

The Mrs. Adele R. Levy Collection : a memorial exhibition

Prefaces by Blanchette H. Rockefeller, Alfred M. Frankfurter, Alfred H. Barr, Jr

Author

Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)

Date

1961

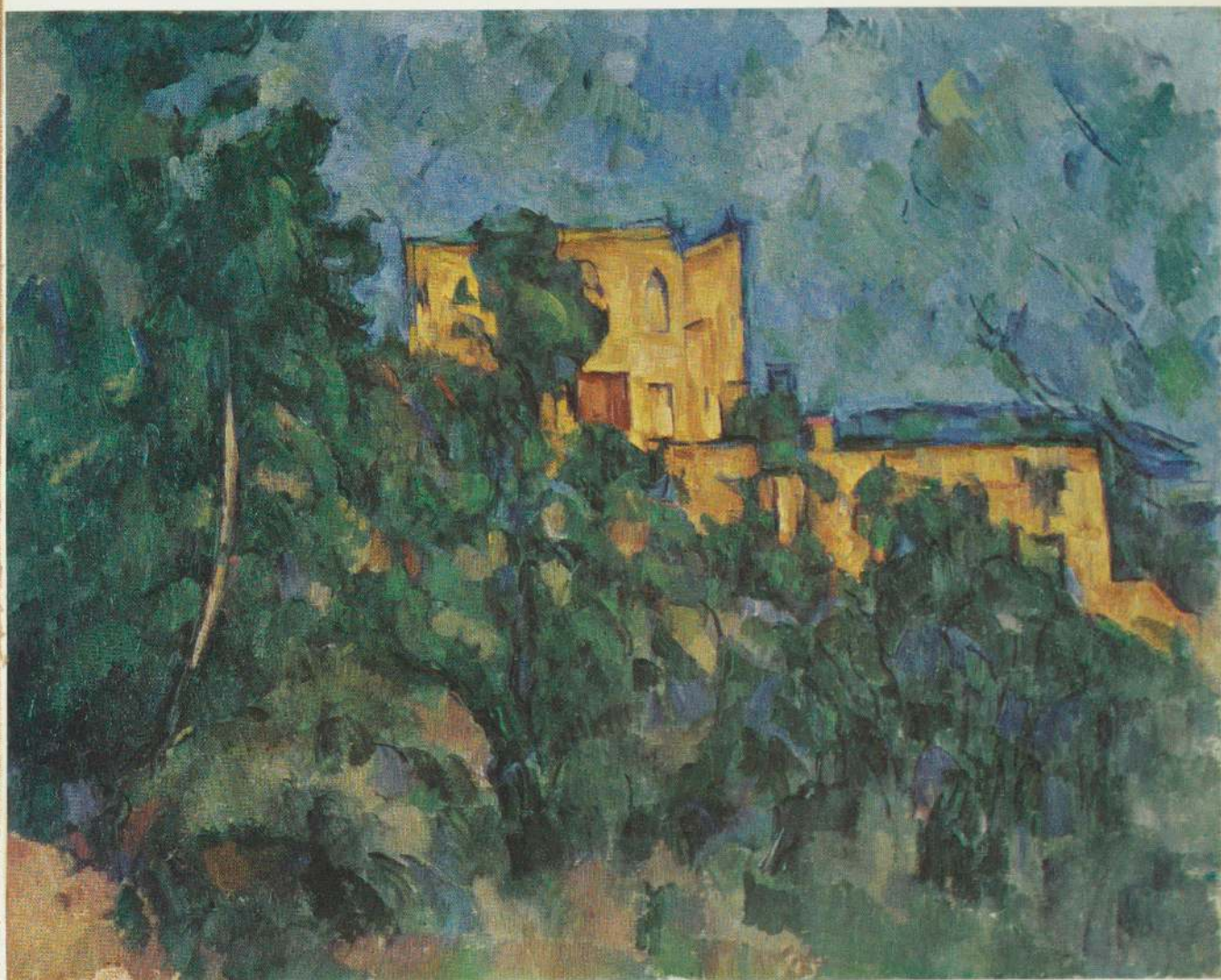
Publisher

The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL

[www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2795?
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The Mrs. Adele R. Levy Collection • A Memorial Exhibition

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cover: CEZANNE, *Le Château Noir* (1904-06)
Oil, 29 x 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York



photo Dorothy Wilding, 1955

Adele Rosenwald Levy

The Mrs. Adele R. Levy Collection

A MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

Prefaces by Blanchette H. Rockefeller, Alfred M. Frankfurter and Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

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1961

11 West 53 Street, New York

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. 61-15130

Printed by Plantin Press, New York

Cover printed by Brüder Hartmann, West Berlin, Germany

Designed by Susan Draper

To Adele R. Levy

Countless people throughout the city, the nation, and the world remember her with deep gratitude and affection. Adele Levy loved people. Her humane wisdom made her a leader among those dedicated to the welfare of mankind and to relieving injustice and oppression. Adele Levy respected people. She believed that excellence of achievement was the greatest gift to mankind and wanted people to share her own enjoyment in it. Her youthful generosity of effort inspired all who worked with her and for her.—Excerpt from a Resolution passed by the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, March 18, 1960.

The showing on the Museum's walls of this unusually fine collection of paintings and drawings has a special significance to all those closely associated with the Museum of Modern Art over the past twenty years. The exhibition will also have great meaning to the many members of the Museum and to the general public who will be privileged to see it, for Adele R. Levy was an individual who left a deep impact on many who knew her.

