

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Museum of Modern Art

MOMA EXPLORES THE DIVERSE REPRESENTATION OF PLACES IN EARLY MODERNISM

ModernStarts: Places

October 28, 1999 to March 14, 2000, Third Floor Galleries

The Museum of Modern Art presents the second installment of *ModernStarts* in *Places*, an exhibition that demonstrates how particular spaces, both real and imagined, urban and rural, were conceived and represented by artists in the period between 1880 and 1920.

Places examines two major and interrelated themes in the visual arts of the time—one of escape from the here and now, whether to actual geographic sites, imaginary realms, or the domestic sphere; and one of embrace of the new modern city in all its complexities. The forty-year period addressed in *Places* divides roughly in half, as images of the country gave way, in large part, to images of the city. Yet, it is important to note that depictions of the country were shaped by urban viewpoints, while representations of the city were informed by the visual vocabulary of the past. The exhibition, drawn entirely from The Museum of Modern Art's rich holdings from this period, comprises a group of seven independent installations, each of which concentrates on an important manifestation of this subject. The visitor will find masterpieces of early modernism, as well as unexpected discoveries by lesser-known artists from the period. There will also be a small number of works by contemporary artists to suggest how the subject of place continues to engage the imagination. Opening on October 28th, the exhibition comprises some 318 works and occupies the entire third floor of the Museum.

ModernStarts: Places is organized by John Elderfield, Chief Curator at Large; Peter Reed, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design; Maria del Carmen González, Associate Educator, Department of Education; and Mary Chan, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings, in collaboration with a team of MoMA curators, who are acknowledged in their respective sections later in this announcement. Elizabeth Levine, Curatorial Assistant, replaced Ms. Chan in the final few months of the project. Administrative support was provided by George Bareford and Sharon Dec.

Among the installations is *Seasons and Moments*, a display devoted to evocations of the poetic and the primal in landscape, with works such as Claude Monet's *Water Lilies*, Joan Miró's *The Birth of the World*, Cy Twombly's *Four Seasons*, and Vasily Kandinsky's so-called *Four Seasons*, on view in a reconstruction of the rotunda gallery where the artist intended these works to be shown. *Changing Visions: French Landscape 1880-1920*, presents landscape paintings by such artists as Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, André Derain, Henri Matisse, Monet, and Vincent van Gogh, and displays them with documentary photographs that reveal their specific sources of inspiration. *Landscape as Retreat: Gauguin to Nolde* examines woodcuts on the theme of escape from the modern world by artists including Paul Gauguin, Edvard Munch, and Emil Nolde. Other galleries explore the urban realm, as in the fin-de-siècle environment of furniture and objects in *Hector Guimard and the Art Nouveau Interior*, and a documentation of the modern world in a largely photographic exhibition,

Rise of the Modern World, which reveals the dynamism and underbelly of urban life in the industrial age. *Unreal City*, an exhibition of paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs, depicts the city as an anxious site of disrupted space and visual disorientation.

In conjunction with *Places*, a film series titled *The American Place: Landscape in the Early Western* examines the development of the iconography of the West in motion pictures.

As with all of the exhibitions in *Modern Starts*, *Places* may be entered through multiple entrances, and may be viewed in any order the visitor wishes. The changing wall colors indicate the individual installations.

Maria Fernanda Cardoso Installation

The visitor to *Places* first sees a monumental installation by the contemporary Colombian artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso, in her first showing at The Museum of Modern Art. *Cementerio—Vertical Garden* (1992), a dramatic installation of 6,000 plastic white lilies, evokes a garden that never decays, where nature is perfect and idealized. Clusters of the flowers jut out from a wall approximately 12 feet high and 112 feet long. Subtle pencil drawings of arches on the surface of the wall refer to traditional Latin American and Southern European cemeteries, where mausoleums are packed tightly together and flower vases line the walls. The artist had a studio near Cementerio Central, which became infamous in the 1950s as the site in Bogotá where victims of urban violence were laid out for identification, and this work unquestionably has elegiac connotations. However, the artist herself stresses the "unashamedly beautiful" aspects of the installation.

