

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

530618-49

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## SUMMER EXHIBITION OF RECENT ACQUISITIONS AND WORKS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION OFFERS WIDE RANGE OF INTEREST

A large exhibition of the Museum's paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints will fill the third floor galleries as the summer show to be on view from June 24 through September 26. The wide variety of material includes the Katherine S. Dreier Bequest of advanced work of 20 to 30 years ago, a special showing of Expressionism in Germany, a section on Varieties of Realism and informal memorial exhibitions of paintings by Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Niles Spencer, all of which will offer an important survey of many leading aspects of modern art. The show has been selected and installed by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and Dorothy C. Miller of the Museum Collections staff; and a special section of newly acquired graphic work was organized by William S. Lieberman, Curator of Prints. Striking New Works from England:

The "Dog" by Francis Bacon, just arrived from England, is a large and rather frightening painting by an artist who is rapidly emerging as one of the most original and powerful painters of his generation.

Two new sculptures by Reg Butler have also just been acquired for the Collection. One is the "Unknown Political Prisoner" Grand Prize Winner in the recent International Competition which has just been the subject of wide public controversy. The study for the monument by Butler is the replica which he made right after his first model was dramatically smashed by a disappointed Hungarian artist attending the Competition's exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London during March. The other new piece is a cast of "The Oracle" recently executed by Butler for the new building of the Hatfield Technical College, attended by 4,000 students and located near London. Last November when the piece was delivered to the College, the local Board of Education and the head of the College attacked it and had it boxed in so it could not be seen. The County architectural commission and the college students liked it, however, and they prevailed in having it accepted and officially dedicated by the Duke of Edinburgh. These events took place only 4 months

before the attack on Butler's "Unknown Political Prisoner."

Reg Butler, 40-year-old English sculptor, is a highly skilled engineer. He is technical editor of the largest British building trades magazine and writes specialized reports on new materials and other construction problems. He also prepares maintenance booklets on airplane engines for which he has developed a 3-dimensional method - with red and green glasses - of reading complicated engineering diagrams. Hatfield, where Butler lives, is the site not only of the Technical College but also of an airfield for jet plane experimentation.

Butler has described his aims in making this sculpture for the College:

In an institution where the primary concern must be with technological matters, it is surely a good thing that there should be some constant reminder that aeroplanes and such are only a means to an end and that life as a whole must be the overriding concern.... Only some created personage, something containing within its being some fragment of the total mystery of evolving life, one capable of evoking sensations going back in time to life's earliest beginnings, yet at the same time equally relevant to contemporary importances would be likely to contain enough "content" to justify its existence. Three associations have been of considerable influence on me while this figure has been in hand:

1. The earliest known flying creatures evolving from primordial marine life.
2. The inexhaustible mystery of the sphinxes, phoenix and oracles of antiquity.
3. The remarkably biomorphic character of the very latest jet planes seen constantly by anyone living and working in Hatfield.

The Katherine S. Dreier Bequest:

Miss Dreier was the founder and President of the Société Anonyme in New York, a group organized in 1920 to present the most advanced art of the period. The Société formed a large collection, later presented to Yale University, and held many pioneer exhibitions.

Miss Dreier herself formed a notable private collection of the work of modern artists most of which she recently bequeathed to the Museum. Among the 102 works presented are 4 important Dada objects by Marcel Duchamp, famous for his painting "Nude Descending the Staircase," himself a very active Dada experimentalist, who still feels that "the Dada spirit is eternal." These objects include the "Stoppages Étalon," a precisely documented experiment in which three metre-long threads are dropped from the height of a metre; a carefully prepared model of a French window glazed in black leather and entitled, as a pun, "Fresh

Widow"; an ordinary stereopticon slide made into a 3-D illusion by means of pencil drawings, and a painted and pasted design on a pane of glass containing a lens and entitled "To be looked at with one eye, close to, for almost an Hour." These are expressive of the poetic nonsense and ironic fantasy that inspired the Dada movement.