Mrs. Levy was an active and influential member of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art from March 1940 to March 1960. She served as the Museum's First Vice-President from November 1946 to her death, and was a Vice-Chairman of our 30th Anniversary Building and Endowment Drive, playing a strong role in planning for the Museum's future. In the weeks following the fire of 1958, it was Adele Levy who gave courage and direction to the Trustees and staff in their first steps to meet the physical and financial losses that were sustained. As one looks back on those disheartening weeks one remembers with gratitude her quiet determination to see everything move forward again. One thinks of the way in which she gave moral support to the members of the staff most troubled and burdened by the results of the fire and one feels indebted to her for her prompt financial assistance to the Museum in that time of special need, thus influencing others to follow her example.

As a member of the Board of Trustees and its various committees on which she served regularly, Adele Levy set an impressive example to us all. She kept herself well informed about what went on within the Museum walls. She was interested in the professional activities of the various members of the staff, many of whom she knew in a warm and personal way.

Adele Levy believed deeply in the concept of the Museum of Modern Art and was con-

cerned with the development of its many-sided and pioneering program. She was always ready to back honest aspirations and achievement even if they did not reflect her own predilections. She displayed remarkable tolerance for the new and sometimes difficult material introduced in the Museum's exhibitions and programs and showed many a younger trustee the way by her open-minded faith in staff judgments and by her belief in the Museum's proper role as a pioneer in the world of today.

These are a few of the reasons why Adele Levy was a deeply honored and beloved trustee of our Museum. She has been sorely missed these past months by each one of her friends at the Museum so that this memorial exhibition of her own beautiful paintings will be a comforting opportunity to think of her with gratitude and affection. To the more general public, the privilege of seeing a private collection of such quality of discriminating taste is in itself an unusual pleasure. The fact that it belonged to and was assembled by Mrs. Levy with the interest and assistance of her husband, Dr. David M. Levy, makes this exhibition of especial significance to our institution. We show it to our members and friends with pride, gratitude and sadness.

To the family of Adele Levy we wish to express our thanks for the opportunity to pay tribute to her by means of this memorial exhibition. Dr. Levy has been generous in allowing his home to be deprived of many of these works of art for the duration of the exhibition. The Trustees of the Museum wish to express to Dr. Levy and to Mrs. Levy's sister, Mrs. Max Ascoli, to her sons, Mr. Richard Deutsch and Mr. Armand Deutsch, and to the other members of her family, our deep appreciation for their cooperation in making this exhibition possible.

Further thanks are due to Dr. Alfred Frankfurter both for contributing the highly interesting article on Mrs. Levy as a collector and for advice on the exhibition and catalogue. Dr. Frankfurter over the years has been a close friend of Dr. and Mrs. Levy and has helped them with his interest and advice in the formation of their collection. Mrs. Marie C. Clancy, Mrs. Levy's secretary, and Mr. Nathan W. Levin, an executor of her estate, have also been of great help in assembling the exhibition.

A number of Mrs. Levy's paintings have been bequeathed to private individuals or to museums or have been distributed by the Adele R. Levy Fund. For lending paintings to the exhibition the Museum of Modern Art is much indebted to Mrs. Ascoli and Dr. Levy, and to The Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts, the Los Angeles County Museum, and The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

BLANCHETTE H. ROCKEFELLER
President, The Museum of Modern Art

*Adele R. Levy and the Collection of
the Museum of Modern Art*

The Museum's President has written of Adele Levy as a Trustee and Vice-President. Dr. Frankfurter, on the following pages, writes of Mrs. Levy as a collector. On the occasion of this exhibition of her collection I should like to speak of her great services to the Museum's collections, of her gifts, the thoughtful way she gave them, and her attitude towards the collection as a whole.

The Degas *At the Milliner's*, exceptional in its wit and beauty of composition, the famous Toulouse-Lautrec *La Goulue at the Moulin Rouge*, Seurat's serene and radiant *Evening, Honfleur*, and Cézanne's *Le Château Noir*, one of his last paintings, abstract in its grandeur—these four pictures constitute the most valuable single gift of works of art to the Museum's collection since the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest of 1931, two years after the Museum's founding. Miss Bliss was the Museum's first Vice-President. One likes to imagine how delighted she would have been had she known how generously her great bequest had been emulated by the gift of her successor in office.

The four paintings were given by Mrs. Levy in 1957. She had retained a life interest in them so that although her gifts were irrevocable they did not come to the Museum immediately. Yet the Museum knew that eventually they would, and this knowledge was not only of great encouragement but of great value in planning the collection even though at the time the donor wished to keep her gift confidential.

A year later, for the good of the Museum, she was easily persuaded to change her mind. In the spring of 1958 the Museum suffered seriously from a fire. Mrs. Rockefeller has told of Mrs. Levy's part in helping to restore the effectiveness and morale of the Museum by supporting immediate plans not just for reconstruction but for a greater future. As a gesture of confidence in the Museum, Mrs. Levy agreed to permit the announcement of her gift of paintings in the hope that other Trustees and friends of the Museum would follow suit. Thus she led the way toward the magnificent exhibition *Works of Art: Given or Promised* which was held in the fall of 1958 as a cogent demonstration of faith in the future of the Museum and its collections.

The four masterpieces of French painting were not Adele Levy's first gifts to the Museum Collection. In 1942 she gave a set of thirty small paintings on a controversial subject, *The Migration of the Negro*, by the then obscure young American painter, Jacob Lawrence. This, her initial gift to the Collection, seems significant even in the presence of the great

paintings which were to follow, for the Lawrence series reminds us of her broad human sympathies and humanitarian interests.

In her Will, Mrs. Levy bequeathed to the Museum an additional painting of superlative quality, Picasso's *Violin and Grapes*, reserving however a life interest in the picture for her husband, Dr. David M. Levy. With characteristic generosity Dr. Levy has foregone his privilege so that the Picasso could join immediately the paintings previously assigned to the Museum by his wife.

The Picasso, a cubist work of 1912, was, in style, the most modern painting in Mrs. Levy's collection. Her taste was, as this exhibition demonstrates, conservative. In her own collecting she did not follow the vanguard of the past fifty years but never at any moment did she question the propriety, indeed the necessity, of the Museum's doing so. That very necessity makes all the more valuable, particularly to the Museum of Modern Art, those classic works which will remain in the Museum Collection after this exhibition is over.