Seasons and Moments

Seasons and Moments, organized by Mr. Elderfield with Mr. Reed, Ms. Chan, and Ms. González, is an installation devoted to works evocative of the poetic and primal in landscape. Comprising some 24 paintings and photographs by artists such as Eugène Atget, Kandinsky, Miró, Monet, and Twombly, and a video work by Bill Viola, the installation examines works that illuminate nature through observations of seasons and moments.

Modern artists approached nature's inherent qualities as visible and observable, rather than as a hidden reality behind the external world. Commonly thought to belong to separate periods of modernism and to have entirely different artistic aims, Monet's *Water Lilies* (c.1920) and Miró's *The Birth of the World* (1925) are large-scale images of the world that offer the sense of immersion in a state of watery flux. Monet's painting, installed for the exhibition along one wall of the gallery, can be thought of as an unaltered record of observed nature rather than an abstracted version of what the artist saw. In contrast, Miró's allusive image does not describe a specific place and refuses a singular explanation of the painting's components.

Kandinsky's so-called *Four Seasons* (1914), on view in a reconstruction of the rotunda gallery in which the artist intended these works to be shown, and Twombly's *The Four Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter* (1993–1994) are also evocative of the changing reality of nature. Like other works in the installation, Kandinsky's *Four Seasons* and Twombly's *The Four Seasons* prompt viewers to consider the paintings in relation to the mysterious instances of nature.

Changing Visions: French Landscape 1880–1920

Highlights of The Museum of Modern Art's collection of French landscape paintings from the years 1880–1920 are on view as a coherent group for

the first time in *Changing Visions: French Landscape, 1880-1920*, organized by Magdalena Dabrowski, Senior Curator, Department of Drawings, with research and documentation by Véronique Chagnon-Burke, Research Assistant. The installation looks at how varied character of different French regions inspired artists to experiment with early modern painting styles, to push the limits of representation, and to explore new modes of personal expression.

The exhibition comprises some 61 works in different mediums, among them 30 landscape paintings by artists such as Braque, Cézanne, Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas, Gauguin, van Gogh, Picasso, and Matisse. The works are grouped by the region and location they represent--Giverny, Aix-en-Provence, and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, among others--to contrast how artists working in various styles portrayed common locations. Selected documentary photographs serve as a reference to the actual landscapes depicted. Additionally, photographs of the period, by photographers such as Atget and Jacques-Henri Lartigue, and a group of drawings and prints complement the installation.

The character of certain locations gave rise to new styles of expression. For example, L'Estaque, a village near Marseilles with lush vegetation, impressive rock formations, and spectacular views of the Mediterranean, inspired Derain's Fauve landscapes, as well as those of Braque. Besides bringing out the intensity of the local color, the brilliant light of L'Estaque emphasized the essential shapes of the scenery, infusing Derain's previously loose, mosaic-like works with a stronger structure. The unique quality of light in the port of Saint-Tropez influenced the use of the pointillist dots in Signac's *The Buoy (Saint-Tropez Harbor)* (1894).

The heavy impasto of van Gogh's Saint-Rémy-de-Provence works conveys the lushness of the region and imparts the area's spectacular colors and light. *The Starry Night* (1889) was inspired by the village where van Gogh resided as a patient in the asylum of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole, but it combines actual landmarks with invented ones. While the village is situated accurately below the mountains, the church steeple is entirely fictional, although reminiscent of the architecture of his native Holland. The swirling sky, with its bright yellow moon and stars, is almost decorative, yet has the sweeping quality of a fantasy or dream.

