

The Museum of Modern Art

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MASTERPIECES FROM THE DAVID AND PEGGY ROCKEFELLER COLLECTION: MANET TO PICASSO

June 9 - September 6, 1994

A wide-ranging though highly select exhibition of exceptional early modern European painting opens at The Museum of Modern Art on June 9, 1994. On view are twenty-one works, the majority of which have been either given or promised to the Museum by David Rockefeller, Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Trustees, and his wife, Peggy Rockefeller. Organized by Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, **MASTERPIECES FROM THE DAVID AND PEGGY ROCKEFELLER COLLECTION: MANET TO PICASSO** highlights superb examples of Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism.

In honor of the Rockefellers and their longstanding association with the Museum, **MASTERPIECES FROM THE DAVID AND PEGGY ROCKEFELLER COLLECTION** concentrates on an area of common interest for both the Museum as an institution and the Rockefellers as collectors: that is, on what Mr. Varnedoe calls "the early flowering of the modern spirit in painting." It provides a singular overview of developments in landscape, cityscape, still life, and figure painting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At the core of the exhibition is a group of the Rockefellers' gifts to the Museum, chronologically ranging from Cézanne's *Still Life with Fruit Dish* (1879-80) to Picasso's Cubism, represented by *Woman with a Guitar* (1914). The donation comprises one of the finest, most generous gifts accorded to this or any other museum.

To show the Rockefellers' gifts to the Museum in a somewhat broader historical context, and to give a more representative idea of the Rockefeller

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collection's depth in this area, the exhibition includes several paintings not promised to the Museum -- some of which the Rockefellers have generously pledged elsewhere, while others are presently slated to remain in the family collection.

Especially notable among the donations to the Museum are the glowing canvases by André Derain, Georges Braque, and Henri Matisse that reflect the Rockefellers' love of the brilliantly colored work of the Parisian Fauve painters of 1906-07. These include such stellar works as Derain's *Charing Cross Bridge* (1905-06), one of the most opulently freewheeling of all Fauve vistas, and Matisse's brilliant *Interior with a Young Girl/Girl Reading* (1905-06), in which a domestic interior is rendered in a firework display of color. On the latter, Mr. Varnedoe writes, "A central part of what we value in modern art resides here, in the seemingly inappropriate and perpetually fascinating conjunction of the ordinary and the fantastic. Our wonder lies not simply in the radical innovation itself, but in the power of that innovation to make us see anew, by unexpected means, the transforming discovery latent in the simplest of our daily experiences."

Other highlights include Georges Seurat's *Roadstead at Grandcamp* (1885), a quiet, luminous landscape that stands in sharp contrast to Paul Gauguin's *The Wave* (1888), marked by flat, decorative colors and abstract pattern. Paul Signac's *Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon* (1890) uses Seurat's pointillism to create a carnival of colors and a boldly flattened pinwheel pattern that serves as background for a portrait of the reserved and decorous art critic.

Picasso's *The Reservoir, Horta de Ebro* (1909) shows the artist beginning to master the complex effects that would lead to the pictorial architecture of Cubism. Another Cubist work, Juan Gris's *The Musician's Table* (1914), "represents the moment of Cubist collage when the private language of the avant-

garde first sought direct intersection with the rough clamor of the modern urban world," Mr. Varnedoe writes.

Following in his family's tradition of arts patronage, David Rockefeller, who was elected to the Museum's Board of Trustees in 1948, served as the Museum's Chairman from 1987 to 1993 and from 1962 to 1972, Vice Chairman from 1972 to 1987, and Chairman (pro tem) from 1958 to 1959. Retired since 1981 as Chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank after a thirty-five year career there, Mr. Rockefeller continues to serve as Chairman of the bank's International Advisory Committee. Mr. Rockefeller initiated the movement in American business to create corporate art collections through the formation of the Chase Manhattan art program, one of the first of its kind in the United States. He remains a member of the Chase Art Committee.

Mr. Rockefeller was also Chairman of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a grant-making organization founded in 1940, from 1980 to 1987, and Chairman of the Board of The Rockefeller University, New York, from 1950 to 1975. Born in 1915 in New York City, David Rockefeller is the youngest son of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, a founder of The Museum of Modern Art.

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PUBLICATION

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