

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
March 1987

DRAWINGS ACQUISITIONS

Through May 26, 1987

A new installation at The Museum of Modern Art features seventy-one works on paper acquired since 1981. During this period, 554 works by 217 artists entered the collection. Organized by John Elderfield, director of the Department of Drawings, the current installation reveals the rich growth of the collection over the past six years.

Among the highlights of early modern drawings in the installation are Piet Mondrian's Amstel River (1907), a large, dramatic, preabstract work that combines a Symbolist mood with an already strong sense of geometric structure, and Giorgio de Chirico's Solitude (1917), widely considered to be probably the greatest of his metaphysical drawings. Three recently acquired works on paper by Pablo Picasso include the monumental Two Nudes (1906), a study for the Museum's painting of that subject; the rigorously abstract, Cubist Guitar (1912); and the beautiful pastel, Woman in a Flowered Hat (1921). Other major Cubist works include Fernand Léger's Contrast of Forms (1912) and Juan Gris's collage, Glass and Bottle (1913), and two drawings by sculptor Julio Gonzalez.

The Museum's representation of Futurism has been enhanced by the addition of Carlo Carra's charcoal drawing, Café Chantant (1912), and works by Giacomo Balla and F.T. Marinetti (the latter represented in the collection for the first time). Early British modernism is exemplified by David Bomberg's early abstraction, study for In the Hold (1913), and works by William Roberts and C.R.W. Nevinson (first time representation).

- more -

German Expressionism, previously a weaker area of the collection, is now better served by the acquisition of four important works: Erich Heckel's Two Female Nudes (1910), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Two Nudes in a Landscape (c. 1909-10), Max Pechstein's Reclining Nude with Cat (c. 1910), and Christian Rohlf's The Soldier (c. 1914). Early Russian modernism and International Constructivism, already among the high points of the collection, have been further strengthened by the addition of numerous works. Included in this installation are works by Alexander Bogomazov, El Lissitzky, Liubov Popova, Olga Rozanova (first time representation in the collection), and Vladimir Tatlin; and by Le Corbusier (a first work), Theo van Doesburg, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp (a first work). Other major early European acquisitions include important works by Max Ernst, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Felix del Marle, Egon Schiele, Tristan Tzara, and Kurt Schwitters, the latter being the first Dada drawing to join the many collages in the collection by this artist.

Early American acquisitions feature an important charcoal, Nature Symbolized (c. 1911-12), by Arthur Dove, and watercolors (first works by these artists to enter the collection) by John Marin and Milton Avery. The Abstract Expressionist collection is strengthened with several works each by Jackson Pollock, Philip Guston, and Mark Rothko, and major single sheets by Franz Kline (first time representation) and Willem de Kooning. Artists of the next generation are represented for the first time by works by Richard Diebenkorn, Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, and Cy Twombly, and by additional works by Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, and Claes Oldenburg, among others. Works represented for the first time by the influential European artists Josef Beuys (an important chalkboard drawing) and Yves Klein are also on view.

Drawings by younger artists include those by the Europeans Frank Auerbach, Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, Jannis Kounellis, and Sigmar Polke, and the Americans Gregory Amenoff, Jonathan Borofsky, Bill Jensen, Bruce Nauman, Katherine Porter, Susan Rothenberg, and Richard Serra. Less well-known artists include the Europeans Miriam Cahn, Giuseppe Gallo, and Ken Kiff, and the Americans Carroll Dunham and Jill Moser. Only two of these artists were previously represented in the drawings collection.

The Museum of Modern Art has always collected drawings. A drawing was among its very first acquisitions, made in October 1929 only a few days after the Museum had opened its doors. It was not until 1947, however, that a special exhibition of drawings was presented, and then they numbered only 227 works in the traditional mediums of pen, pencil, and charcoal. In 1960, a second such exhibition took place, by which time the collection had grown to 530 works. In 1964, the Museum inaugurated a gallery especially devoted to drawings and prints from the collection. In 1971, the Department of Drawings was established as an autonomous curatorial unit with the mandate of collecting and exhibiting unique works on paper. By 1974, the collection had grown to 2,500 works. A decade later, when new galleries devoted exclusively to drawings were provided as part of the Museum's expansion, the collection consisted of over 6,000 works. It is widely considered to be the greatest of its kind.

DRAWINGS ACQUISITIONS remains on view in the Ronald S. Lauder Galleries, second floor, through May 26, 1987.

* * *

No. 16

For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.