An important factor in the evolution of landscape painting was the new ease of travel by train, and later by car. The Normandy shore and the coast along the English Channel became fashionable resort areas for Parisians, and harbors, misty sea atmosphere, and picturesque shorelines became subjects for artists. Georges-Pierre Seurat was among those who addressed the raw yet serene beauty of this scenery. His *The Channel at Gravelines, Evening* (1890) conveys a quality of deep stillness in its flat sand and quiet sky. The sense of emotional distance is reinforced by the careful technique, a "pointillist" method, controlled and rational, of using small dots of complementary colors. The use of large expanses of flat color without visual detail in Matisse's *Periwinkles/Moroccan Garden* (1912) was prompted by a visit to gardens in Morocco, then a French protectorate. Innovations like these secured the important position of French landscape painting within the development of modern art.

Changing Visions: French Landscape 1880-1920 is accompanied in the gallery by a interactive kiosk/Web site project of the same name, organized by Ms. Chagnon-Burke, with production design by Elaine Cohen, Coordinator of Education Technology, in consultation Ms. González.

Landscape as Retreat: Gauguin to Nolde

The rapid modernization and industrialization of Western society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prompted many artists to flee commercial urban centers for rural, often exotic locales, in search of a greater unity with nature. *Landscape as Retreat: Gauguin to Nolde*, organized by Wendy Weitman, Associate Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, explores the broad theme of escape from urban life in some 27 woodcuts, lithographs and etchings by artists such as Gauguin, Heckel, Kirchner, Munch, and Nolde.

To evoke the natural world with greater spontaneity and honesty, artists often turned to the simplified, crude vocabulary of printmaking, in particular the woodcut. Although intended to exhibit a pure retreat to nature, much of this art expressed a murky ambivalence to the polarities of city and country, as artists brought their sophisticated modern influences with them to their rural havens. For instance, although the coarsely patterned lines and curved forms of the foliage in Gauguin's *Nave Nave Fenua* (1893-94) impart an exotic setting, the landscape is imaginary rather than observed, while the Tahitian goddess depicted is based on a photograph of a Buddhist temple carving.

Munch, who used images of his local Norwegian landscape as a vehicle for psychological statements, revolutionized the approach to the woodcut by introducing a technique in which the woodblock is carved into pieces that are inked separately and reassembled like a puzzle. In *Women on the Shore* (1898), Munch depicts two women in different stages of life with typically austere and fatalistic overtones, accentuating the two figures and rocky coastline with lines resulting from the individual pieces of the woodblock. The young rebellious artists of the Brücke group, critical of the cities' increasingly commercial values, made frequent communal escapes from the city with their models to swim, sunbathe, and sketch in the nude. While these visits served as inspiration, the spontaneous feel of these works belies the fact that they were actually studied interpretations created back in the artists' Dresden studios and reflected the strong influence of avant-garde artistic thinking of the time.

Hector Guimard and the Art Nouveau Interior

Hector Guimard was one of the most original designers of the quintessentially urban and cosmopolitan style in France known as Art Nouveau. *Hector Guimard and the Art Nouveau Interior*, organized by Mr. Reed, explores how Guimard consciously modernized design with exuberantly curved, biomorphic shapes evocative of the natural world. While the Art Nouveau aesthetic reached beyond the private home, this installation demonstrates how the domestic urban interior was made to be a highly refined place of retreat.

Many of the approximately 26 pieces of furniture and design objects in the exhibition come from Guimard's own collection. They are seen against a background of wallpaper originally designed by Guimard for a bedroom in the Castel Béanger, the sensational Parisian apartment building in which no detail escaped his artistry. The swirling organic forms and muted colors of the wallpaper are emblematic of the movement. The wallpaper was recreated specifically for the exhibition by Wolf-Gordon Inc., New York.

A wide range of objects--from a table and a fireplace to picture frames, door handles, and a letter opener--reveals how the phantasmagorical interiors echoed the movement of forms and the dynamic processes in nature. Guimard described the act of design as sculpting. His carved wood furniture, including his own desk (c.1899) and a settee (1898), designed

for the Castel Béranger, makes us fully aware of the artist's expressive hand: the legs and arms suggest skeletal forms, and the overall contours swell to resemble organic shapes. The flowing arabesques of a cast-iron balcony (1905-07) form a lacy protective network, delineated like a pen-and-ink drawing.

