

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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not mailed

No. 42

PRESENTATION OF RODIN'S BALZAC TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
AS A MEMORIAL TO CURT VALENTIN,
Museum Sculpture Garden, May 3rd, 5:30 in the afternoon.

Miss Marion Willard, Chairman of the Curt Valentin Memorial Committee:

We are met here today to present to the Museum of Modern Art this great sculpture by Rodin as a memorial to our friend Curt Valentin.

As chairman of the Curt Valentin Memorial Committee, I should like to say a few words about Curt as I knew him during the twelve years of our association as neighbors on the tenth floor of 32 East 57th Street. One of the most remarkable things about Curt was his deep concern for the artists in his gallery. All of us are members of some family circle, large or small, and therefore know the connotations of the word "family" and the role it plays in our lives. For a moment I want to transpose this role into the field of art and to think of Curt Valentin as the head, or "boss" as he was affectionately called, of a family composed of creative temperaments, bringing demands far more exacting than those of one's actual family. As "boss" he was always a devoted and sympathetic critic of the artists' work, giving unflinching understanding and moral support as necessary as the material results which followed his sponsorship of their work. A contemporary gallery deals with the blood and spirit of creative artists, and must provide an atmosphere in which those artists can produce at their best, at the same time finding a public responsive to their work. These factors are primary in a gallery directed by one of Curt Valentin's nature and stature.

No matter how heavy the demands upon his time, Curt was always available to the artists, to the public and to the large circle of his friends coming from every section of the art world, both here and abroad. We were stimulated and guided by his knowledge and understanding though sometimes unmindful of the unflagging generosity with which he gave of himself, his time and his energy, in fact his very life. His passing has left an irreparable void -- for us personally and for the public for whom his gallery was a source of constant interest and inspiration.

We, his friends -- united by his friendship -- derive small consolation in our hearts but some outer satisfaction in our tangible contribution of the monumental Balzac by Rodin to the Museum of Modern Art. Placed here in the sculpture garden it is truly a fitting memorial to the spirit of Curt Valentin.

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Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections:

I know that I can speak for our Trustees and staff in assuring you, Miss Willard, and your committee and the 130 other donors, that the Museum of Modern Art is deeply grateful for this truly magnificent gift and greatly touched by your having chosen us as the custodian of this memorial to Curt Valentin.

Our Museum, more, I believe, than any other, was indebted to Curt Valentin. I shall not attempt to list the gifts of painting and sculpture, drawings and prints which he made to our collections. Of almost equal importance were the hundreds of loans which he made over many years, and at considerable inconvenience, to our traveling exhibitions. And quite aside from his admirable exhibitions and publications, all of us, amateurs and professionals, New Yorkers and non-New Yorkers, felt continually grateful to Curt for the hospitality of his gallery and the extraordinary warmth and thoughtful concern which he showed for his friends. The love and affection which they bore towards him have been beautifully expressed in articles by Perry Rathbone and James Thrall Soby. Another expression of his friends' feeling for Curt is their gift of the superb memorial which we are dedicating this afternoon.

When David Thompson first approached us with the idea of giving the Museum a work of art in memory of Curt Valentin I suggested Rodin's Balzac with some hesitation thinking it might be too great an undertaking. Yet, it seemed appropriate because of Curt's special interest in sculpture; also, I think it can justly be said that Curt has done more than anyone to restore Rodin's fame and prestige in this country. I well remember Curt's spontaneous enthusiasm when he heard that the Museum was commissioning a cast of the Balzac from the Musée Rodin.

This sculpture has been given as a memorial to an individual who was our friend. At the same time, we know that it will live an independent life as a work of art. Balzac, standing there in his shabby dressing gown, is yet a proud monument to the endurance, the grandeur and the power of all great artists in whom Curt Valentin so deeply believed.

Perry T. Rathbone, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (read by Andrew Carnduff Ritchie in Mr. Rathbone's absence)

In 1937 when Curt Valentin came to this country and opened his gallery in West 46th Street, he was virtually unknown to Americans. When he died last August there was scarcely a community in America where art is cultivated that had not felt

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his influence.

How was this possible? The answer is partly to be found in the fact that I, for example, the representative of quite another museum a thousand miles away, should speak on this occasion. Curt Valentin's gallery was the cross-roads of the art world. At the same time, Curt Valentin was the most traveled art dealer in America. He did not satisfy himself by taking a parochial interest only in this Museum. Rather, he created a family of museum friends throughout the whole country. Museums and museum people in Missouri and California were as familiar to him as those in New York. All felt his influence, all responded to his stimulus. His wonderful gift of friendship has brought us together here today. And through it he left us the enduring legacy which has enriched all of us and our museums, for through friendship he communicated his own love and understanding of art.