he worked in Moscow, San Francisco in 1931, Detroit in 1932, New York (Rockefeller Center) in 1933. More than any other artist he has caused a revival of interest in mural painting. His subject matter is drawn from the human drama both of the past and the present. He is a radical in politics and economics. His art is based primarily on the great tradition of Italian fresco painting.

58. While the Poor Sleep, 1922-1927, original in fresco on the walls of the Ministry of Education, Mexico City.

The full, rounded, simplified forms, the glowing color, and the profound interest in human life are all characteristic of Rivera's art at its best. The reproduction shows a section of a larger composition.

59. Head of a Slain Indian, 1930, original in fresco on the walls of the Palace of Cortez, Cuernavaca.

The Cuernavaca frescoes, showing the history of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, were given to the town by United States Ambassador Morrow.

This "close-up" detail gives an excellent idea of the quality and power of Rivera's technique.

60. Cane Workers, 1930, original in fresco on the walls of the Palace of Cortez, Cuernavaca.

A section of a composition showing Indians gathering sugar cane under the eyes of armed overseers—a document and a magnificent decoration.

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