Several works by Guimard's contemporaries represent Art Nouveau's range of expression, for example, painted blown glass vases (c.1910) by Daum Frères, a table lamp (c.1900) by Louis Majorelle, and a sculpture, originally wired as a lamp, of the dancer Loïe Fuller by François-Raoul Larche.

One of the most notable works, placed at the entrance to *ModernStarts: Places* is Guimard's recently restored Entrance Gate to Paris Subway Station (*Métropolitain*) (c.1900). Today, 86 gates of Guimard's design remain in Paris, but the gate in the Museum's collection is the only one of its kind in the United States. This is the first opportunity to view it after an extensive restoration project, undertaken by the Museum in consultation with the Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens, which involved welding repairs, electrical work, and the re-creation of a green faux-bronze finish on the cast iron.

Rise of the Modern World

The invention of photography in 1839 coincided with many of the radical changes brought about by the industrial revolution. Unparalleled in its ability to describe events and objects vividly and accurately, photography was perfectly suited for capturing the emergence of the modern era. *Rise of the Modern World*, organized by Susan Kismaric, Curator, Department of Photography, explores the complementary relationship between photography and the industrial revolution, and the development of a new pictorial language that would forever change visual representation.

The exhibition comprises some 109 photographs—salt paper prints, photogravures, and gelatin silver and albumen prints—made during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often by unknown photographers. While there was a great effort to promote photography as an art form during this period through the Pictorialist and Photo-Secession movements, most photographs were made for practical reasons: to document new inventions or medical research, to describe unknown parts of the world, to reveal the dynamic growth of cities, to chart civic-improvement projects, or to record the proliferation of technological and scientific advances. The "documentary" style of these vernacular photographs contributed to a new visual vocabulary, and their influence can be seen in the work of many twentieth century photographers, such as Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, and Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Several fascinating photographs are on view at MoMA for the first time. These include a series by H. Blancard, which, taken over the course of a year, captures the gradual rise of the Eiffel Tower; likewise a series by an unknown photographer depicts the construction of the Panama Canal.

As early as the 1850s, photographers were combining the technologies of photography and the telescope to record and study the planets. Pictures such as *The Moon* (*Boussingault, Vlacq, Maurolicus*) (1899) by French photographers Loewy and Puiseux fueled curiosity and sparked the invention of more sophisticated instruments for viewing, and ultimately visiting, distant worlds.

Photographers such as Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine documented urban social

changes, as in Riis's *Flashlight Photograph of One of Four Pedlars Who Slept in Cellar of 11 Ludlow Street* (1916). Photography's ability to stop time and motion allowed Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey, early pioneers in the study of motion, to capture movement frame by frame. Muybridge's *Studies of Foreshortening* (1878-79) and Marey's images of a man running, among other works, created a foundation for the invention of motion pictures.

One section of the installation, which also includes modernist paintings, is devoted to the theme of flight, which offered artists dramatic new perspectives on the earth. Two such examples, both taken from the air by unknown photographers, are *London Terminal Aerodrome, Croydon* (1921-22) and a World War I reconnaissance photograph taken in France. The ability to see the world from this new vantage point influenced the radical perspectives and allover compositions of modernist paintings, represented by *The Conquest of the Air* (1913) by Roger de la Fresnaye and Kasimir Malevich's *Suprematist Composition: Airplane Flying* (1915).

Unreal City

The art created in Paris around the time of World War I is characterized by instability and visual disorientation. *Unreal City*, organized by Mr. Elderfield, Ms. González, and Sarah Ganz, Research Assistant, Department of the Chief Curator at Large, examines the parallels between the astounding physical destruction of the war, which fostered a sense of insecurity, and the art from this period, which references the urban environment. The installation comprises some 46 paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs, including a map identifying the location of artists' studios in Paris during the period between 1900 and 1914. A selected group of prints by Otto Dix that directly address the topic of war will also be on view.

