

The Museum of Modern Art

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RARELY SEEN MASTERPIECES FROM SWISS COLLECTIONS

ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The unfamiliar riches of Switzerland's museums and private collections will be introduced to the American public by the exhibition EUROPEAN MASTER PAINTINGS FROM SWISS COLLECTIONS: POST-IMPRESSIONISM TO WORLD WAR II, on view at The Museum of Modern Art from December 15 through March 1, 1977. Included in the exhibition will be 72 master paintings ranging from great works by Cézanne, Gauguin and van Gogh, to paintings of the School of Paris of the 1930s and 1940s.

Many of the works in this exhibition have remained largely unfamiliar because they are in private Swiss collections of especially difficult access or because they are in museums in cities relatively unfrequented by Americans. Above all, this holiday season exhibition is intended to "provide a feast for the eye," notes William Rubin, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, who organized the exhibition and installed the works. The catalogue* accompanying the exhibition reproduces all 72 works--with 24 in color--and contains a preface by William Rubin and detailed individual discussions of all the paintings by John Elderfield, Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture.

The paintings in the exhibition have been chosen to represent coherently a particular area of major strength from each of the Swiss lender institutions: the Bern Kunstmuseum, the Basel Kunstmuseum, the Zurich Kunsthaus and the Winterthur Kunstmuseum. Thus, the Basel Kunstmuseum has lent its

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major Picassos and Cubist works, the latter including some of the most important paintings by Braque, Léger and Delaunay. This marks the first time this institution has ever permitted more than one or two paintings from the famous La Roche collection to be lent simultaneously. Indeed, the Basel Kunstmuseum has made known its intention never again, after this special gesture to The Museum of Modern Art, to permit its major Cubist Picassos and Braques (or Picasso's Neo-Classical Seated Harlequin) to leave its premises. The turn-of-the-century group from the Zurich Kunsthaus stresses that museum's special strength (its great late Cézanne, its Munchs, Rousseaus and Vuillard). The paintings from the Winterthur Kunstmuseum (including important works by Monet, van Gogh and Rousseau) are also mainly from that same period; and the group from the Bern Kunstmuseum stresses its forte--Cubism and its derivations (the Rupf Braques, an unusual Chagall, the artists of the Esprit Nouveau and Klee). Indeed, one compelling aspect of the exhibition will be the presence at The Museum of Modern Art of an unrivalled group of Cubist paintings. As Mr. Rubin notes: "The superb Swiss holdings in early Cubism, led by the magnificent collection of the Basel Kunstmuseum (the best in the world, if one allows for the absence of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon), will make it possible to see in a single visit to The Museum of Modern Art--between its own collection and this temporary exhibition--more great Cubist paintings than has ever previously been assembled in one place at one time."

In making selections from private collections, explains Mr. Rubin, the unfamiliarity as well as quality of the work was taken into account. Two-thirds of the privately owned works have never before been exhibited in America (the percentage is only slightly lower for the works from the museums). Significant paintings by van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne, Picasso, Rousseau and Chagall are being seen in this country for the first time. Other important works from private collections include major groups of Bonnard, Matisses, Chagalls and Modiglianis as well as individual master works by Klimt, Boccioni,

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Léger, Redon, the largest of Rousseau's jungle paintings and a magnificent 1911 Composition by Kandinsky. This extraordinary painting--one of only four extant large-scale Compositions of the seven that Kandinsky painted before 1914 and the only one still in private hands--was purchased by its owner a few years after it was painted and since then has been exhibited only once (in Basel). Throughout the exhibition, the selection as a whole is broadly European in scope--ranging from Degas to Dubuffet--but distinguished Swiss-born artists are also represented: not only Hodler, Vallotton and Klee (who is shown here in a selection from the Klee Foundation of the Bern Kunstmuseum), but Amiet, Alberto and Augusto Giacometti, Le Corbusier and Taeuber-Arp.

Among the many major paintings in the exhibition is Paul Gauguin's Nafea Faa ipoipo (When Will You Marry?) (1892). This painting of Gauguin's vahine, Tehura, with another Tahitian girl in a landscape that mirrors the organic decorations of Tehura's dress, well reveals how the sensuousness of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings was expressed not only through their exotic subjects, but pictorially, through line and color, which created their own rhythms, accents and feelings. Also on view is Cézanne's monumental Mont Sainte-Victoire (ca. 1902-06) on loan from the Zurich Kunsthau. This late work exemplifies Cézanne's final resolution of the conflicting claims of fidelity to nature and two-dimensional pictorial construction, his synthesis of volumetric illusion and surface flatness. Wassily Kandinsky's Composition V (1911) was conceived as a symbolic expression of pure spirituality and a rebuke to materialism. Subtitled by the artist "Last Judgment," it derives from studies showing the resurrection of the dead and the collapse of cities accompanying the Last Judgment. Another large-scale painting in the exhibition is Robert Delaunay's Homage to Blériot (1914). Blériot was the first person to fly across the English Channel, and Delaunay's painting evidences the vibrant enthusiasm for the inventions of modern life that he shared with many other painters and poets of his generation. Also on view is a 1914 series by the Russian-born Marc Chagall: The

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Jew in Black and White (The Praying Jew), severe and dramatic in its harsh contrasts (this is the original version of a painting well-known in America through two later versions); The Jew in Green, intense and spiritual, bathed in unnatural light; and The Jew in Red, archetypal in representing the form of the Wandering Jew. Among the other highlights of the exhibition are a group of paintings by Bonnard showing the range of his art from 1908 to 1930; a selection of major Klee's, among them one of his large horizontal paintings of 1938 insula dulcamara; and four great Légers, including the Woman in Blue of 1912 and a very large Contrast of Forms painting of 1913.

Works by Picasso in the exhibition range from the early Two Nudes (1906), poised between his earlier lyrical classicism and the somber, hieratic and impersonalized art of the Demoiselles d'Avignon, through the Large Heads of 1969, with its spontaneity and exaggerated bravura of execution. Picasso's Bread and Fruit Dish on a Table (1909), The Aficionado (1912), Souvenir of Le Havre (1912), Seated Harlequin (1923), and the profoundly decorative Women on the Banks of the Seine, after Courbet of 1950 are also on view. Major works by Georges Braque, Picasso's partner in Cubism, include Houses at L'Estaque (1908), Guitar and Fruit Dish (1909), Violin and Pitcher (1910) and The Portuguese (1911).

EUROPEAN MASTER PAINTINGS FROM SWISS COLLECTIONS is being made possible, in part, by reciprocal loans with the major Swiss museums, for example, the loan of a major group of works from The Museum of Modern Art to a Picasso exhibition at the Basel Kunstmuseum. It has been aided by generous grants from the Pro Helvetia Foundation, Zurich, and the Coordinating Committee for the Presence of Switzerland Abroad. In addition, the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, through one of the first applications of the recently passed Arts and Artifacts Act, has made a substantial contribution to the exhibition by providing Federal indemnification of loans and thus alleviating the great expense of commercial insurance coverage.

Photographs, color transparencies and additional information available from Bruce Wolmer, Assistant, or Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7295; 7501.
