

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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LARGE RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF COLLAGES

BY MODERN EUROPEANS AND AMERICANS

An exhibition of over 100 works by more than 30 artists, a survey of the evolution of the collage technique since its origins as a force in modern art, will open in the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City, on September 22. The exhibition, which was directed by Miss Margaret Miller of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, will remain on view on the third floor until November 28. The Museum is showing this comprehensive exhibition of collage not only for the intrinsic interest of the work itself but also because of the historical importance and influence of the technique.

For the purposes of the exhibition the term "collage," from the French for pasting or paper-hanging, has been interpreted broadly as a technique of cutting and pasting, whether the materials are newspaper, cloth, bus tickets or photographs and engravings. Sometimes the works are entirely of pasted materials; sometimes pasted materials are combined with drawing, water color or oil.

The technique of collage derived originally in 1912 from analytical cubism, but in the course of 35 years it has developed into popular and widespread use in billboards, posters and advertisements. It has been used by the proponents of such divergent movements as cubism, dada, constructivism and surrealism. Thus the exhibition presents a miniature history of the two main currents in twentieth-century painting: the cubist and abstract movements and the fantastic tradition of dada and surrealism.

The cubist originators in Paris in 1912 were Braque, Picasso and Gris. Among the dada group collage was taken up by Jean Arp and spread with the dada movement to Berlin where it became a form of protest against art as a cult. Here George Grosz and John Heartfield invented a new term for this technique - "montage," meaning, in German, mechanical engine fitting - to emphasize the anti-artistic nature of the process. They were the first to suggest the value of collage for the spontaneous release of creative impulse even when practiced by amateurs. At the same time - in 1918 - Kurt Schwitters made his first collage using dis-

carded materials. Max Ernst, active in the dada movement in Cologne, made a series of fantastic collages from halftones which anticipate the poetic irrationality and magic realism of surrealism.

Inspired by the example of Max Ernst the surrealists used collage, like automatic writing, as a means of evoking spontaneous subconscious imagery.

The director of the exhibition, Miss Margaret Miller, comments as follows:

"Collage as a technique and process of invention has played a decisive role in twentieth-century image making. From the beginning it was associated with the revolt against painting as an art of imitation. It played an important part in the construction of cubist images, which display the power of the mind to conceive and hold several aspects of an object simultaneously. It was in collage, as well, that another type of mental imagery first appeared, the free unregulated vision on the borderline of the conscious and unconscious. Through photomontage new types of composite images, bold, direct, communicable in a glance, were developed for the purposes of political propaganda and commercial advertising.

"Collage cannot be defined adequately as merely a technique of cutting and pasting, for its significance lies not in its technical eccentricity but in its relevance to two basic questions which have been raised by twentieth-century art: the nature of reality and the nature of painting itself. Collage has been the means through which the artist incorporates reality in the picture without imitating it."