Viewing for the last time these paintings assembled, *in memoriam*, I recall the pleasure of seeing them in the collector's home. I remember particularly the meetings of a small committee which year after year helped organize a benefit art exhibition for the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. Adele Levy served as Chairman so I had a chance to watch, always with delight, the charm, patience and cogency of her way of working with people. At the same time I could not help being distracted now and then from the business at hand by the superb pictures hanging on her walls. A flair for collecting fine works of art is not ordinarily conjoined with practical effectiveness. At these meetings both were brilliantly in evidence. Adele Levy was a woman of rare good taste and, perhaps more important, a woman of courage, sense of responsibility and vision.

ALFRED H. BARR, JR., *Director of the Museum Collections*

Adele Levy and her Pictures

Adele Levy probably would have denied on this occasion, as she always did, that she was a "collector"—and, still more, that she owned a "collection." She hated pretension and loved art—the latter in a highly personal, intimate way, differing from her public moments in philanthropy and education. Hence it seems possible to describe her attitudes toward the pictures in this exhibition with more reason, and perhaps more relevancy, than might ordinarily emerge from discussing today's average collections of nineteenth- and twentieth-century painting, some larger than hers. She and her husband began to acquire these pictures more than a quarter of a century ago, a little before the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists had quite become the fantastically expensive darlings of fashion they are nowadays. Since the last war the element of free choice has all but disappeared from the collecting of works of this period, and the chronicle of latter-day collections is likely to become a record of merely fortuitous buys and daring bids at international auctions rather than of intensely personal taste.

Not so with Dr. and Mrs. Levy's pictures. In the winter of 1935-36, Mrs. Levy enrolled in courses I was teaching in French painting from Courbet to Picasso; she was an intelligent and active student, often requesting recommendations for additional reading. At the end of the second semester, she told me she was thinking of buying some paintings and asked whether I would help her and her husband with advice—under a rather unusual arrangement: we were to constitute ourselves a jury of three to pass on the paintings, unanimity to be required for purchase. At that time the Levys already owned about half a dozen paintings: the Soutine and the Marin watercolor included in this exhibition, as well as a Renoir, a Gauguin and an Utrillo. They wanted both to add to these and to raise the level of quality, Mrs. Levy told me, and it was characteristic of her that she should have prepared herself by serious study.

The plan for unanimous three-man approval worked very well over two decades, and all that it involved—looking together at literally hundreds of pictures, studying carefully the candidates for acquisition and arrival at a final decision—adds to the pleasantest memories of a career in art. Dr. Levy at Harvard had taken Arthur Pope's art courses; also he was taught to sketch by his brother, a painter. His opinions, influenced by these experiences, were also affected by scientific reasoning, relating to his work in psychology and psychiatry, and all too rare in the art world. Mrs. Levy had a clearly defined visual taste; she

liked pure, rather serene forms in which exquisite color played a part even if subdued. Typical of her taste are the small yet wonderful Corot, the great Degas pastel, the Manet, the silvery Renoir *Madame Henriot*, the two Seurats, even the unusually cool van Gogh. Still, there was another side, or perhaps an undertone, to her taste, which would crop out only occasionally and unpredictably; it appeared in the turbulent Matisse *Odalisque* and, strikingly, in her immediate, passionate interest in the Cézanne *Château Noir*, with its wild luxuriance of foliage—a painting which became her favorite.

At least as interesting as the operation of a personal taste for color and form is a collector's motivation and, so to say, the morality of his esthetic. Mrs. Levy's motivation surely originated in a fastidious, delightfully feminine pleasure in the beautiful surroundings of life—as her handsome collection of eighteenth-century porcelain, as the far-above-average Georgian furniture of her house, as even her restrained though special taste in her own clothes, all testified. The morality—a quality not always associated with collecting—is something which Mrs. Levy had as peculiarly her own. It can perhaps be defined as a form of Old Testament puritanism, directed never towards the work of art but towards the possession of it. One might say it was a sense of responsibility about the artist's creation, mixed with a feeling not of guilt but of concern—that the work of art, as a luxury, could tip the balance toward hedonism. When she first considered buying a picture at a price in the upper five figures (valued in the middle six-figure range today), she consulted her financial advisor; he told her that it should be considered a capital investment and (to her great relief) not a luxury which might have diminished the high percentage of the income she was already giving to charities and education. This really encouraged her collecting.

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to Mrs. Levy's sense of responsibility towards these esthetic luxuries is her disposition of them. That they have ultimately been given to the public could astonish nobody who knew her, but the way in which she left them has its own distinction. She once remarked, in discussing the destiny of her pictures, that she could not bear the thought of leaving to one museum an intact collection bearing her name, with the vicarious immortality that implies. Instead, by her wishes, her pictures are being distributed among large museums in New York, Washington, Dallas, Los Angeles and other cities across the country—including a number of smaller centers where it is unlikely there will ever be anything like the wealth of art centered in New York and Washington.

The genus *collector* has many species; one likes to think that Mrs. Levy's is the kind Cézanne, Degas and the other artists represented here would have chosen as an ideal custodian of their works.