Art that referred to the architecture and structure of the metropolis often mirrored sentiments of uncertainty brought about by war. In Matisse's *View of Notre Dame* (1914), the window, streets, and cathedral are collapsed into the picture plane, rendering the subject almost unrecognizable. Conversely, de Chirico's *Gare Montparnasse (The Melancholy of Departure)* (1914) uses exaggerated perspective, creating an uncanny and melancholy atmosphere with shadowed passages and eerily elongated streets. Matisse and de Chirico are not usually thought to be related artists. However, this installation shows surprising connections between their works in this period, and with works by other artists—from Marcel Duchamp to Robert Delaunay—who were active in Paris in these years.

Artists often represented physical, social, and psychological boundaries with doors and windows. The destruction resulting from the war literally exposed interiors to view, compromising the idea of the exterior as public and interior as private. While Edouard Vuillard's *The Window* (1893) suggests the intimacy of a nineteenth century interior by accentuating the private space with a curtained window, Delaunay's *Windows* (1912) does not demarcate a public and private space, conveying instead an image in which interior and exterior exist simultaneously.

Although many images in the installation do not illustrate events of the time, their pictorial strategies integrate the challenges to security and structure presented by the wartime period, and respond to the need for a new visual language that could represent this unreal world.

Unreal City is accompanied by an interactive kiosk/Web site project of the same name, organized by Ms. Ganz, with production design by Sabisha

Friedberg, Administrative Associate, New Media, in consultation with Ms. González.

The Armory Show

A selected display of newspaper articles, editorial cartoons, and related ephemera on the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, commonly known as the Armory Show, was drawn from the Museum Archives and Library and organized by Jennifer Tobias, Associate Librarian. These artifacts reflect the public response of outrage and amusement to the most important introduction of modern art in America. Many of the European artists whose work was displayed in the Armory Show are represented in *ModernStarts*.

The American Place: Landscape in the Early Western

In conjunction with *ModernStarts*, the Department of Film and Video presents a five-month series *From Automatic Vaudeville to the Seventh Art: Cinema's Silent Years*. As part of this series, MoMA will mount a cycle in January and February 2000 that examines the development of the iconography of the West in motion pictures. The series *The American Place: Landscape in the Early Western* spans the beginnings of this influential genre, from Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) through Victor Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928), and includes key works by major filmmakers such as Charles Chaplin (*The Gold Rush*, 1925), William S. Hart (*Selfish Yates*, 1918), D. W. Griffith (*The Battle at Elderbush Gulch*, 1913) and John Ford (*Straight Shooting*, 1917).

About MoMA2000

ModernStarts is the first cycle of MoMA2000. The Museum of Modern Art's response to the millennium, MoMA2000 is a 17-month-long series of exhibitions that presents well-known and less-familiar art works in unusual juxtapositions and new contexts. An exploration both of the Museum's unparalleled collection and of new ways of displaying it, MoMA2000 provides a provocative look at some of this century's most compelling and powerful art. Conceived as a preliminary laboratory for the reinstallation of the Museum's collection after the completion of our new building project, it offers fresh interpretations of the premises, meanings, and diversity of modern art. MoMA2000 presents three major exhibition cycles that focus on distinct historical periods: 1880 to 1920 (*ModernStarts*), 1920 to 1960 (*Making Choices*), and 1960 to the present (*Open Ends*). Each historical cycle will be interspersed with works from other periods, creating a dialogue between various historical moments. Installed throughout the entire Museum, works in all mediums will be presented in innovative, multidisciplinary ways.

Sponsor

This exhibition is part of MoMA2000, which is made possible by The Starr Foundation. Generous support is provided by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro in memory of Louise Reinhardt Smith. The Museum gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. Additional funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and by The Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art. Education programs accompanying MoMA2000 are made possible by Paribas. The publication *ModernStarts: People, Places, Things* is made possible by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. Web/Kiosk management software provided by SohoNet.

