

The Museum of Modern Art

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STEIN COLLECTIONS ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

FOUR AMERICANS IN PARIS: THE COLLECTIONS OF GERTRUDE STEIN AND HER FAMILY will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from December 19 through March 1. Sponsored by Alcoa Foundation, the exhibition of more than 200 works represents the first attempt to reassemble the paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints acquired by this extraordinary family, who were early, ardent patrons of Matisse and Picasso in the first decades of this century. From about 1905 on, an international assemblage of artists, writers, musicians and intellectuals gathered regularly in their Paris apartments to look, listen, talk and be introduced to the revolutionary art of our time.

Directed by Margaret Potter, Associate Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, the show includes many paintings long recognized as masterpieces of the 20th century, other important works that are virtually unknown, and portraits, sketches and documentary photographs. Together, these evoke a highly significant moment in the history of art and illuminate the personalities of the four members of this noted family: Gertrude, her brothers Leo and Michael, and the latter's wife, Sarah. Nucleus of the exhibition is formed by the 47 works -- 38 by Picasso and 9 by Gris -- acquired by five American collectors from the Estate of Gertrude Stein in 1968. It was decided to reassemble around these as many as possible of the works once owned by Gertrude, Leo, Michael and Sarah Stein. Because their collections had been gradually dispersed over many years, the loans have been gathered from some 90 institutions and individuals ranging geographically from the USSR to Australia, and from Norway to Mexico. Modified versions of the exhibition will be shown in 1971 at The Baltimore Museum of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Art.

"The collection of Leo and Gertrude Stein was never a collection of specimens; there were many advanced artists of the period who were not represented -- Braque, for example,

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or Vlaminck and Derain," observes Irene Gordon, editor of the book* that the Museum has published to accompany the exhibition, and author of one of its five essays. "Although from time to time it contained the work of others, the bulk consisted of a Big Four: Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso. The collection Michael and Sarah Stein assembled was devoted predominantly to the work of Matisse."

The majority of works on view -- including 5 by Renoir, 7 by Cézanne, a Manet and a Bonnard, as well as those by Matisse, Picasso and Gris were bought by the Steins in the decade preceding the first World War and at prices that never exceeded more than a few hundred dollars. "The process of tracing the ownership of these works has in itself been something of an adventure," Miss Potter says. A primary source of information in identifying paintings that left the Stein collections years ago has been a series of photographs of their two Left Bank apartments in Paris -- that of Leo and Gertrude on the rue de Fleurus, and that of Michael and Sarah in the nearby rue Madame. Enlargements of some of these photographs are shown in one gallery and reproduced in the publication.

In his essay, Leo Katz points out that "in the voyage of brother and sister toward the center of the then current revolution in painting, it was Leo who steered the course. Ever since the / days of their postgraduate studies at Johns Hopkins University, Leo had been painting and collecting; and under his tutelage Gertrude began first to appreciate Whistler and Leo's collection of Japanese prints, and then -- several steps behind -- El Greco, Mantegna, Renoir, and the Post-Impressionists, especially Cézanne. But Gertrude arriving later, stayed longer. Leo's contempt for Cubist 'funny business' and new trends in art grew rapidly after 1911, the year in which the intellectual and emotional break with his sister began, before their parting of ways in 1913. Gertrude, however, remained in close rapport with a succession of artists in Paris -- as collector and connoisseur, sometimes as friend, and most importantly, as fellow artist, the development of whose own art paralleled and was influenced by theirs".

* FOUR AMERICANS IN PARIS: THE COLLECTIONS OF GERTRUDE STEIN AND HER FAMILY. Essays by Douglas Cooper, Lucile M. Golson, Irene Gordon, Ellen B. Hirschland and Leon Katz. Foreword by John B. Hightower. Introduction by Margaret Potter. "More Adventures" excerpted from Appreciation by Leo Stein and "Portraits" by Gertrude Stein (of Matisse and Picasso) are reprinted. 176 pages; 109 illustrations (8 in color); bound in Lexotone (simulated leather), \$6.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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Gertrude Stein first began her attentive study of modern art with the work of Cézanne. Among seven Cézannes in the show are an early oil (1873-77), Apples, which Leo Stein insisted on retaining when he and Gertrude finally parted company in 1913 and divided their collection, Bathers (ca. 1895), owned by The Baltimore Museum of Art, and a landscape watercolor now owned by the Louvre.