ALFRED FRANKFURTER

THE MRS. ADELE R. LEVY COLLECTION

Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition, June 9 to July 16, 1961

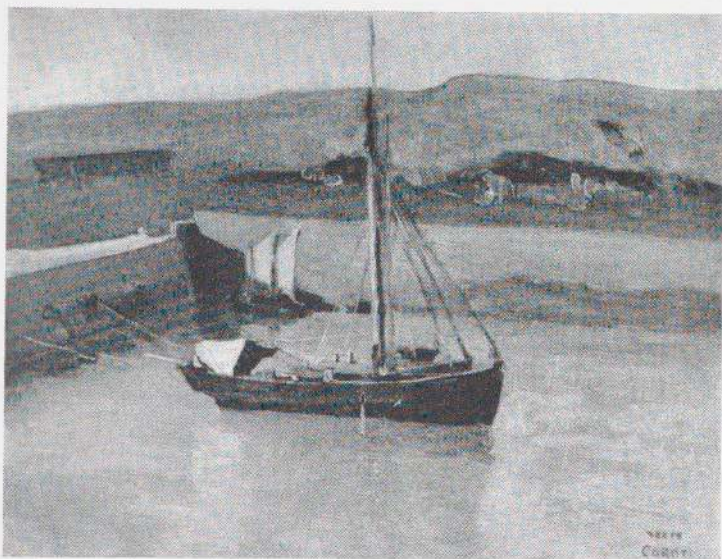
The works of art are arranged in roughly chronological order. An alphabetical index of artists with their works is given here.

The names of private and public recipients of gifts or bequests are listed as lenders in the captions to the reproductions. The National Gallery did not lend. All works listed without a lender's name are owned by the Adele R. Levy Fund, Inc.

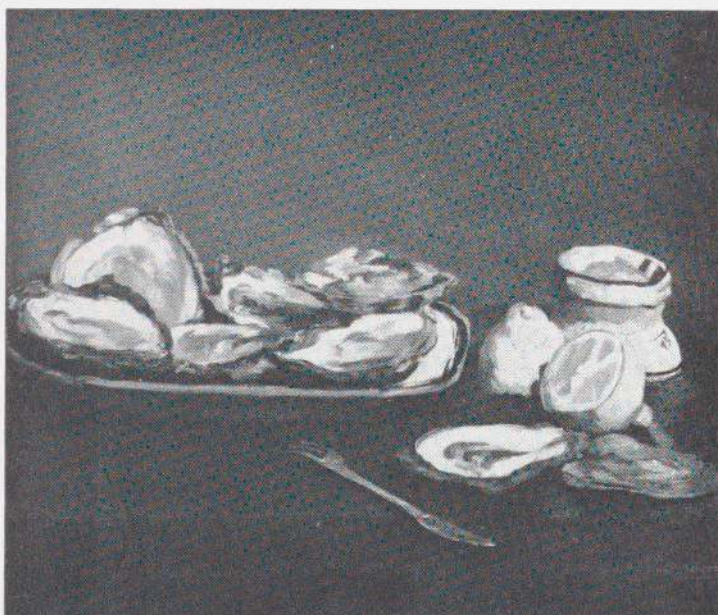
The date following each title is that inscribed on the work of art by the artist; if *not* so inscribed, the date, based on other evidence, is enclosed in parentheses.

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width. Unless otherwise specified oil paintings are on canvas, drawings and watercolors on paper, with sheet sizes given.

- Bonnard: *Roof Tops*, p. 22
Braque: *Under the Awning*, p. 29
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Cézanne: *Le Château Noir*, cover
Cézanne: *Still Life with Cherries and Peaches*, p. 19
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Degas: *At the Milliner's*, p. 17
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Seurat: *Study for The Bathers*, p. 22
Soutine: *Woman beneath a Tree*, p. 30
Toulouse-Lautrec: *La Goulue at the Moulin Rouge*, p. 25
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above: COROT, Jean-Baptiste Camille
(French, 1796-1875)
Honfleur, A Fishing Boat (c. 1830)
Oil, 10 x 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ "



left: MANET, Edouard
(French, 1832-1883)
Oysters, (c. 1862). Oil, 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

opposite: RENOIR, Auguste
(French, 1841-1919)
Portrait of Madame Henriot. (1876-77)
Oil, 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
The National Gallery, Washington, D. C.



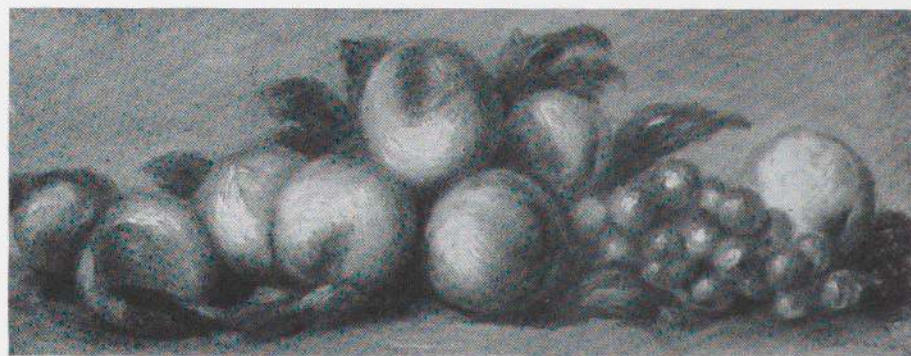


DEGAS, *Three Dancers*
(1879-80) Charcoal with
pastel, 18½ x 24"

below left: CEZANNE
Barrier, Chantilly. (1888)
Watercolor, 7½ x 4¾"

below right: RENOIR,
Madame Renoir in a Boat
(1888-95), Watercolor and
pencil, 8¼ x 11¼"





above: DEGAS, Hilaire-Germain-Edgar
(French, 1834-1917). *Horses at Pasture*
(1873-74). Oil on wood, 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
Collection Dr. David M. Levy

below: RENOIR, *Still Life*
with Peaches and Grapes. (1905-08?)
Oil, 6 x 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (sight)





DEGAS, *At the Milliner's (L'Essayage chez la modiste)*. (c. 1882)
Pastel, $27\frac{5}{8} \times 27\frac{3}{4}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York