Orientation Gallery

Making ModernStarts, mounted in the first-floor Garden Hall Gallery,

functions as an orientation gallery to *People, Places, and Things*, and previews the Museum's future beyond MoMA2000. A statement by Director Glenn D. Lowry accompanies the display of a new study model of the future Museum of Modern Art by architect Yoshio Taniguchi. Conceptual explanations and floor plans of *ModernStarts* are presented, along with a representative sampling of works including Constantin Brancusi's *Mlle Pogany* (1913), Lucian Bernhard's lithograph *Bosch* (1914) and Koloman Moser's *Vase*. Additionally, *The Red Studio* (1911), an iconic work by Henri Matisse, depicts people, places, and things.

Publications

ModernStarts: People, Places, Things. Exhibition catalogue, edited by John Elderfield, Peter Reed, Mary Chan, and Maria del Carmen González. 456 illustrations, including 235 in color, 360 pages, 9 1/2 x 12". Clothbound \$55 and paperbound \$29.95 distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, and available in the MoMA Book Store.

French Landscape: The Modern Vision, 1880-1920. Magdalena Dabrowski. 136 illustrations, 45 in color and 28 in duotone. 144 pages, 9 1/2 x 11 1/2". Paperbound \$24.95 distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, and is available in the MoMA Book Store and the MoMA Online Store for \$19.95.

Acoustiguide

MoMA Director Glenn D. Lowry, contemporary artists Sol LeWitt and Maria Fernanda Cardoso, and MoMA curators narrate an audiotour of *ModernStarts*.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS The Museum of Modern Art is planning several public programs in conjunction with *ModernStarts: Places*. A series of Brown Bag Lunch Lectures will address the evolution of modern art and the themes it encompasses as represented by the Museum's collection. A lecture series, *Conversations with Contemporary Artists*, will allow visitors to gain a wider understanding of modern art. A course, *People and Places in the Photographic Image: the Body and the City, 1870s-1920s*, will explore depictions of the human figure and the city in the modern media of photography and cinema. The Museum also offers a series of Saturday morning guided tours for families with young children to introduce participants to the diverse world of modern art.

Educational Brochure

A brochure is available to visitors at the entrance of the exhibition. This illustrated publication serves as both an overview and as a guide to the themes within the exhibition. The brochure was written by Magdalena Dabrowski, John Elderfield, Maria del Carmen González, Susan Kismaric, Peter Reed, Jennifer Tobias, and Wendy Weitman.

Web Site and Interactive Kiosks

Three subsites devoted to the exhibition will be available via the Museum's Web site, www.moma.org, and adjacent to the galleries via interactive kiosks. The introductory subsite, *ModernStarts*, includes an introduction and eight sections addressing the installations within *Places*, including curatorial essays, numerous selected works, a search function, and a floorplan of the exhibition. In addition, extensive subsites accompany the installations *Changing Visions: French Landscape 1880-1920*, and *Unreal City*.

ModernStarts CD

The *ModernStarts* CD conveys the concept that during 1880-1920, many traditions were challenged and new forms defined. Composers veered away

from form and tonality and ventured into the realm of new harmonies, rhythms and colors. The CD includes pieces by Claude Debussy, George Gershwin, Scott Joplin, Igor Stravinsky, Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, and Aimé Doniat. The ModernStarts CD is produced in the U.S. by Museum Music, Inc. 14 selections. Running time: 55.25 minutes. \$14.98, available at The MoMA Design Store, The MoMA Book Store, Online at www.momastore.org, or by calling 1-800-793-3167.

Visitor Packages

A special MoMA2000 package is being offered to visitors. For \$50, the visitor will receive admission for one to the Museum, a MoMA2000 appointment calendar and lunch at Sette MoMA, the Museum's elegant Italian restaurant. No. 87

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