

# Modern masters from European and American collections the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1940

Author

Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)

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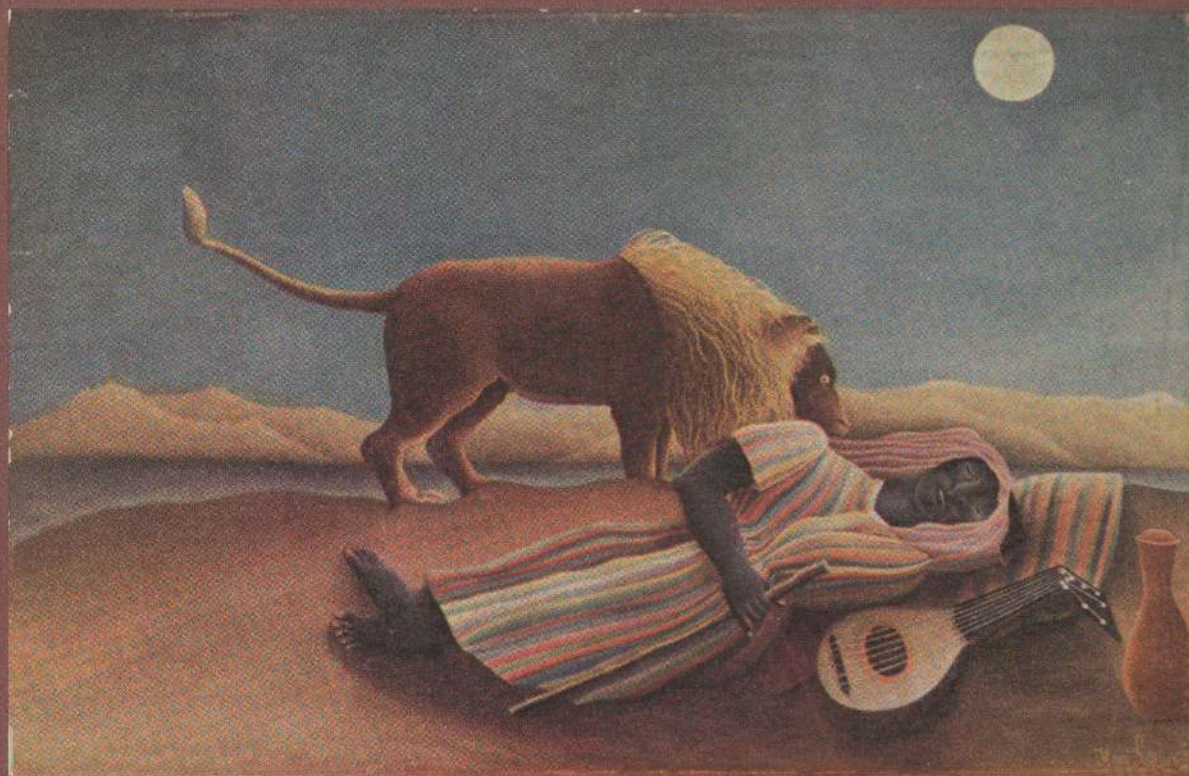
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FROM EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN COLLECTIONS

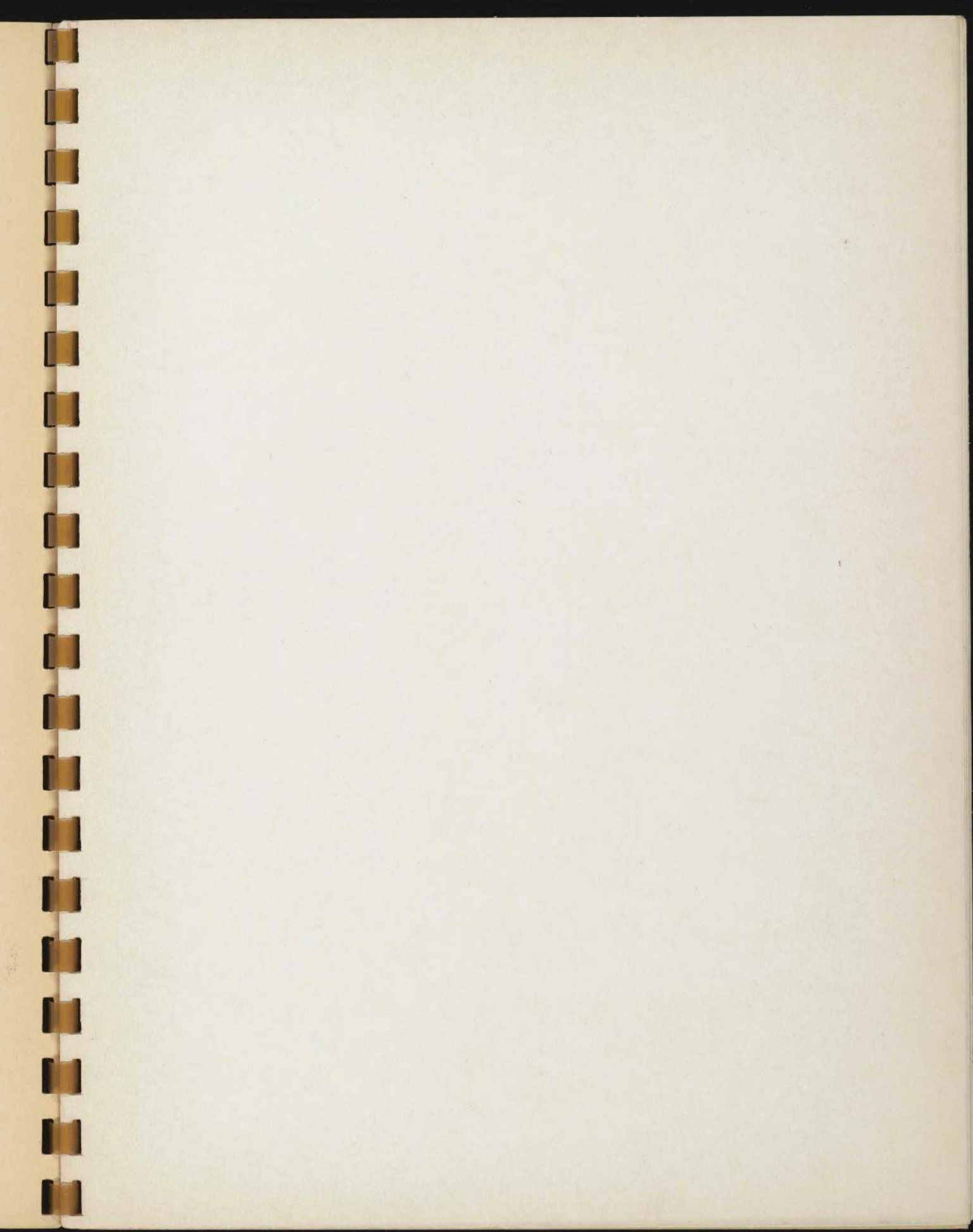
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, 1940

M A S T E R S

Bernard Saypol









M O D E R N

M A S T E R S





**M O D E R N**

FROM EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN COLLECTIONS

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, 1940

**M A S T E R S**



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# FOREWORD

"We must make . . . something solid and enduring like the art of the museums."

