

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

SIXTEEN PAINTINGS AND 94 PRINTS NEWLY ACQUIRED BY MUSEUM TO GO ON EXHIBITION

Three famous canvases by Marc Chagall are included among 16 paintings and 89 prints recently acquired by the Museum of Modern Art and now placed on exhibition in the ground floor galleries to open to the public on October 26. Chagall's Crucifixion, one of his largest and most important works, was painted in Paris in 1912 and bought a year later by a Berlin collector. It has never before been seen in this country. Birthday is a poetic fantasy inspired by a visit Chagall's fiancée paid him in his studio shortly before they were married in 1915. In Over Vitebsk Chagall has painted a wintry view of his native town, and above it the looming shadowy figure of a legendary Jewish peddler. The three Chagalls have been purchased through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

Near the Chagall paintings the Museum has placed on view 94 prints by Chagall, including the lively etchings illustrating Gogol's Dead Souls acquired by the Museum's Print Room through the Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Purchase Fund.

The other recently acquired paintings include two compositions by American pioneers of abstract art, the Portrait of Marcel Duchamp, 1918, by Katherine Dreier and Synchromy, 1917, by Stanton MacDonald-Wright, Willis Avenue Bridge, 1940, by Ben Shahn, the gift of Lincoln Kirstein; and three works by younger Americans: Battle Wagon, 1946, by Lee Gatch, gift of Mrs. Charles Suydam Cutting; The Homely Protestant, 1948, by Robert Motherwell, acquired by exchange, and Moon and Shoals, 1949, by Reuben Tam, gift of Mr. Sam A. Lewisohn.

Dunes at Fehmarn, 1912, by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Man with a Melon, 1926, by Carl Hofer are both characteristic works by two of the best-known German expressionists. The Landscape Near Cassis, ca. 1907, by André Derain is from the French artist's best period. André Bauchant, the French gardener turned painter, intended his The Proclamation of American Independence, 1926, as a gesture of Franco-American friendship. It has been presented by Mme. Eve Daniel and Mme. Sibylle Cournand of New York in memory of their mother, Mme. Jeanne Bucher of Paris. Progression Pantaculaire, 1948, by Victor Brauner, a Roumanian living in Paris, is the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jean de Menil of Texas;

Snack for Two, 1944, by the controversial post-war French painter Jean Dubuffet, is the gift of Mrs. Saidie A. May of Baltimore. Renato Guttuso's Melon Eaters, 1948, was acquired by exchange from the recent Museum exhibition, "Twentieth-Century Italian Art."

Besides the etchings for Gogol's famous satire Dead Souls, the Chagall print acquisitions include drypoints from the series called My Life, published in 1923, the complete illustrations for the Seven Deadly Sins and selected pages from the Bible, La Fontaine's Fables and the Arabian Nights as well as all of Chagall's major independent prints. These prints which constitute a retrospective exhibition of Chagall's work over the past 30 years, are the gifts of Leo Auerbach, Albert Carman, Harry C. Oppenheimer, Bernard J. Reis and the artist himself or have been acquired through the A. Conger Goodyear Fund.

Other recent acquisitions previously announced and now on view on the ground floor of the Museum include Picasso's Three Musicians and a number of modern Italian paintings and sculptures.

A complete check-list with notes on the acquisitions will be available to the press on Tuesday afternoon, October 25, at the press preview.

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

SIXTEEN PAINTINGS RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY MUSEUM

Notes by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections

CHECK LIST

BAUCHANT, Andre. French, born 1873.

THE PROCLAMATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE. 1926. Oil on canvas, 30 x 46 5/8".

Gift of Mme Eve Daniel and Mme. Sibylle Cournand, in memory of their mother, Mme. Jeanne Bucher

Bauchant has worked as a field-hand, gardener and cartographer but since about 1920 has spent much of his time painting. He is one of the few living artists of reputation who has been a "history painter." Besides many classical subjects including the Barge of Cleopatra in the Museum Collection, he has painted scenes from American history of which this is the best known. The figures from left to right are Rochambeau, Franklin, Washington and Lafayette.

Madame Bucher was a distinguished Paris publisher and dealer who had many friends in America.

BRAUNER, Victor. Rumanian, born 1903. Lives in Paris.

PANTACULAR PROGRESSION. 1948. Encaustic, 19 3/4 x 27 1/2".

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil

During the 1930s Brauner was associated with the surrealists and has continued to paint in their tradition of fantastic invention, influenced in his recent painting, by medieval picture books of myth, magic and fabulous fauna.