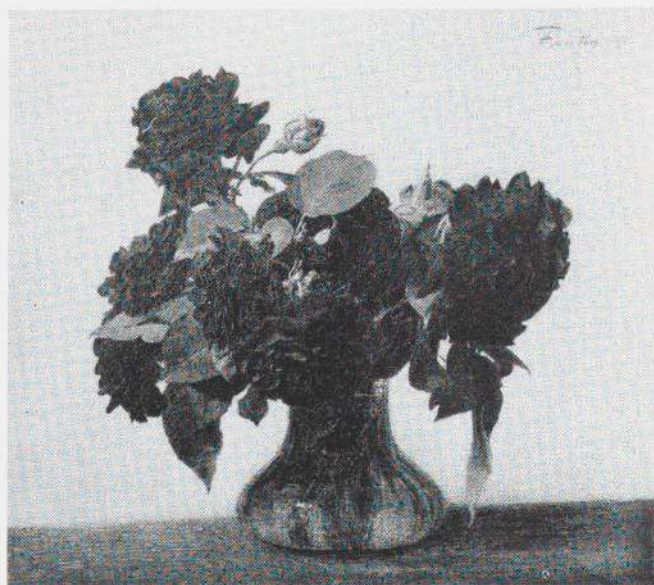
opposite: DEGAS, *Portrait of Madame de Nittis*. (c. 1872)
Oil, $29\frac{1}{4} \times 21\frac{3}{4}$ ". Collection Mrs. Max Ascoli, New York

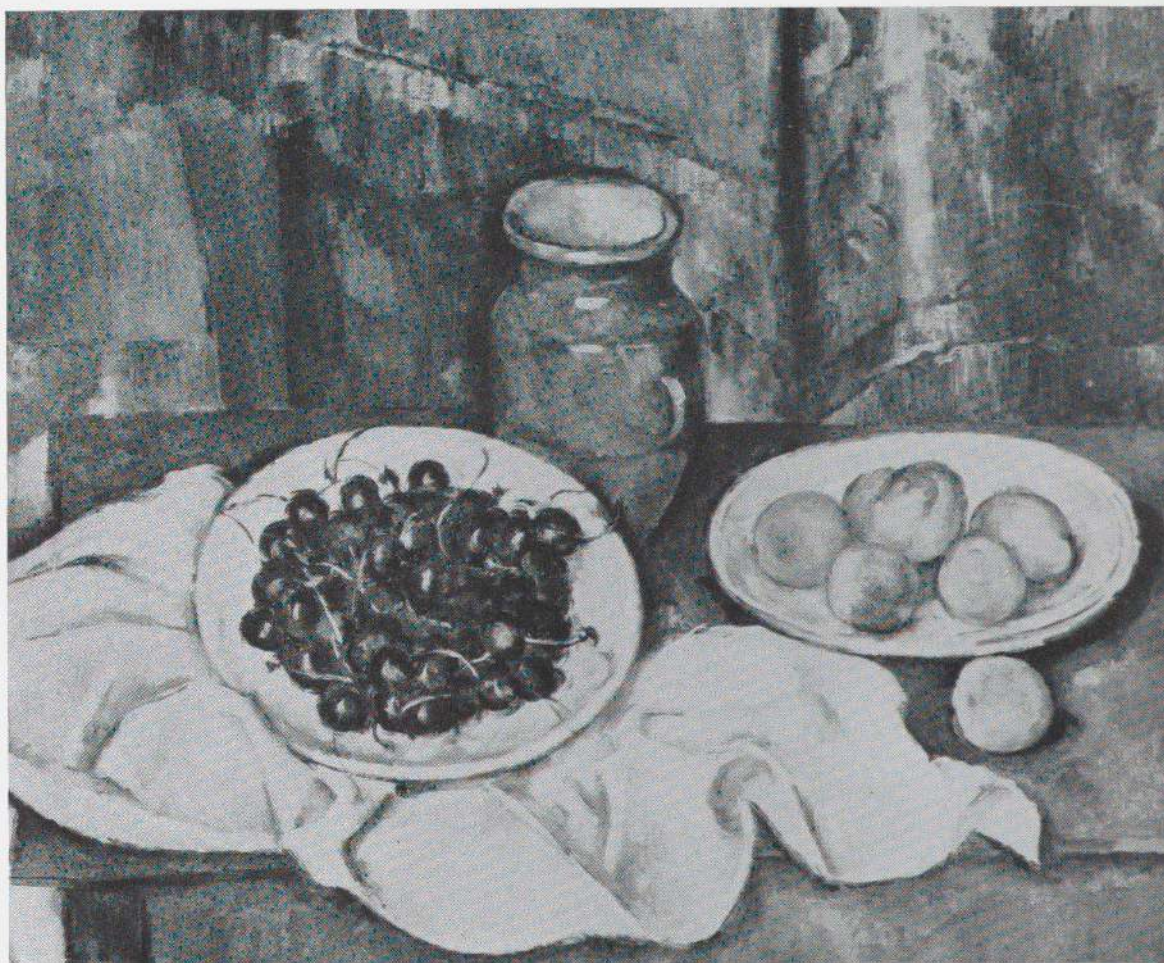


left: CEZANNE, Paul (French, 1839-1906)
Vase of Flowers. (c. 1870-72?) Oil, 16¼ x 13"

below: FANTIN-LATOUR, Henri (French, 1836-1904)
Red Roses. 1891. Oil, 13¼ x 14¾"

opposite: CEZANNE, *Still Life with Cherries and Peaches*. (1883-87) Oil, 19¾ x 24"
 Los Angeles County Museum