Paul Cézanne.

When the Museum of Modern Art agreed to exhibit the masterpieces which had been lent by the Italian government to the Golden Gate International Exposition last summer, it was decided that a group of distinguished modern painters and sculptors should be shown in the illustrious company of the Italian masters. The Museum has therefore brought together a number of works of high quality by some of the foremost artists of the last third of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth.

The roll of the Italian exhibition includes some of the greatest names of Italian art, although it is in no sense intended as a survey of the field. The desire to balance the Italian exhibition of twenty-nine pieces has necessarily limited the modern works in number. While many other artists, both European and American, would have been included in a larger exhibition such as *Art in Our Time* held a few months ago at the Museum of Modern Art, it is felt that this smaller group makes possible a more direct and stimulating comparison with the Italian masters.

Among the twenty-nine modern works are a number of masterpieces. Cézanne and Renoir are each represented by two works, Cézanne by a landscape and a monumental figure composition, Renoir by one of the finest Impressionist paintings, the *Moulin de la Galette*, and a child's portrait. One of Seurat's six major compositions, *La Parade*, is included. The *Arlésienne* and the *Night Café* are among the great van Goghs, and Gauguin's Tahitian period is magnificently shown in *The Spirit of the Dead Watching*. The *Sleeping Gypsy*, just acquired by the Museum, is believed by many authorities to be the greatest work of the *Douanier* Rousseau. Whistler's graciously beautiful *White*



*Girl*, one of the best early paintings by the Anglo-American master, may be compared with the more modest but psychologically acute *Letitia Bacon* of Thomas Eakins. Homer's dramatic daylight realism is strikingly seen in his *Fox Hunt*, which seems as far removed as possible from the nocturnal mystery of Ryder's equally important *Macbeth and the Witches*.

It is more difficult to apply the word masterpiece to works which have been produced within the short span of the twentieth century, but it may be said that with a few exceptions each work in this exhibition represents the artist at the height of his powers. Lehmbruck's *Kneeling Woman* is not only his finest achievement but is surely one of the greatest masterpieces of modern sculpture. The *Bird in Flight* is Brancusi's most admired bronze. Despiau's *Assia* and Epstein's *Mother and Child* are both major pieces by sculptors better known in this country through their portrait busts. Braque is represented by an excellent early cubist painting, Picasso by a magnificent still life of 1925, Roger de La Fresnaye by his most important composition, Rouault by the imposing *Clown's Head*. The Derain, *Window on the Park*, just purchased by the Museum in honor of one of its founders, is one of the artist's most renowned works.

Imaginary contests between the heroes of antiquity and their modern counterparts have always had a certain fascination. Here, within the Museum of Modern Art, some such trial of strength may actually take place, for the Museum, believing in the power and quality of the modern artist, has not hesitated to accept the challenge made possible by its act of hospitality toward the Italian masters. Whichever side, the old or the new, seems to triumph, one fact is sure: the great indebtedness of the modern masters to the work of their ancestors of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque—a debt that is continually being paid not only by the explicit homage which modern artists so often offer to the past but by the ever-changing illumination which the art of the living throws upon the art of the dead.

D. C. M.

**1 WHISTLER: The White Girl. 1862. Oil on canvas, 85¼ x 43 inches. Lent by Miss Gertrude B. Whittemore, Naugatuck, Connecticut.**

James Abbott McNeill Whistler. American, 1834-1903. After early studies in Paris he lived in London where he fought English philistinism with vitriolic wit. His work seemed so revolutionary that in 1878, seven years after he had painted his now beloved portrait of his mother, John Ruskin, the leading English critic, called one of his *Nocturnes* a "paint pot flung in the face of the public."





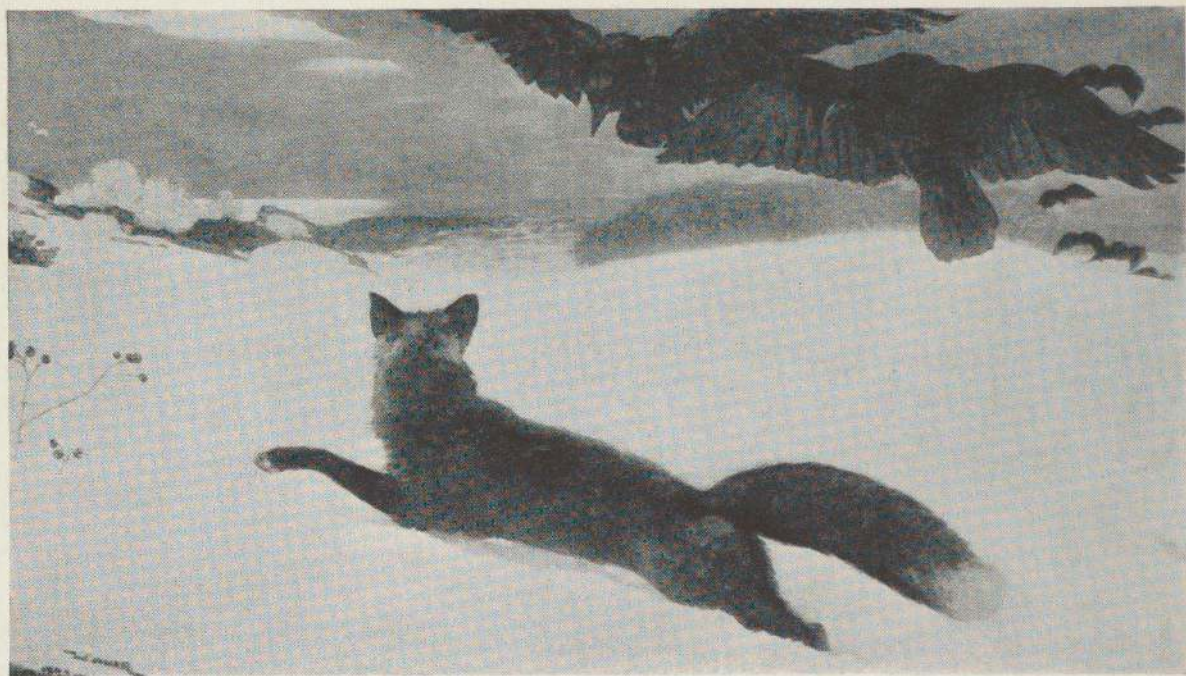




**2 EAKINS: Mrs. Letitia Wilson Jordan Bacon. 1888. Oil on canvas, 59 x 39½ inches. Lent by the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York.**

Thomas Eakins. American, 1844-1916. Lived in Philadelphia. He painted American people—sporting scenes, prize fights, rowing, hunting, hospital scenes and, above all, portraits which are remarkable for their ruthlessly honest penetration of character. Though grossly underestimated as an artist during his lifetime, his integrity has been an inspiration to many American painters during recent years.





