

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

14 WEST 49TH STREET, NEW YORK

38923 - 25  
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 7-7470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Museum of Modern Art, 14 West 49 Street, New York, announces that it will open to the public on Wednesday, September 28, the first comprehensive Exhibition of The Prints of Georges Rouault ever held in this country or abroad. The Exhibition will consist of 150 lithographs, etchings, and wood-engravings, about half of them in full color and many of them never before shown even in Paris. The wide range of subjects includes real and imaginary portraits, clowns and circus girls, and religious scenes, selected from the work which has engaged a very large part of Rouault's time during the past twenty years.

Monroe Wheeler, who directed the Museum's Exhibition of Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators (April - September, 1936), has assembled the prints for the Rouault Exhibition and made the installation in several of the Museum galleries. Mr. Wheeler made a special arrangement with the artist and his publisher, Ambroise Vollard, to display for the first time trial proofs of Rouault's most recent work in advance of its official publication. The New York public will thus have an opportunity to study, in these prints, the latest development in Rouault's style and his new palette of startlingly vivid yellows, oranges and blues, quite unlike the sombre colors which predominate in his earlier and more familiar work.

Georges Rouault was born during the last French Revolution known as the Commune. On May 27, 1871, a stray shell struck

the Rouault house in the Belleville Quarter of Paris. The expectant young mother was thrown out of bed and the family moved her down into the cellar where she gave birth to the son who was to become one of the great tragic painters of modern times.

The circumstances of Rouault's birth can scarcely be said to have affected his painting but his apprenticeship at the age of fourteen to a maker of stained glass apparently influenced his sense of color. Almost all his paintings have the medieval blood-reds and nocturnal-blues of stained glass, and their heavy framework of drawing is like the lead jointures.

At the age of eighteen Rouault enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, where Gustave Moreau was his teacher and became his close friend. Moreau died in 1897 and bequeathed to the city of Paris his home and some 6,500 of his own paintings for a museum. Rouault, the favorite pupil, was made curator of the museum at a salary of about \$400. a year, a position which he holds to this day. The outward circumstances of Rouault's life seem normally happy. He married and had four children and, although his art has never been popular, it has always had a measure of discriminating appreciation which has grown with the years. But since boyhood his nature has been both melancholy and mystic, he consoled himself with Moreau's words to him: "Each of us must suffer and learn for himself." He is a lyrical painter of inward vision and introspective drama but art alone is not enough for his entire expression. He has devoted much time to literary composition of an obscure and prophetic kind which he illustrates with lithographs and etchings. Although he has been careful to avoid the rut of conventional religious painting, his friend Saures calls him "the monk of modern art." Rouault's life has been, as Mr. Wheeler writes in his introduction to the catalog of the exhibition--

... "full of a strange disquiet, a desperate search for a means of expression more philosophic and more mystical than is usual in modern art.... Rouault has dreamed of and striven to portray the personages of a twentieth century mythology.... In his graphic work there is a particularly eloquent and uncompromising expression of the attitude of a great-hearted modern man toward the victims of

27  
civilization and toward its warlords and overlords.... Miserere et Guerre is the portrait of disaster in our period and our world: not the cruelty, atrocity and destitution which the camera has made very familiar but, instead, spiritual catastrophe: human pride and humiliation, self-pity and a rather morbid longing for an unknown God....

"In his beautiful series of faces and figures there is a wild earnestness, an unexplained excitement, a mood of Dostoevsky.... Throughout his work there is one recurrent theme: a great creature, at once superhuman and sub-human, sitting and staring as though enthroned in pompous evil....

"Although there have been many masters of black-and-white, it may be said that there has never been so great a master of black alone. I can think of no other artist who has obtained variations so like colour, so liquid and so luminous that certain of these great etchings achieve in black-and-white the quality of oil paintings.... Emotion fiercely personal has given this art its great originality; it is as unique as the intellect and feeling which have produced it. Rouault's failure to 'express himself' entirely has given him humility; his implacable quarrel with the public has given him ferocity. His cult of Christ has endowed him with endless patience and all-embracing compassion."

The Exhibition of The Prints of Georges Rouault will open at the Museum of Modern Art on Wednesday, September 28, 1938, together with an Exhibition of American Photographs by Walker Evans and an Exhibition of Useful Objects Under Five Dollars. All three exhibitions will remain on view through October.