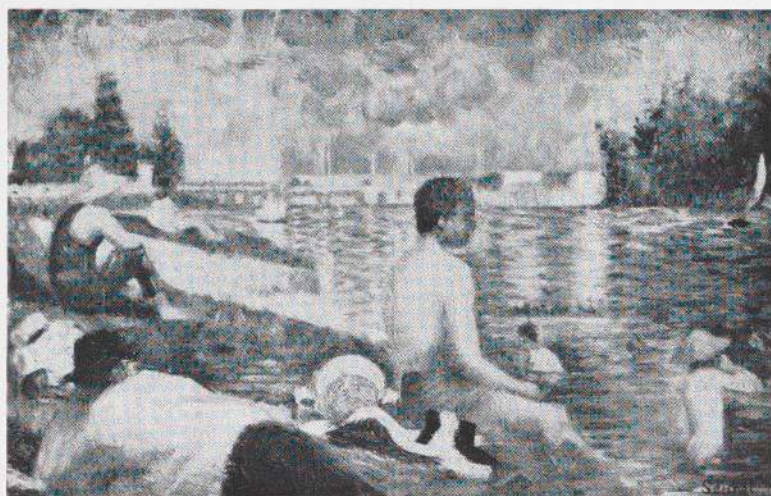






VAN GOGH, Vincent (Dutch, 1853-1890)
Purple Iris (Les Iris). (1890). Oil, 29 x 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift, 1958

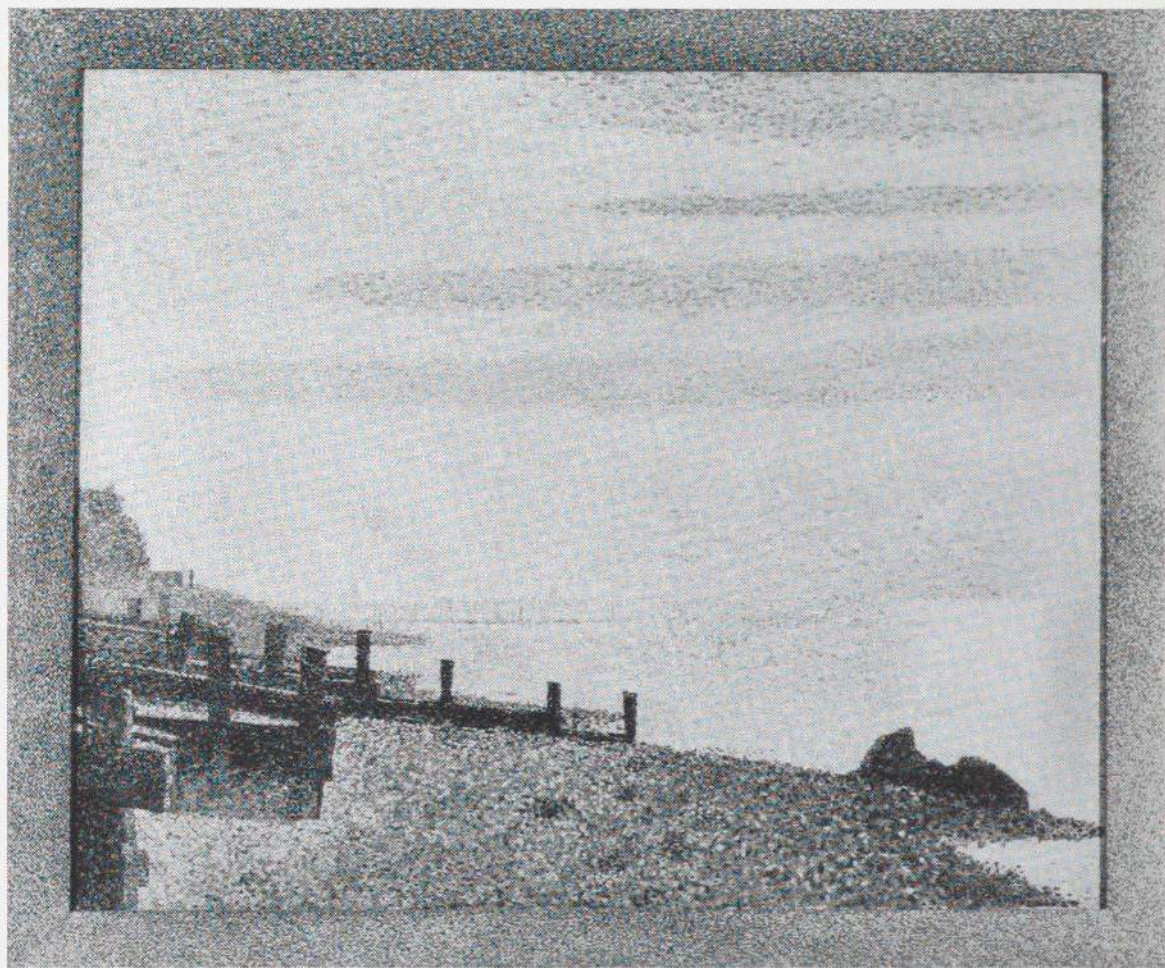
opposite: GAUGUIN, Paul (French, 1848-1903)
Under the Pandanus Tree (I Raro Te Ovir) 1891. Oil,
26 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts



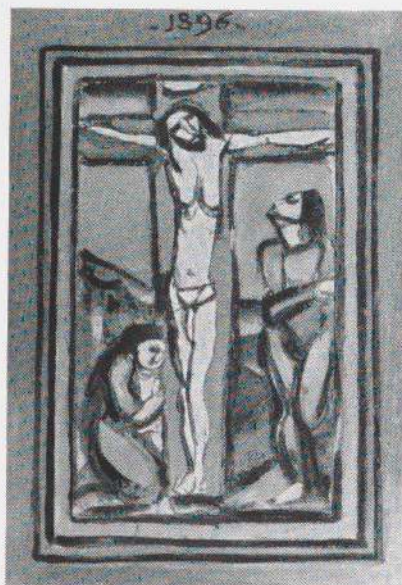
above: SEURAT, Study
for *The Bathers* (1883)
Oil on wood, $6\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$ "



left: BONNARD, Pierre
(French, 1867-1945)
Roof Tops (Les Toits)
(c. 1895-1900). Oil on
cardboard, $13\frac{7}{8} \times 15\frac{1}{8}$ "