**3 HOMER: The Fox Hunt. 1893. Oil on canvas, 38 x 68 inches. Lent by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.**

Winslow Homer. American, 1836-1910. Originally an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*. Almost uninfluenced by his European contemporaries, he painted the American out-of-doors with simplicity, enthusiasm and unsurpassed power.





**4 RYDER: Macbeth and the Witches. Oil on canvas, 28½ x 36 inches. Lent by the Ferargil Galleries, New York.**

Albert Pinkham Ryder. American, 1847-1917. Ryder's scenes of romantic legend or clouded moonlight might have been banal had it not been for his mastery of design and his profound poetic feeling.





Photograph Jacques Seligmann & Co.

**5 DEGAS: At the Milliner's. About 1882. Pastel, 27 x 27 inches. Lent by Dr. and Mrs. David M. Levy, New York.**

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas. French, 1834-1917. Exhibited in 1874 with the Impressionists though never closely allied with them in point of view. Influenced principally by masters of the Renaissance, Japanese prints, Manet and photography. For a time somewhat eclipsed by the fame of Cézanne and Renoir, Degas' position as one of the greatest and most versatile artists of modern times is now almost unquestioned.



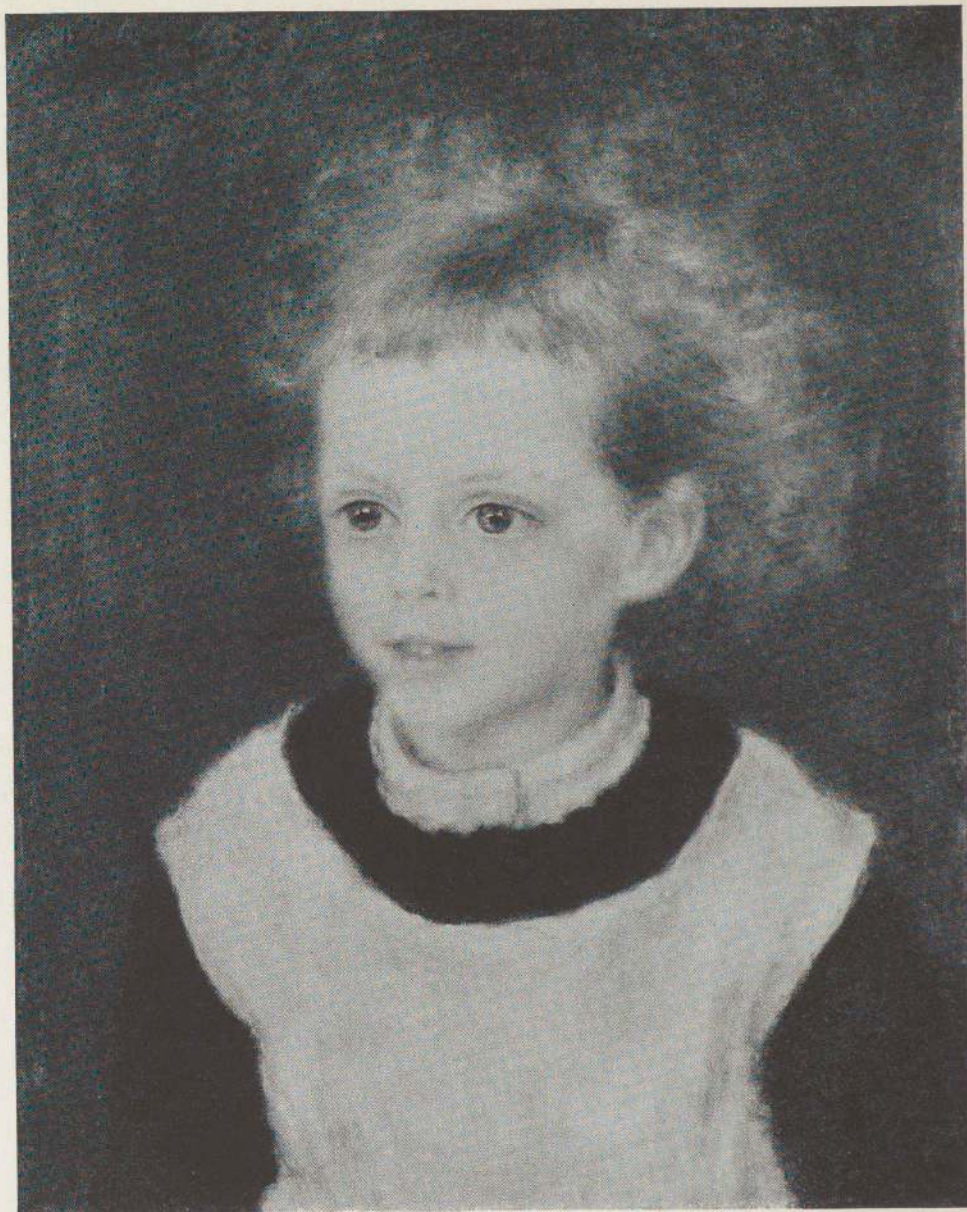


**6 RENOIR: Le Moulin de la Galette. 1876. Oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 44 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches. Lent by John Hay Whitney, New York.**

*Illustrated, no. 3, in color portfolio Art in Our Time, Museum of Modern Art, 1939.*

Auguste Renoir. French, 1841-1919. His youthful works of the 1870's are the finest Impressionist paintings. Later under the influence of old masters like Rubens and Titian, his art became richer in color and more rhythmic in form until it sings in a ripe, full-throated, luxuriant harmony.





**7 RENOIR: Little Margot Bérard. 1879. Oil on canvas, 16 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches. Lent by Stephen C. Clark, New York.**

*Reproduced, Museum of Modern Art Color Print no. 3.*





**8 CÉZANNE: La Montagne Sainte-Victoire. 1885-1887. Oil on canvas, 23 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Lent by the Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington.**

Paul Cézanne. French, 1839-1906. Influenced first by Daumier, Delacroix, Courbet and Renaissance and Baroque masters, and later by Manet, Pissarro and the Impressionists with whom he exhibited.

Cézanne in his own words tried to make of Impressionism something solid and lasting "like the art of the museums." He wanted to get back to the traditions of the old masters without sacrificing the new technique of vibrating color which the Impressionists of the 1870's had developed. In attempting to solve this problem he became one of the greatest and probably the most influential artist of the last hundred years.





9 **CÉZANNE: The Card Players.** 1892. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 32 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Lent by Stephen C. Clark, New York.

*Reproduced, Museum of Modern Art Color Print no. 2.*





**10 VAN GOGH: Night Café. Arles, 1888. Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 36⅞ inches. Lent by Stephen C. Clark, New York.**

Vincent van Gogh. Dutch, 1853-1890. Worked in France, 1886-1890. Distraught by his inability to adjust his life or his art to an unsympathetic world, he killed himself. Today the world honors his martyrdom and loves his vibrant emotional pictures which fifty years ago seemed repulsive and incomprehensible.





11 **VAN GOGH: L'Arlésienne (Mme. Ginoux).** Arles, 1888. Oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches.  
Lent by the Lewisohn Collection, New York.

