

## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OPENS LARGEST RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION  
OF ROUAULT WORK HELD IN THIS COUNTRY

From seventy-four years of rich experience, thought and intense devotion, punctuated by three wars with the same enemy, the great art of Georges Rouault has emerged. A comprehensive selection of this lifetime of art will be shown in the largest retrospective exhibition of Rouault's work ever held in this country, opening Wednesday, April 4, at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street. The exhibition will continue through June 3. The 161 items, produced from 1893 to 1939, include paintings in oil, pastel, gouache and watercolor, prints from all the artist's major series, color etchings and wood engravings for book illustration, ballet designs, books, tapestries and ceramics.

Rouault was born in Paris May 27, 1871, during the bombardment of that city by the Versaillais of the Commune--an abortive attempt at revolution which came as an aftermath of the siege of the city by the Germans. Rouault's father was a wood craftsman but at fourteen the boy was apprenticed to a stained-glass maker, a trade which he says "inspired me with an enduring passion for old stained glass." This early influence was coupled with one even earlier and equally strong--his grandfather's passion for Daumier and his determination that Georges should become an artist.

For several years Rouault attended evening classes at the Ecole Nationale des Arts Decoratifs but in the early 90's he began attending the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where he became Gustave Moreau's favorite pupil. Around 1903 began the development of the intensely personal, devout and tragic art that has made Rouault the greatest religious painter of the twentieth century. The medieval, sombre richness of his colors and their leaded black outlines characterize not only his religious subjects but also his circus pictures, landscapes, judges, theatre figures and print making.

As one of the major figures in twentieth-century painting, his art is more an expression of tragic pity for the age he lives in than a denunciation of it. Rouault himself once said: "I do not feel as if I belong to this modern life on the streets where we are walking

at this moment; my real life is back in the days of the cathedrals." He also once described himself as "a prisoner of shadows until my death."

But recently, after a period of silence when it was feared he might have died under the Occupation of France, he was discovered living in the country, alive and well. He indicated that his work was perhaps taking a new direction, for he said: "I spent my life painting twilights. I ought to have the right now to paint the dawn."

James Thrall Soby has directed the Rouault exhibition for the Museum and has written the book which the Museum is publishing simultaneously. An essay by Carl O. Schniewind on the technique of Rouault's prints is also included, as well as three full color reproductions and 125 halftones. When the book was about to go to press in February of this year, a short manuscript was received from Rouault, with notes on his artistic credo and anecdotes of his life. He sums up his philosophy of art as follows:

"Our old masters started out very young generally and did not pursue two hares at one time. Having produced their masterwork early in the guilds, they possessed the means to express themselves very young, having sometimes begun by grinding colors in the master's studio while still children.

"In order to have a taste for enriching the mind, it is perhaps not necessary to be a graduate or have a degree or to be a mandarin with mother-of-pearl buttons.

"It is not the worldly eclecticism of multiple knowledge that enriches, but perseverance in a favorable furrow and the loving, silent effort of a whole life.

"False Michelangelos or Leonardos in the making or Raphaels who have scarcely the gift or breadth of a Chardin follower--these think themselves absolutely capable of one day bestowing upon us a new Last Judgment. If they do not achieve it, they die of vexation.

"That is why I sometimes tremble with sacred anger, may I say, when I am compared in my various attempts with some of the great old masters whom I love....I am so far away from them--in a certain way. But can we not say, here more than ever, to make ourselves better understood if possible with regard to this cult of the old masters:

"'The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.'"