Nineteen small collages by Kurt Schwitters form another section of Miss Dreier's Bequest. The brilliant compositions are pasted together from the innumerable odds and ends he habitually collected on walks - which he called "merz" walks - picking off the streets bits of paper wrappers for film packs and candy, discarded bus tickets, postage stamps or cigarette boxes. In the same vein, and with the same invented title, Schwitters also recorded sonorous syllables as "merz" poetry, he made "merz" 3-dimensional constructions including a fairy-tale grotto in Hannover, Germany, and he published a "merz" magazine.

An important group of works to be seen in this collection is by Paul Klee, including one oil and 8 watercolors by this famous expressionist.

Pevsner's "Torso" of 1924-26, in plastic and copper, embodies his theory that sculpture should be primarily a division of space rather than the composition of solid forms. This Russian constructivist, like Kandinsky, left Russia at the time of the totalitarian suppression of freedom in art in the early 1920s. Another Russian artist also well represented in the collection, El Lissitzky, left his country at this time but later returned; he was denied the freedom of his brush and died in disappointment probably about 1947.

The earliest Brancusi bird is also found in the collection, a sculpture executed in marble in 1912. It was the first of a long series of birds by this Rumanian artist, culminating in the Museum's well-known and much more abstract "Bird in Space."

One of the starkest Mondrian geometrical abstractions is included, diamond-shaped with 4 bold black lines on a white canvas.

Two galleries devoted to Expressionism in Germany are hung with works selected from the Museum Collection. This and the gallery devoted to Varieties of Realism form a sequel to last summer's Cubist and Futurist selections from the Collection, aiming to show various historical movements in modern art as represented in the Museum. The expressionist works shown are representative of this development not only by German

artists of the pre-World War I period but also by others who went to Germany and were associated with the movement.

From the so-called "Bruecke" (Bridge) group are to be seen works by Kirchner, Nolde, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff. Beginning in 1905, these men lived in a close companionship similar to a medieval guild, at first not even signing their paintings individually. Influenced by primitive art and the paintings of Munch and Gauguin, they made use of bold color and vigorous drawing in their expression of strong emotion. Later developments in expressionism are well represented in outstanding paintings by Max Beckmann, who recently died in America where he came to teach after the war; by George Grosz, satirical painter and draftsman now resident in Long Island; by the Austrian-Czech Kokoschka, who lives in England, and by the Russian painter Kandinsky who at one period worked in close association with the German expressionists before his invention of abstract painting.

#### Varieties of Realism:

A room in this exhibition, supplementing the realist works already on view on the second floor, exemplifies several different approaches to this form of expression in painting. There are striking contrasts to be observed, for example, in the landscapes: the romantic decay of Hopper's "House by the Railroad" contrasted with Sheeler's precise and almost photographic exactness in portraying the Ford plant at River Rouge, or the immense panorama of Mexican sand mines depicted with topographical realism by O'Gorman.

Four realistic portraits range from the precision of the German painter Otto Dix's life-size portrait of a rotund throat specialist to the tiny 9" high portrait of a dour-faced woman by Lucian Freud, grandson of the founder of psychoanalysis.

Popular, story-telling realism is exemplified in the primitive painting by the Peruvian Urteaga, "Burial of an Illustrious Man," and in a depiction of a melodramatic incident from the Franco-Prussian War by Peyronnet, a Frenchman born during that war. Realism with social implications is manifested in trenchant paintings by Ben Shahn, Joseph Hirsch and Clarence Carter.

#### Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Niles Spencer Memorials:

Two of the best American painters of their generation, both born

in 1893, both recently deceased, are here given informal memorial exhibitions of their works as represented in the Museum Collection. Kuniyoshi, of Japanese birth, was long a resident of New York and President of Artists Equity. He is represented by a number of oils, drawings and lithographs. Niles Spencer, of Rhode Island and New York, has, like Kuniyoshi, been represented in numerous Museum exhibitions. Among several oils, the most important is the large composition, In Fairmont, just acquired for the Museum Collection.

A complete checklist annotated by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. will be available at the press opening on Tuesday, June 23, 2-5 p.m.