*Illustrated, no. 4, in color portfolio Art in Our Time, Museum of Modern Art, 1939.*



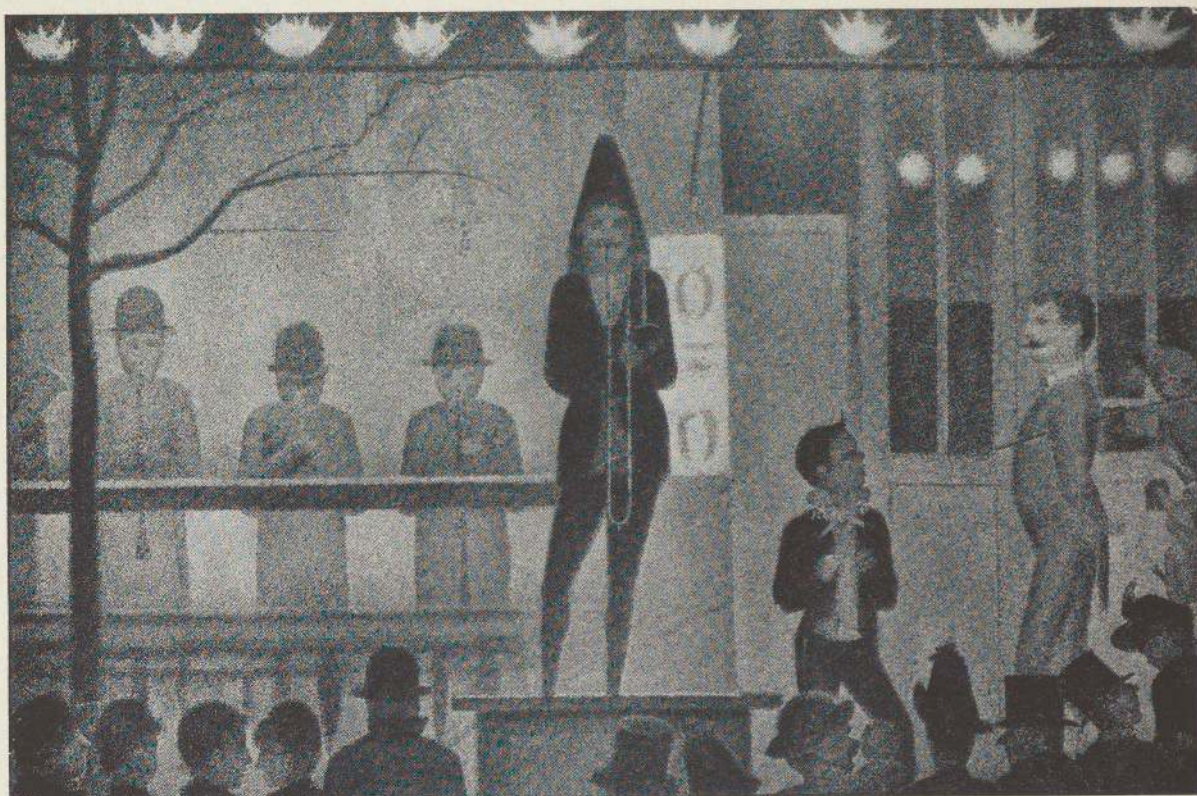


- 12 GAUGUIN: The Spirit of the Dead Watching (Manaò Tupapaù).** Tahiti, 1892. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 36 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches. Lent by A. Conger Goodyear, New York.

*Illustrated, no. 5, in color portfolio Art in Our Time, Museum of Modern Art, 1939.*

Paul Gauguin. French, 1848-1903. Gave up a successful business career for art, and then abandoned civilization to paint in the South Seas, where he died. Under the influence of primitive and folk art, he tried to make painting simple, direct and decorative, in reaction against the elaborate semi-scientific attitude of Impressionism.





- 13 SEURAT: The Side Show (La Parade).** 1889. Oil on canvas, 39½ x 59¼ inches. Lent by Stephen C. Clark, New York.

Georges-Pierre Seurat. French, 1859-1891. Seurat's brief career as an artist was dominated by a passion for system and order. With scientific precision he took the small brush strokes of the Impressionists and made them into dots all of the same size. Each dot is a light or dark shade of one of the six pure primary colors—blue, yellow, red, green, violet and orange. With similar logic, he analyzed lines and tones and their emotional effects of sadness, calm and joy. Though his method seems over-scientific, Seurat painted several of the greatest compositions of modern times. To artists of today he is the supreme example of intelligence and discipline.

- 14 ROUSSEAU: The Sleeping Gypsy (La Bohémienne Endormie).** 1897. Oil on canvas, 51 x 79 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Mrs. Simon Guggenheim. (See frontispiece for color reproduction.)

Henri Rousseau. French, 1844-1910. Called "le Douanier" because of his job as a minor customs officer. Greatest of the many "modern primitives," self-taught artists of the people, whose fresh eye, untutored technique and imaginative power have interested modern artists.





**15 VUILLARD: Le Salon Hessel, Rue de Rivoli. 1901. Oil on canvas, 29 x 25 inches. Lent by Wildenstein & Company, Inc., New York.**

Jean Edouard Vuillard. French, born 1868. Lives in Paris. Influenced by Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. Developed a personal, intimate kind of indoor Impressionism which places him, with Rouault, Bonnard and Matisse, at the top of the oldest generation of living French painters.





Photograph Pierre Matisse Gallery

- 16 ROUAULT: Clown's Head. 1917. Oil on canvas, 44¼ x 29¾ inches. Lent by Edward G. Robinson, Beverly Hills.**

Georges Rouault. French, born 1871. Lives in Paris. Influenced by Rembrandt, Daumier, Goya and medieval stained glass, his work, even when not specifically religious in subject matter, is profoundly concerned with human injustice and pothos, subjects which he embodies in forms and colors of somber power.





**17 DERAİN: The Window on the Park. 1912. Oil on canvas, 51 x 35 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, purchased in memory of Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan.**

André Derain. French, born 1880. Lives in Paris. Derain's early work was influenced by many sources, including Negro sculpture, Cézanne and medieval Italian frescoes. After the war, through his adaptation of the French tradition of Courbet and Corot, he exerted a wide influence upon younger men.