The Matisses in the exhibition begin with a late 19th century oil and conclude with drawings and prints from the early 1920s. In her essay on the Michael Steins, Lucile M. Goldson points out that every phase of Matisse's early development was represented in their collection starting with The Open Door of 1896. "The Sideboard and Table (1899) already exemplifies Matisse's 'pre-fauve' pointillist technique Quite different in its austere color is the forceful Cézannesque Woman with Black Hair of about 1902."

Although two key pictures once owned by Leo and Gertrude Stein -- Woman with a Hat, the sensation of the 1905 Salon d'Automne, and Joy of Life, painted in 1905-6 -- proved unavailable for loan, a number of other works dating from those years reflect Matisse's development at this time. They include Nude before a Screen, one of three paintings by Matisse which Michael and Sarah Stein brought back to America in 1906 when they returned to inspect their property following the San Francisco earthquake and fire, and which were the first works by the artist to be seen in this country; and Reclining Nude painted at Collioure, 1906. The Blue Nude of 1907, which Leo Stein lent to the Armory Show in 1913, is one of

works borrowed from The Cone Collection of The Baltimore Museum of Art. Dr. Claribel and Etta Cone of Baltimore were early introduced by the Steins to modern art and eventually outdid them in collecting zeal. Ellen B. Hirschland, a great-niece of the Cone sisters, has written about them for the catalogue. Matisse's sculpture is also well represented in the exhibition by a number of bronzes; in addition, there are some of his rare ceramics -- a vase with figures and a tile, as well as numerous drawings and prints.

Leo Stein claimed with reason that he was the first to recognize both Matisse and Picasso. His patronage of the latter began in 1905 when the artist was almost unknown; but he could

not follow him into Cubism, which on the other hand, Gertrude identified with her own aims in writing.

In the exhibition, one can follow Picasso's earlier style, influenced by Toulouse-Lautrec, through the Blue Period (for example, Two Women at a Bar, Chrysler Collection), his circus subjects (including The Acrobat's Family with a Monkey, Konstmuseum, Göteborg, and several related studies), the tender Young Girl with a Basket of Flowers (Collection Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller), the Rose Period Standing Female Nude (Collection Mr. and Mrs. William S. Paley), and the works influenced by Iberian sculpture, notably the 1906 Portrait of Gertrude Stein, which she bequeathed to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Especially important are the many works and studies related to Les Demoiselles d'Avignon of 1907, which has been in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art for more than 30 years and is on view in its second floor galleries, and which represented Picasso's breakthrough toward Cubism. The steps toward Cubism may be traced through the monumental Three Women of 1908, one of two paintings lent by The Hermitage, Leningrad, and landscapes of 1909, including Horta de Ebro and Reservoir, Horta, both from the Gertrude Stein Estate. Other important works of developed Cubism include The Architect's Table -- Gertrude's first independent purchase of a Cubist work -- and Guitar on a Table. The exhibition also includes two 18th century chairs with needlepoint executed by Alice B. Toklas after designs by Picasso.

The other Cubist artist most favored by Gertrude was Juan Gris. As Douglas Cooper points out in his essay, "she had made up her mind that 'cubism is a purely spanish conception, and only spaniards can be cubists'. Her discovery of the Cubist paintings of Juan Gris, another Spaniard, confirmed her in this quixotic belief". Although she had become interested in his painting before the outbreak of the first World War, the period of intimacy between Gris and Gertrude Stein, according to Mr. Cooper, seems to run from 1923 until his death in 1927. Nine works, including three Cubist collages of 1914 and six paintings of the 20's, all from the Estate of Gertrude Stein, are in the exhibition, as well as four lithographs commissioned as illustrations for one of her texts, published by D. H. Kahnweiler in 1926.

Among the other outstanding paintings in the show are The Siesta (1900) by Bonnard, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, and five Renoirs, including Bather (1882-83), Brunette (1890), the Reader (1895).

Among the portraits of the Steins in the exhibition are oils, sculptures, and drawings of Gertrude by Christian Bérard, Jo Davidson, Jacques Lipchitz, Louis Marcoussis, Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso, Francis Rose, Pavel Tchelitchew and Félix Vallotton. There are also portraits of Sarah and Michael Stein and their son, Allan, painted by Matisse.

In 1925, Michael and Sarah Stein commissioned Le Corbusier, then a relatively little-known architect, to build a house for them at Garches on the outskirts of Paris. A model of this house, Les Terrasses, which they lived in until their return to the United States in 1935, has been especially constructed for the exhibition and is shown together with plans and original drawings by the architect, as well as photographs taken when the Steins occupied it.

Additional information and photographs available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 Street, New York, NY 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-7501.