

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK 19

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Monday, December 13, 1965

TO: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

FROM: ELIZABETH SHAW, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

René Magritte, famous Surrealist artist will be guest of honor at the preview of his exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art this evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Magritte arrived from Belgium a few days ago accompanied by their dog.

Ambassador and Mrs. Andre Forthomme head the list of Belgian diplomats invited to the black tie party. About 100 lenders, Museum trustees and officials will arrive at the Museum about 6:30 for a pre-dinner view of the show. Beginning at 8 p.m., about 2,000 Contributing Members of the Museum will start to arrive.

German, British and Belgium television will be covering the event for Europe.

Photographers are asked to check at the Information Desk in the Main Lobby for additional material and passes to the show.

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

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FOR RELEASE:

Wednesday, December 15, 1965

PRESS PREVIEW:

Tuesday, December 14, 1965

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

An exhibition of 81 works by René Magritte, 67-year old Belgian artist and famous surrealist painter, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from December 15 through February 27. The exhibition includes work from 1926 to 1965, borrowed from public and private collections here and abroad. Many of the paintings, early and late, have not been exhibited in this country before.

The exhibition was selected by William C. Seitz, former Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, and James Thrall Soby, Chairman of the Department. Mr. Soby has written the accompanying catalog\*. Alicia Legg, Associate Curator, has installed the exhibition.

Magritte was born in Belgium in 1898. He has lived in Brussels all his adult life except for a three year period in the late 20's when he joined the surrealist group in Paris. His first one-man show was held in Brussels in 1927. During the 30's he was represented in all important international exhibitions of surrealist art. In 1936 his first one-man exhibition in this country was held at the Julien Levy Gallery. His first retrospective in this country was presented by the Museum for Contemporary Arts in Dallas in 1960. In New York his current work is exhibited regularly at the Alexander Iolas Gallery.

"Perhaps more<sup>consistently</sup>/than any other painter of his generation," Soby says in the catalog, "he has sought what Guillaume Apollinaire called art's greatest potential--surprise. Magritte tells jokes and invents puns in a quiet voice. Many of us listen with avid attention and our number is growing."

The most important single event of Magritte's career occurred in 1922 when a friend showed him a reproduction of de Chirico's 1914 painting Song of Love. Later

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\*RENE MAGRITTE by James Thrall Soby. 80 pages; 72 illustrations (16 in color). Paperbound, \$2.95; hardband, \$6.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, distributed by Doubleday and Co., Inc.

the artist said, "Chirico was the first to dream of what must be painted and not how to paint."

The projection of obsessive iconographic elements--birds, a derby hat, an apple, furniture--into new surroundings and combinations is typical of Magritte's procedure. His art, Soby says, is direct rather than allusive, and this is its hypnotic charm. "He does not conceal one object or scene within another of different identity...He portrays these objects and scenes as self-sufficient and crystal clear. And then he questions our capacity to believe by opposite factual statements...."

Thus a metal musical instrument burns with the precise same flame as the wooden chair next to it, a dumbbell being held aloft by a strong man turns into his head, the painting on an easel in front of a window reproduces the view from the window, ordinary boots sprout real toes, a leaf is as large as a tree, an eye replaces the marrow in a ham steak, looking into the house through an open window we observe the street outside, a tree's root has grown around the ax that severed its trunk, an apple fills the entire room, loaves of bread float in the sky, a horse rides above a taxi.

To the three kinds of metamorphosis which recur in Magritte's art: interior to exterior setting; deep to shallow perspective; dead weight to buoyancy, a fourth was introduced around 1950 when he began to paint street scenes in which houses and pavements are plunged into a darkness relieved only by artificial lights, while the sky above blazes in the noon sun.

The exhibition was prepared in collaboration with the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University; The Art Institute of Chicago; The University Art Museum, University of California Museum, Berkeley; and the Pasadena Art Museum. It will be shown in those institutions in 1966.

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Additional information and photographs available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.