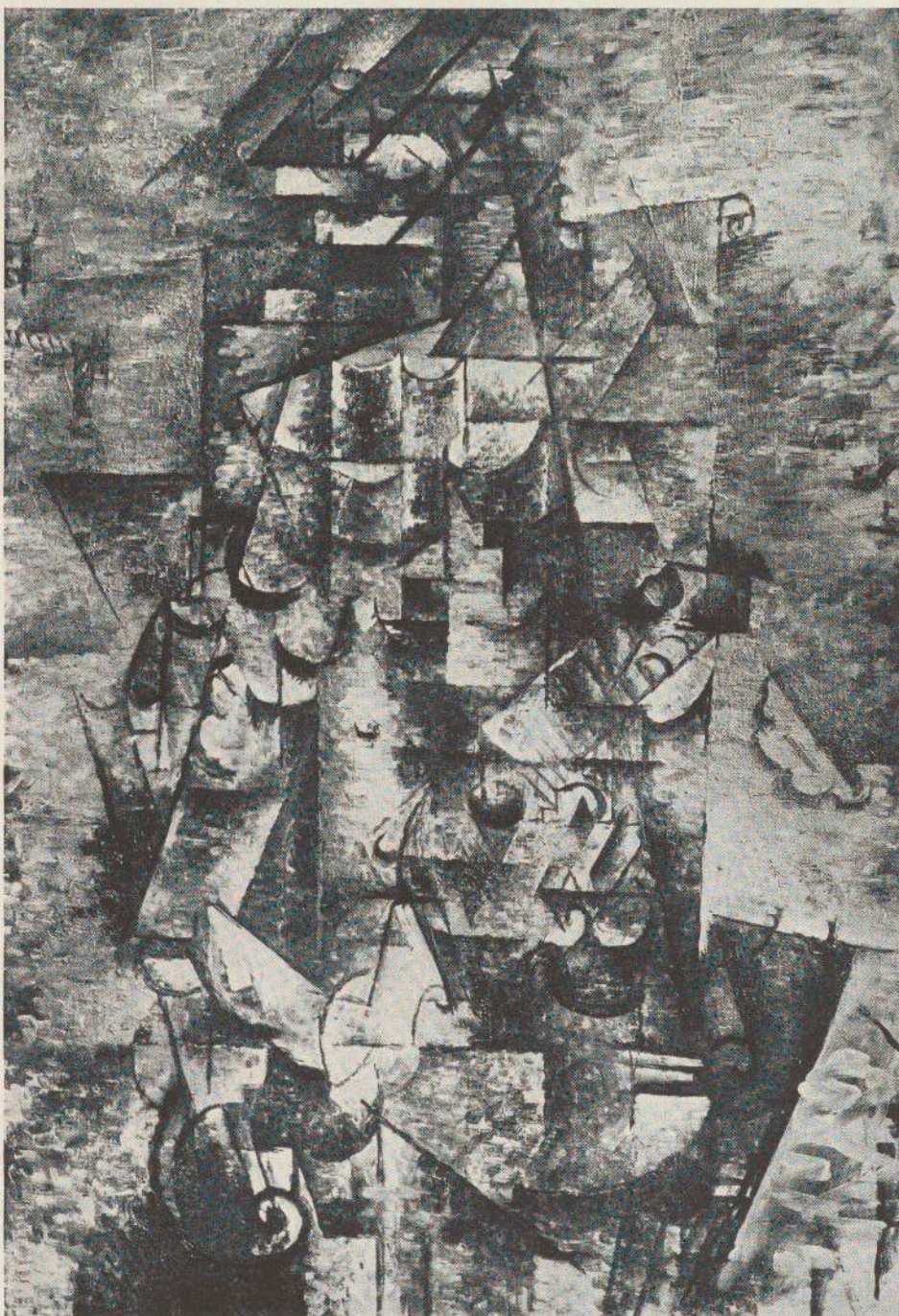


- 18 MATISSE: White Plumes. 1919. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches. Lent by Stephen C. Clark, New York.**

*Illustrated, no. 7, in color portfolio Art in Our Time, Museum of Modern Art, 1939.*

Henri-Matisse. French, born 1869. Lives in Nice. Matisse in 1905 was the leader of the Fauves (wild beasts) group who went beyond Gauguin in using bright flat color and heavy black outlines.





**19 BRAQUE: Man with a Guitar. 1911. Oil on canvas, 45¾ x 32 inches. Lent by Marcel Fleischmann, Zurich.**

Georges Braque. French, born 1881. Lives in Paris. The foremost French master of Cubism, which with Picasso he invented about 1908. He remains one of the most distinguished French painters.

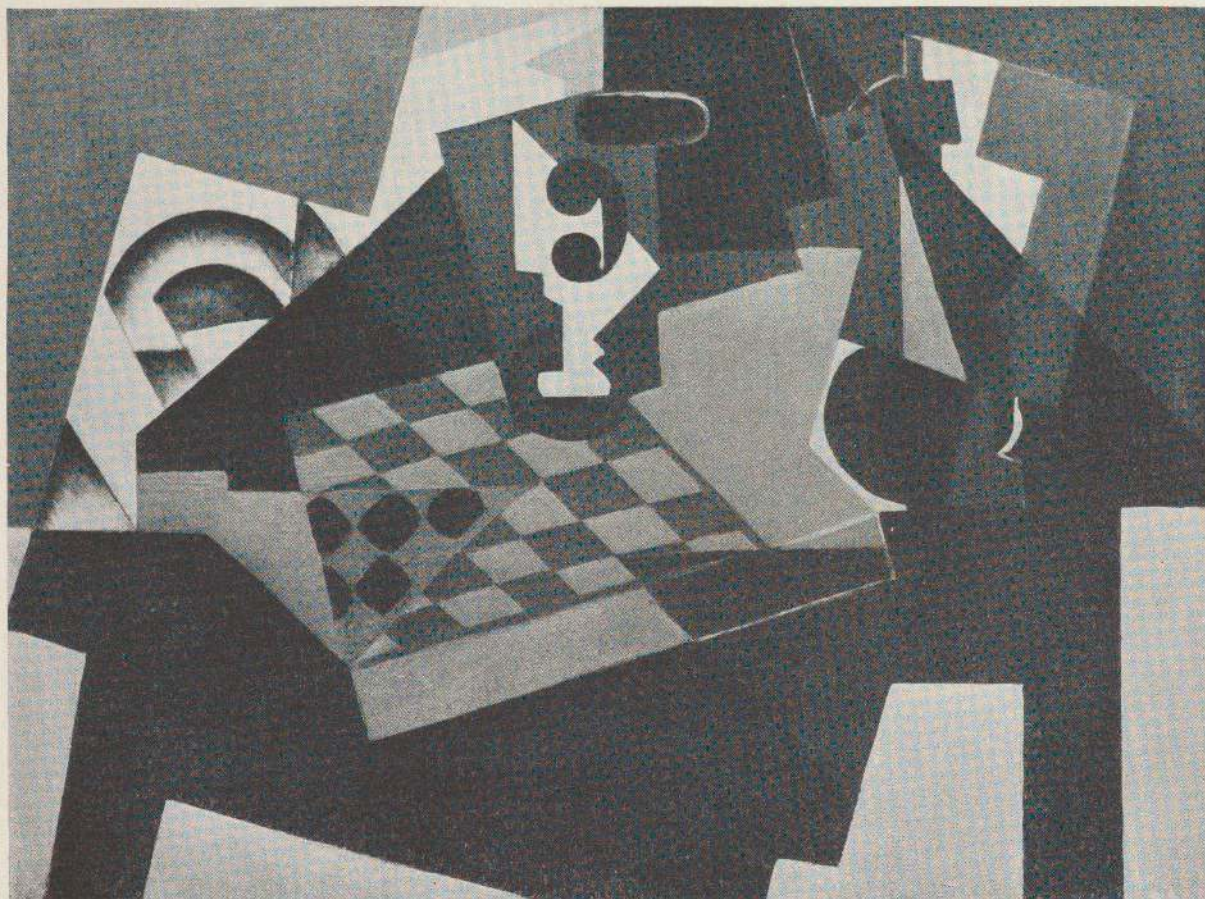




- 20 LA FRESNAYE: The Conquest of the Air. 1913. Oil on canvas, 91½ x 77 inches. Lent by René Gaffé, Brussels.**

Roger de La Fresnaye. French, 1885-1925. Associated with the Cubists. His rare large pictures are among the masterpieces of early 20th century painting.