SEURAT, Georges-Pierre (French, 1859-1891)
Evening, Honfleur (1886). Oil, 25¼ x 31½"
in a stippled frame painted by the artist
The Museum of Modern Art, New York



left: ROUAULT, Georges (French, 1871-1958). *Crucifixion*
(Dated 1896, but obviously later). Gouache, 17 x 12"

below left: REDON, Odilon (French, 1840-1916)
Pansies. Pastel on gray paper, 21½ x 18"

below right: TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, Henri de (French, 1864-1901)
Seated Woman. (1896)
Sanguine on gray-blue paper, 21 x 14½"

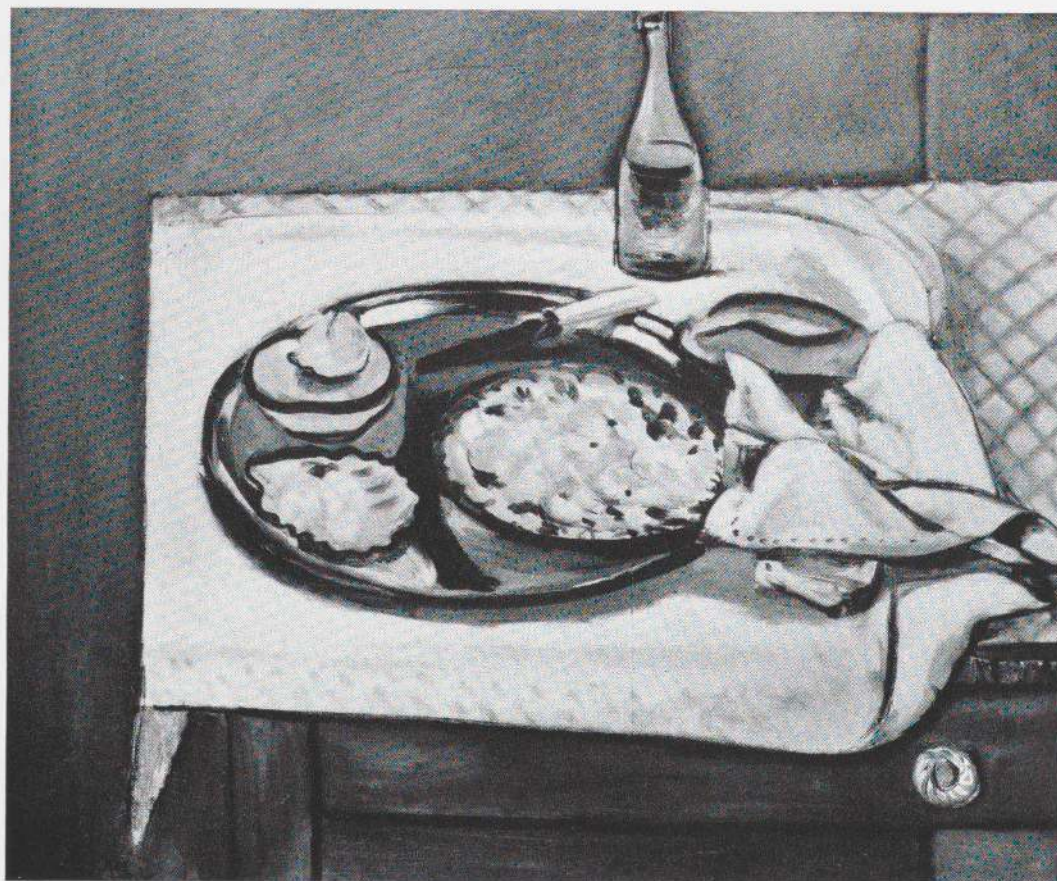
opposite: TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, Henri de (French, 1864-1901)
La Goulue at the Moulin Rouge. (1891-92). Oil on cardboard,
31¼ x 23¼". The Museum of Modern Art, New York



