

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SHOWS TWO MAJOR ACQUISITIONS

Two masterpieces of French art, among the foremost 20th-century works so far acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, will go on exhibition on Wednesday, April 6, on the ground floor and in the garden of the Museum. One is a magnificent late work by Maillol, The River, a sculpture of heroic size never before shown in this country. The other is Matisse's large canvas of 1911, The Red Studio, the most important work by this master to enter the Museum Collection. Both the Maillol and the Matisse were acquired through the Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

The River is Maillol's last great achievement, and one of his largest figures. It was begun before the war, probably late in 1938 or early 1939, and was intended as a monument to the famous pacifist writer, Henri Barbusse, in which the abolition of war was to be symbolized by the falling figure of a woman stabbed. The Barbusse monument was abandoned when the war started, but Maillol and his assistant, Robert Couturier, brought the sculpture to completion as The River. The plaster was finished late in 1943, a few months before Maillol's death at the age of 82. After the war, The River was cast by Rudier in lead strengthened with antimony. The River measures seven and one half feet in length, four and one half feet in height. Another lead cast has been acquired by the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris.

In 1911 Matisse painted a pair of large views of the interior of his studio at Clamart, near Paris. One of them, predominantly lavender in tone, was sold almost immediately to the great Russian collector, Sergei Shchukine of Moscow. The other, The Red Studio, now acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, was lent by the artist to New York's famous Armory Show early in 1913 where it was catalogued as no. 406, Panneau Rouge. The painting was also shown in the Chicago and Boston editions of the Armory Show during 1913, was then returned to France and remained in the artist's possession until the mid-twenties. At that time it was purchased directly from the artist by the English collector David Tennant who kept it hanging in the Gargoyle Club in London for many years. Tennant sold it early in the war to Georges Keller who brought it back to New York. It was not publicly exhibited until 1948 when it was shown at the Bignou Gallery, New York, and in the Matisse retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Red

studio measures five feet, eleven inches high by seven feet, two inches wide.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections, comments as follows:

"Maillol's most characteristic figures are calm, reposeful, even static. Even when they represent violent muscular strain, there is little movement; the action is self-contained, the arms bound behind the back, as in Chained Action, the torso of which may be seen in the Museum's sculpture galleries. Maillol was aware of his avoidance of movement; he even remarked to Judith Cladel as late as 1937, 'For my taste, there should be as little movement as possible in sculpture.'

"Yet within a year or so afterwards Maillol had conceived The River, a work of astonishing, almost reckless movement. Not only is the huge figure turning and twisting, her arms and legs outflung, but Maillol has balanced her on the very edge of the pedestal, a second radical departure from his usual architectural monumentality.

"We know that originally in designing this figure as a monument to Barbusse, Maillol had intended her as a dying figure stabbed in the back. The name The River is therefore an afterthought which scarcely explains the tragic violence of the pose. Yet the idea is not entirely new in Maillol's art. Going back to the mid-90s when Maillol was a painter, not a sculptor, we find that figures of women tumbling in the waves was the subject which most interested him. The River, a personification of moving water, is therefore a reversion in subject matter as well as in symbolic content to the work of Maillol's early maturity 40 years before.

"The River is probably Maillol's last completed work, a final magnificent flowering of bold invention and creative energy on the part of a man who was, in his generation, the world's greatest sculptor.

"Matisse was born in 1869, eight years after Maillol, but his career as a painter began a number of years before Maillol's as a sculptor. Matisse was 42 in 1911, the year he painted The Red Studio; he had been painting for 20 years. Three or four years before he had emerged from fauvism, an ambiguous and inconclusive style in which the contradictory influences of Gauguin's bold drawing and flat tones had struggled with the neo-impressionist's bright spots of broken color. Japanese prints, Persian pottery and the paintings of children helped him clarify and purify his style.

"In The Red Studio of 1911 there are no traces of impressionist color or of traditional European chiaroscuro modeling and cast shadow. Deep space is suggested by the foreshortened perspective of the floor line and furniture, but this suggestion of depth is contradicted by the elimination of all sense of solidity and gradations of light. Walls and floor form a continuous flat plane of color; the furniture exists only in outline. The table with its flowers and utensils, the chair, the sculpture stands, the paintings on the walls are distributed in a wonderfully free centrifugal composition which seems to move about the central stabilizing axis of the grandfather clock.

"The most striking feature of The Red Studio is, of course, the great uniform background of rust red. This background color is completely arbitrary, for in a similar painting of an adjacent view of the same studio, Matisse used pink and lavender tones for floor and walls. After the daring color and boldly scattered composition of The Red Studio, Matisse turned in the following years to a somewhat more austere and classic style."

Note: For the convenience of the critics a color reproduction of the companion piece to The Red Studio may be seen in the Publicity Department. The companion piece, formerly in the Shchukine collection and now in the Museum of Modern Western Art, Moscow, shows a different view of the studio but includes some of the same pictures on the walls.

Matisse's paintings which he reproduced in miniature in The Red Studio are, from left to right: Large Nude with a Collar, now destroyed; Nude (above), still in the artist's possession; Corsican Landscape; The Young Sailor, 1906, in Hans Seligman collection, Basel; Purple Cyclamens; Le Luxe, 1907, in Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris. The bronze sculpture on the stand is a variant of the Standing Woman in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Museum of Modern Art announces a special lecture by Daniel Henry Kahnweiler on "BRAQUE AND CUBISM" in the auditorium Tuesday evening, April 26, at 8:30.

Mr. Kahnweiler is the author of The Rise of Cubism and monographs on Derain, Vlaminck, Léger and Gris, as well as a contributor to Critique, Les Temps Modernes, Horizon and other French, English and German magazines. Director of the Galerie Leiris, Paris, he has had a distinguished career as a pioneer art dealer for more than four decades.

Members' tickets \$1.50 each including tax.

Public \$2.

A gallery of the Museum Collection on the second floor is hung with paintings by Picasso, Gris and Duchamp to illustrate the development of cubism between 1908 and 1914. Picasso's famous portrait of Clovis Sagot, 1909, lent by a private collector, is shown for the first time in America.