- 21 GRIS: The Chessboard. 1917. Oil on wood, 28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches. The Museum of Modern Art, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Purchase Fund.**

*Illustrated, no. 9, in color portfolio Art in Our Time, Museum of Modern Art, 1939.*

Juan Gris (José Gonzales). Spanish, 1887-1927. Worked in Paris; one of the foremost Cubists. Remarkable for the distinction and precision of his style.

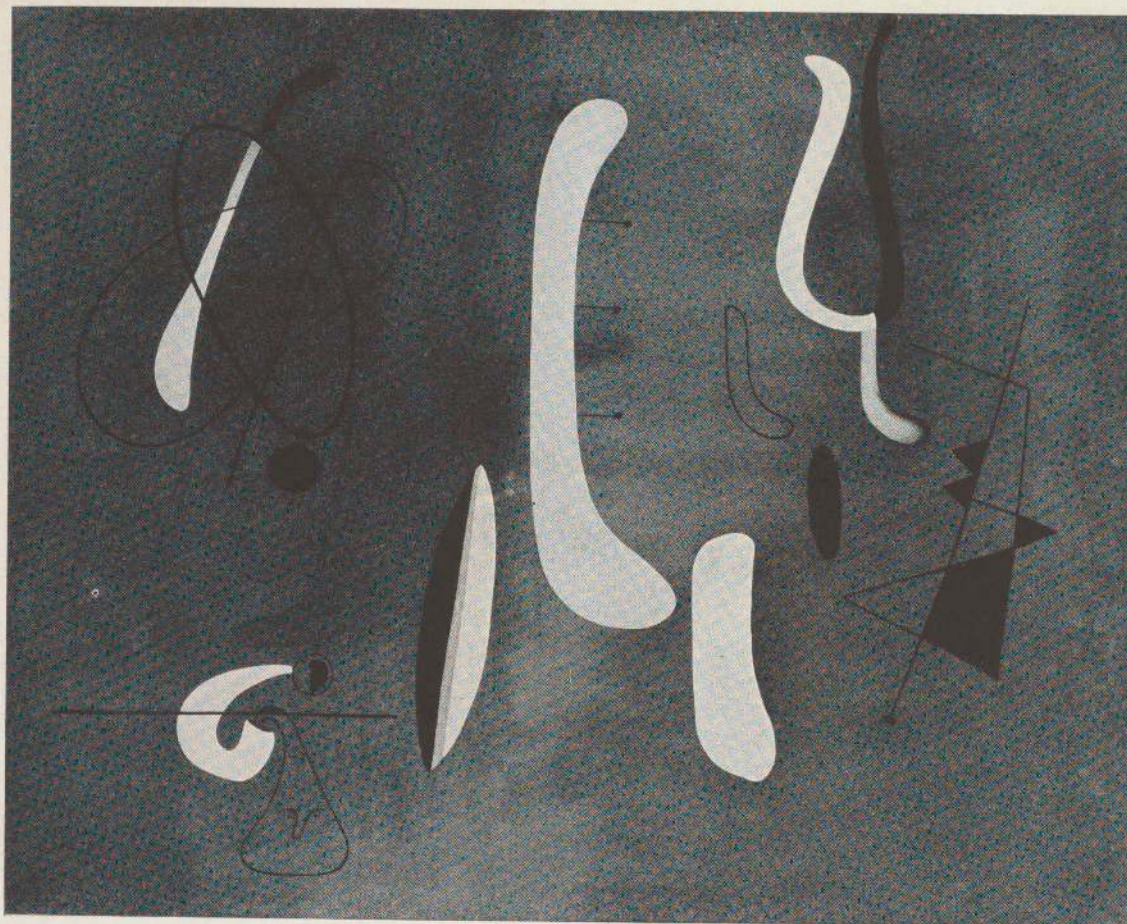




**22 PICASSO: The Studio. 1925. Oil on canvas, 38 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 51 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Lent anonymously.**

Pablo Picasso. Spanish, born 1881. To Paris, 1901, where he now lives. Early work influenced by Toulouse-Lautrec, then by Negro sculpture and Cézanne. With Braque, founded Cubism. His incalculably protean art cannot be classified. His early work has greatly influenced the neo-romantic painters of 1930. His later work is claimed by the Surrealists.

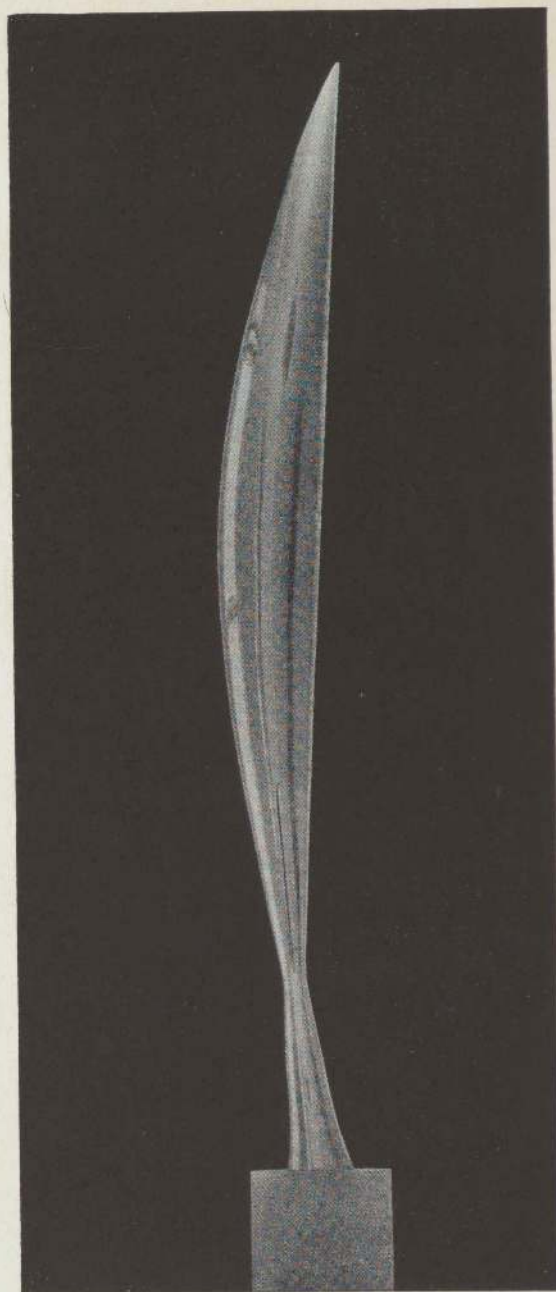




**23 MIRO: Composition. 1933. Oil on canvas, 52 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 65 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches. Lent by Miss Ann Resor, New York.**

Joan Miro. Catalan, born 1893. Allied with Paris Surrealists, 1924. Lives in Paris. Remarkable for the complete spontaneity of his invention, his Surrealist sense of humor, and the excitement of his color.

