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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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IMPORTANT NEW ACQUISITIONS EXHIBITED BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Painting Collection of the Museum of Modern Art has just been enriched by a cubist masterpiece acquired through the generosity of Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, and by the acquisition of three other outstanding cubist paintings which constitute the most important bequest of twentieth century paintings received by the Museum in recent years. All four canvases were painted in Paris during the years 1912-1913.

The painting acquired through the fund established by Mrs. Guggenheim several years ago at the Museum is Conquest of the Air (1913) by Roger de La Fresnaye, a monumental canvas more than 7½ feet in height and nearly 5½ feet in width. The three other cubist paintings are all by Juan Gris, produced in 1912 and 1913, and are the bequest of Mrs. Anna Erickson Levene in memory of Dr. Phoebus Aaron Theodor Levene.

Announcement of the acquisitions was made by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections. The paintings are now shown on the first floor of the Museum. Conquest of the Air has previously been exhibited at the Museum as a loan from its former owner, the Belgian collector René Gaffé, from whom the painting was bought. The Museum has one other painting by La Fresnaye, a still life of 1914, the gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The three paintings by Juan Gris were bought by Dr. Levene in New York almost thirty-five years ago and since then have been exhibited only once in a Juan Gris exhibition held in New York in 1932. The Museum owns four other paintings by Juan Gris dating from 1911 to 1917.

Mr. Barr commented on the new acquisitions as follows:

"Roger de La Fresnaye and Juan Gris were born within two years of each other, the former in 1885, the latter in 1887. Both took active roles in cubism from about 1911 until the movement broke up after the end of World War I. Before they died, both at the age of forty, they had turned to less radical, more classic styles. Their lives and careers thus show remarkable parallels but during their cubist periods their work is strikingly different.

"Roger de La Fresnaye, unlike Gris, was not one of the inner circle of cubists. In fact the Conquest of the Air, the painter's masterpiece, seems far removed from the typical cubist pictures

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of the period with their elaborate, somewhat myopic dissections of guitars and bottles. There is little sense of experiment or research in this spacious canvas but its grandeur of subject matter, scale and sentiment, its charm of color and its serene and noble rhetoric make it one of the monuments of 20th century French art and one of the most notable among the Museum's recent acquisitions.

"Juan Gris at first followed in the footsteps of his countryman, Picasso. Even more strictly than his mentor he confined himself to orthodox cubism, working almost exclusively on still life compositions of a modest scale. His best cubist paintings reveal a precision of style, a concentration and intensity unsurpassed by Picasso himself.

"Guitar and Flowers, the earliest of the three compositions, is limited to the generally neutral tonality of analytical cubism as practiced by Picasso and Braque during the preceding years. It is, however, more systematic and deliberate in design than are works of the older cubists and the pale, subtly graduated color is Gris' own invention.

"Painted perhaps half a year later, in the spring of 1913, the Violin and Engraving is still restrained in color but the forms are broader. The pasted-on section of an engraving, and the illusionistic nail and frame moulding add to the effect of variety and freedom within discipline. And it is disciplined design, almost geometrical in its severity, which is strained to the utmost to bind together the richly varied textures and patterns and the acrid sultry Spanish color of Grapes and Wine, the latest of these three so-called still lifes."