

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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No. 101

FOR RELEASE:

Wednesday, November 30, 1955

OVER FIFTY NEWLY ACQUIRED PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The first showing in this country of one of Monet's famous large water lily paintings, two important canvases by Léger, exceptional pictures by Soutine, Nolde, Beckmann, Sickert and van Dongen and striking works by younger artists of four continents highlight the exhibition of over 50 paintings and sculptures newly acquired by the Museum of Modern Art for its Collection which will be on view from ~~December~~ ^{Nov.} 30 through February 19.

The exhibition is the first major show devoted entirely to new acquisitions to be held at the Museum for several years. It was installed on the third floor of the Museum, 11 West 53rd Street, by Dorothy C. Miller, Curator, and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections.

The great variety in character and nationality of the works of art in the exhibition is characteristic of the Museum's collecting policies. Besides those mentioned above, paintings by the older generation of Europeans include compositions by Picasso, Schmidt-Rottluff, Le Fauconnier and Delaunay-Terk, portraits by Sickert and Dufy, a screen by Bonnard, and watercolors by Dix and Heckel. Paintings by the British artists, Graham Sutherland and Lucian Freud, by the Frenchman, Mathieu, the Hollander, Karel Appel, and the Italian, Leonardo Cremonini, represent more recent works by Europeans. The Canadian, Paul-Émile Borduas, the Australian, Sidney Nolan and several artists from Latin-America, including Roberto Burle-Marx of Brazil, Rufino Tamayo of Mexico, and Alejandro Obregón of Colombia are also included. Among the Americans whose work is shown are Sam Francis, Larry Rivers, William Baziotes, Wallace Putnam and the "primitive" painter Theora Hamblett.

A study for a large frieze by Henry Moore, an early and a late bronze by Matisse, a 14 foot high ceramic sculpture by Noguchi, a wooden figure by the young American, Elbert Weinberg, an iron construction by the Colombian, Edgar Negret, a Marini portrait, a genre composition in wire by the young Britisher, William Thornton, a construction in wood by Vantongerloo and an abstract stainless steel piece by José de Rivera demonstrate the enormous range of modern sculpture. Illustrating some of the new techniques developed by modern artists are collages of various materials by the Americans Ida Fischer, Arthur G. Dove and Ann Ryan, a fumage painting by Wolfgang Paalen and a romantic "object" by Joseph Cornell.

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Two groups of paintings in the exhibition offer valuable comparisons in the approach of artists to religious and historical subjects, generally neglected in recent art. Emil Nolde's roughly tender Christ and the Children of 1910, Max Beckmann's harrowing Descent from the Cross, 1917, and Graham Sutherland's more recent Thorn-Head with its reference to Christ's passion are, all three, paintings of great conviction and power.

Far more uncommon in contemporary art of the avant-garde are several "history pictures," a category which was deemed supreme in the 17th and 18th centuries but which has generally sunk in recent years to the level of academic illustration with an occasional exception such as Picasso's Guernica. But here, by a coincidence, are three compositions on heroic subjects. Larry Rivers' huge Washington Crossing the Delaware with all its misty confusion seems far closer to historic truth than Emmanuel Leutze's famous 19th century tableau. Sidney Nolan's After Glenrowan Siege presents the frightening image of Ned Kelly, the spectacular Australian outlaw brought down by police bullets, his eyes reflecting through his iron helmet the flames of the village hotel where his besieged band had died to a man. Georges Mathieu shouts a paean of victory in his slashing twelve foot high abstraction which he has called, after the medieval French battle cry, Montjoie Saint Denis!

The large Monet and the two Légers were purchased by the Museum through the Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund which is reserved for works of exceptional importance. Water Lilies (Les Nymphéas) is one of a great series of mural canvases, each 7 x 19 feet in size painted by Monet between 1914 and 1923, only a few years before his death in 1926 at the age of 86. Many of the series hang in two large oval galleries in the Orangerie Museum in Paris, placed there through the efforts of Georges Clemenceau, famous French statesman who was a close friend and great admirer of Monet, and who encouraged the artist during his last years of illness and despondency. The huge painting, which might be called "abstract impressionist" in style, makes clear why Monet has recently been so much admired by young abstract painters, particularly in America.

The two large canvases by Léger, Three Musicians and The Divers, were painted during his fourth visit to America between 1940 and 1946. The Divers is the culminating work of a long series of compositions in which an interlace of strongly modeled black-and-white figures is played against a background of brilliant, flat, curved shapes. The Three Musicians of 1944 looks back to a drawing of 1925 and forward to Léger's many comparatively realistic figure compositions of the last ten years. It is one of his greatest paintings.

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Among other paintings of unusual interest are the Sir Thomas Beecham Conducting probably the first major painting by Walter Richard Sickert to enter an American museum; van Dongen's rowdy Café Singer painted in the magnificent color of his fauve period; Dufy's Portrait of the Poet François Berthault; a large and sumptuous Tamayo, Girl Attacked by a Strange Bird; major early paintings by two minor members of the cubist circle, Delaunay-Terk and Le Fauconnier; and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's Pharisees, a capital work of 1912.

The two most imposing sculpture are by coincidence both religious in content though not Christian as are the three paintings discussed above. Noguchi's Even the Centipede, a vertical composition of eleven ceramic segments reaching from floor to ceiling, was inspired by a Zen Buddhist sentiment that even the lowliest creatures pray, even the centipede. Elbert Weinberg's Ritual Figure, blowing the Hebrew shofar, is related to the trumpeters who laid low the walls of Jericho.

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Checklists with descriptions of the paintings and sculptures, and photographs available on request from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, Circle 5-8900.