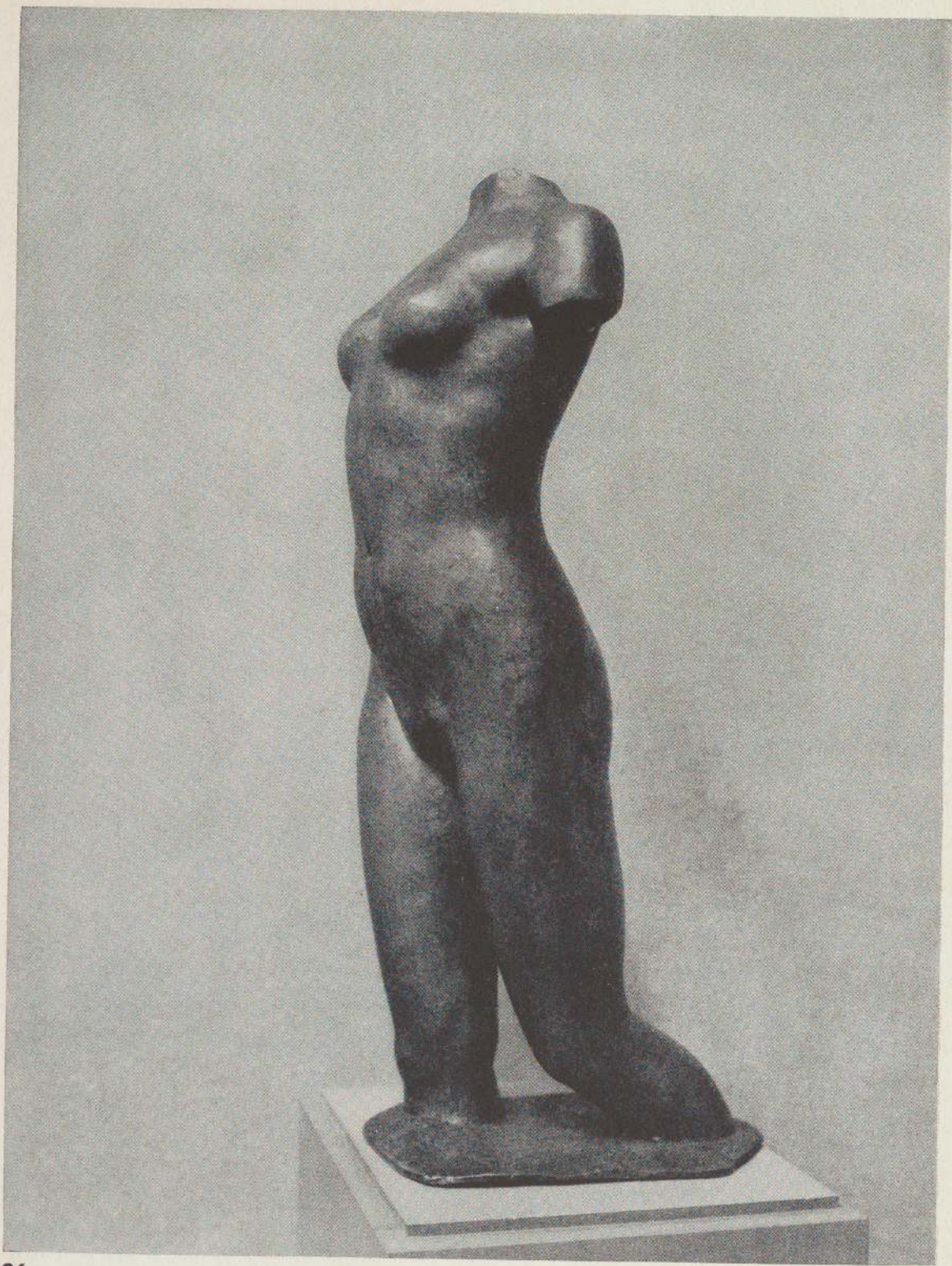




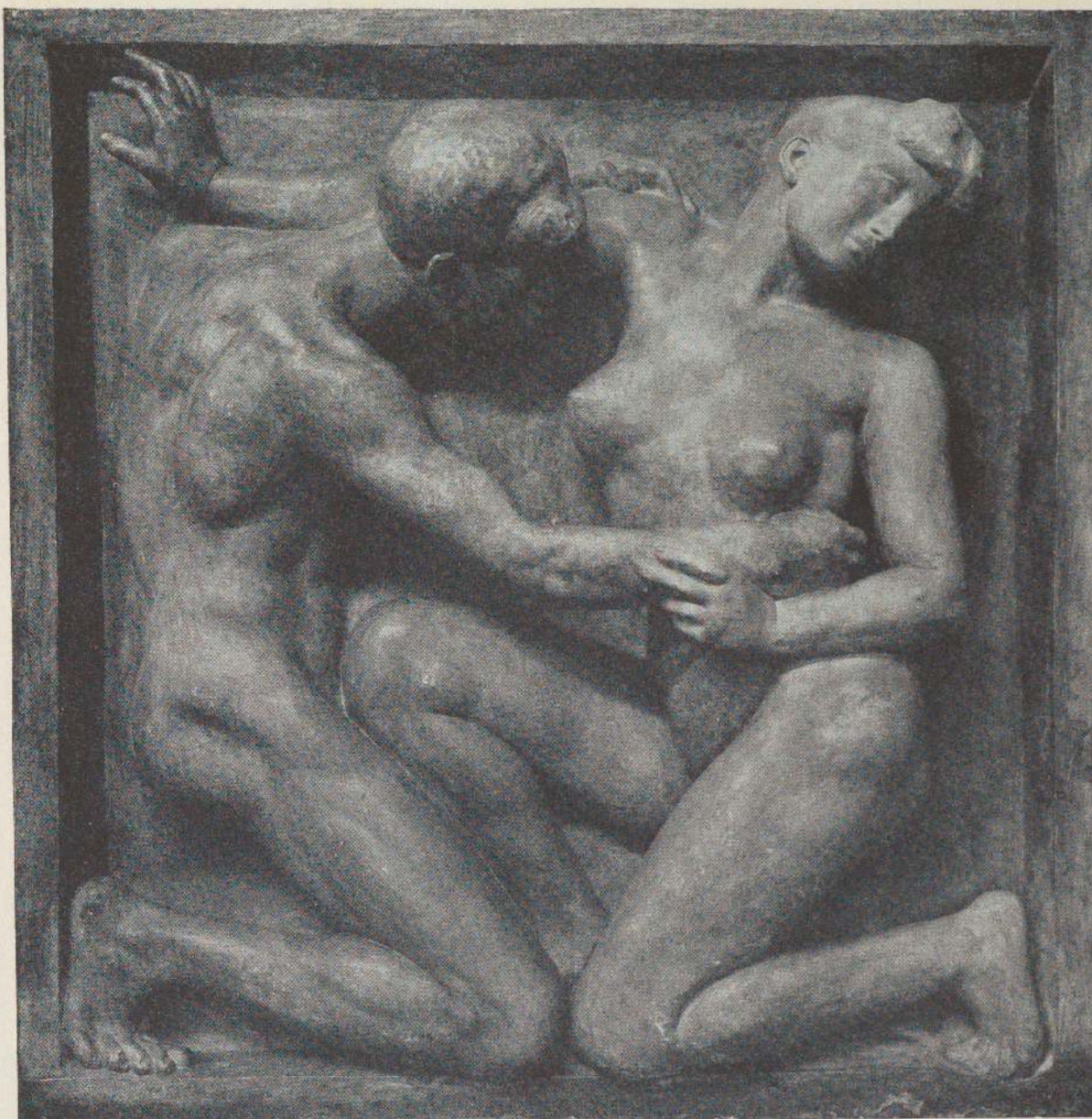
**24 BRANCUSI: Bird in Space. 1919. Bronze, 54 inches high. The Museum of Modern Art.**