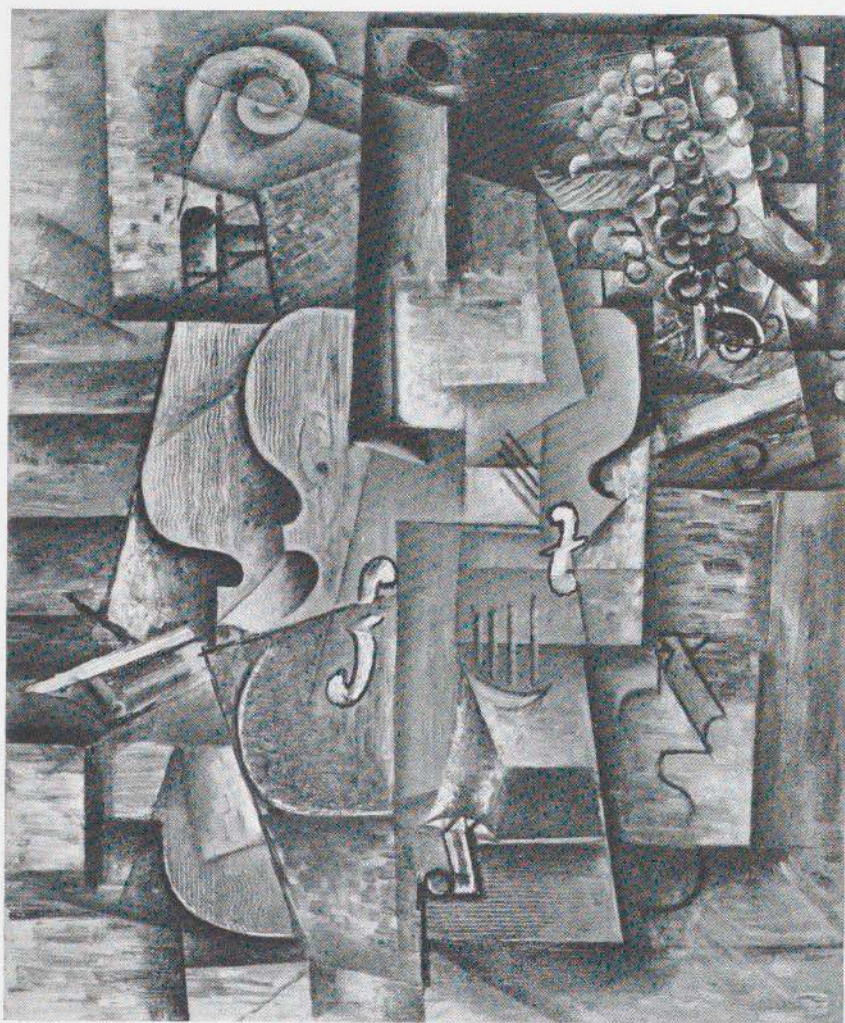


opposite: MATISSE, Henri
(French, 1869-1954) *Odalisque*
(1926). Oil, 28 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

below: MATISSE, *Shrimps*
(1920). Oil, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

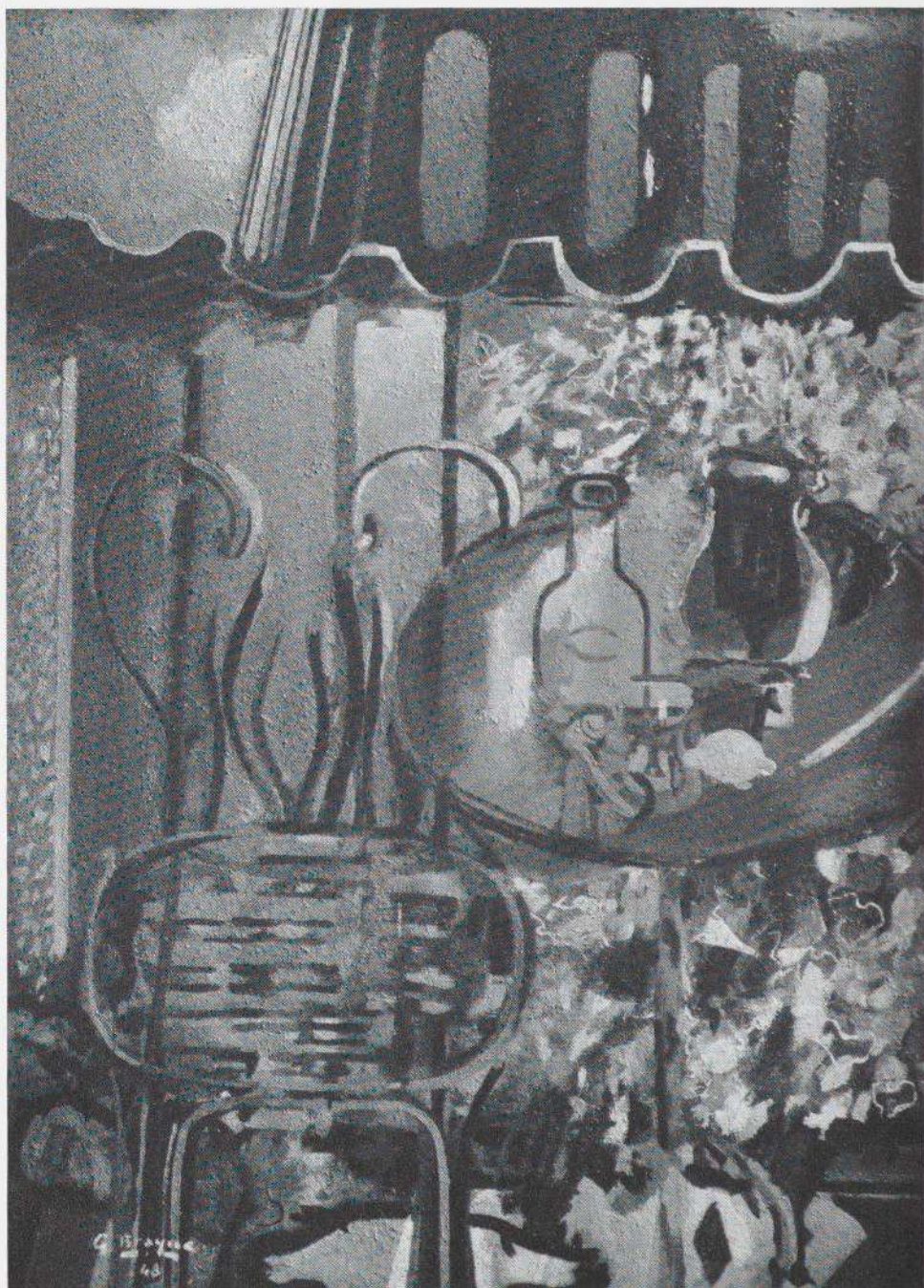






PICASSO, Pablo (Spanish, born 1881)
Violin and Grapes. (1912). Oil, 24 x 20"
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

opposite: BRAQUE, Georges (French, born 1882)
Under the Awning. 1948. Oil, 51 x 35"







above: MARIN, John (American, 1870-1953)
My Hell-Raising Sea. 1941. Oil, 23 x 29"

right: MARIN, *Near Stonington, Maine*
 1921. Watercolor, 10 x 12 3/4"

opposite above: SOUTINE, Chaim (French, born
 Lithuania. 1894-1943) *Woman beneath a Tree*
 (1925) Oil, 20 7/8 x 20 1/8"

opposite below: SEGONZAC, André Dunoyer de
 (French, born 1885). *Village by the Water's Edge*
 (1925-30) Pen and watercolor, 9 x 24"