Constantin Brancusi. Rumanian, born 1876. Pupil of Rodin. Lives in Paris. The great sculptor of abstract forms which are beautiful in themselves rather than as representations of nature. In 1926 there was a law suit over his most admired work, *Bird in Space*, which the United States Customs held was not a work of art.









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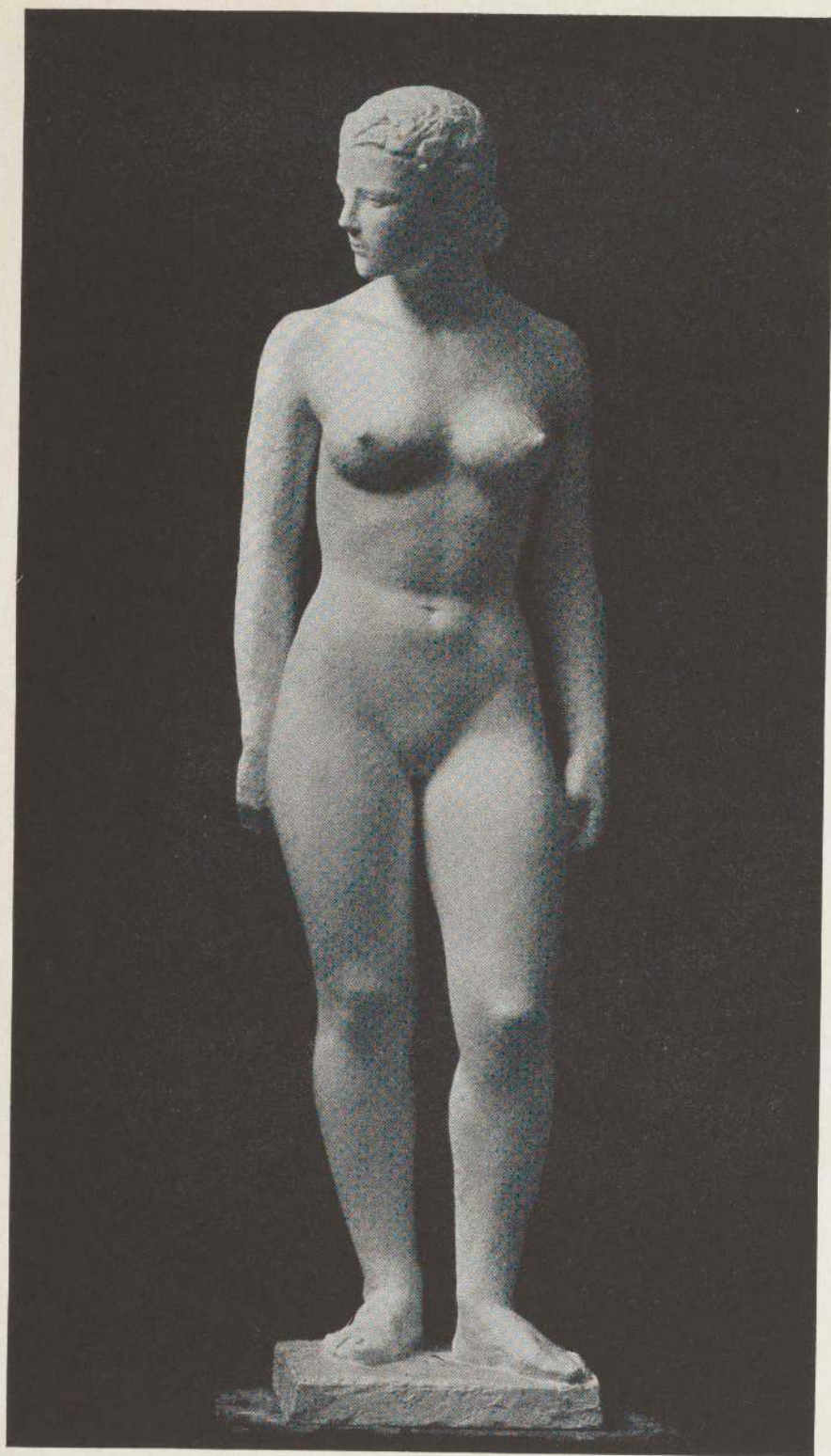
**25 MAILLOL: Desire.** About 1904. Plaster, 47 x 45 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, gift of the sculptor.

**26 MAILLOL: Torso.** 1910. Bronze, 43 inches high. The Museum of Modern Art, gift of A. Conger Goodyear.

Aristide Maillol. French, born 1861. Lives in Paris. Something of the warmth and serenity of Greek sculpture is reborn in these works of one of the foremost living artists.

35





Charles Despiau. French, born 1874. Lives in Paris. Rodin's assistant, 1903. With Maillol, the most distinguished of the older generation of French sculptors. He differs from Maillol in his extremely sensitive surface modeling.

- 27 **DESPIAU: Assia.** 1938. Bronze, 75¼ inches high. The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Mrs. Simon Guggenheim. (This reproduction is from a photograph of the original cast in plaster.)





**28 LEHMBRUCK: Kneeling Woman. 1911. Cast stone, 69½ inches high. The Museum of Modern Art, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Purchase Fund.**

Wilhelm Lehmbruck. German, 1881-1919. One of the greatest of 20th century sculptors, much of his art is now officially repudiated in his own country. His mature work suggests the elongated elegance and spirituality of late Gothic sculpture.





**29 EPSTEIN: Madonna and Child. 1927. Bronze, 67 inches high. Lent by Miss Sally Ryan, courtesy the Tate Gallery, London.**

Jacob Epstein. Born in New York, 1880. Lives in London. Famous for his controversial figures in stone (*Christ, Rima, Eve*) and for his vigorous bronze portraits.



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