CHAGALL, Marc. French, born Russia 1889.

CALVARY. 1912. Oil on canvas, 68 3/4 x 75 3/4".

Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

The Calvary was painted in Paris in 1912 and exhibited in the spring of 1913 in Berlin, where it was sold to the collector Bernard Koehler. The painting remained almost legendary because it was never lent to an exhibition until 1933, after the death of the owner. It has never been shown in the United States. Franz Marc is said to have admired it greatly.

This is the first and greatest of a series of paintings of Golgotha or Calvary. Chagall has invented personal and poetic variations on traditional iconography which he knew through Russian icons. Of Christ he writes: "The symbolic figure of Christ was always very near to me and I was determined to bring it out of my young heart. I wanted to show Christ as an innocent child. Now I see him otherwise." Of the two figures by the cross he writes: "When I painted Christ's parents I was thinking of my own parents. My mother seemed about half the size of my father...as I wrote in my book Ma Vie. The bearded man is the child's father. He is my father and everybody's father."

Chagall explains further that the Judas figure is his invention - an apparition which frightened him a little so that he "gave him a ladder because he wanted to bring him down to a more familiar level."

The background figure in the sailboat is intended "to suggest an element of tranquility in contrast to tragedy." In the same way "the river, which is the river of my native town, flows very peacefully."

Chagall concludes his description with these words: "When I painted this picture in Paris I was freeing myself psychologically and plastically from the conception of the icon painters and from Russian art in general."

BIRTHDAY. 1915. Oil on cardboard, 31 3/4 x 39 1/4"

Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest

A Russian citizen, Chagall returned from Paris to his native Vitebsk at the outbreak of war in 1914. There, on July 25, 1915, he married his wife Bella (who died in New York in 1944).

The Birthday, or Anniversary, was painted on Chagall's birthday, July 7, a couple of weeks before his marriage. Bella had brought him a bouquet of flowers. As she entered his studio, Chagall made the pencil sketch which he has recently given the Museum, and which hangs near the painting. The painting was done on the same day.

In her biography published in New York in 1947, Bella Chagall recalls the incident: "The flowers are still in my hands...but soon I forget the flowers. You fall upon your canvas which quivers under your hand. You work with your brushes. You pour color - red, blue, white and black. You carry me away with the stream of color. Suddenly - you tear me up from the earth and even you stand on one foot as if the room had become too small for you. You jump into the air...You float up among the rafters. You turn your head and you twist mine around too....I listen as you sing a song to me with your soft low voice. Even your eyes sing. And both together we rise over the clean little room and float away...the walls hung with colored cloth whirl around us and our heads whirl...."

"How do you like my picture?" You ask and move aside from the canvas. You look at your picture and at me: 'Is there still much to do? You can't leave it that way, can you?' I answer. 'Tell me what more should I do?' you say. You wait and are afraid of what I may tell you. 'It's very good - you float away so beautifully. We'll call it the Birthday....'

This is the original version of the Birthday. A second version, painted in 1923, is in the collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

STUDY FOR BIRTHDAY. 1915. Pencil, 9 x 11 1/2".

Gift of the artist.

OVER VITEBSK. 1915-20. Oil on canvas, 26 3/8 x 36 1/2".

Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

The first version, now in a private collection in Basel, was painted in Vitebsk shortly after Chagall returned there in 1914. This is a replica completed about 1920 before Chagall left Russia to return to Paris. When Chagall was asked whether the picture did not represent the Wandering Jew he replied that he had not intended any symbolism in the painting, but that in spite of himself he had indeed made a picture of that legendary figure.

DERAIN, Andre. French, born 1880.

LANDSCAPE NEAR CASSIS. ca. 1910. Oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 21 5/8".

Purchase Fund.

DREIER, Katherine S. American, born 1877.

PORTRAIT OF MARCEL DUCHAMP. 1918. Oil on canvas, 18 x 32".

As a painter, Katherine Dreier studied in Brooklyn, Paris, Munich and Florence. Since 1911 she has exhibited in many European and American cities including the Armory Show held in New York in 1913. The Marcel Duchamp is one of several "abstract" portraits.

Miss Dreier founded the "Société Anonyme - Museum of Modern Art 1920", and has been its active president since. She organized many exhibitions in New York and elsewhere throughout the country during the '20s and '30s. In 1941 the Société Anonyme Collection was presented to Yale University where it is now displayed.

Marcel Duchamp, the painter of the famous Nude Descending the Staircase helped Miss Dreier organize the Société Anonyme and was its first secretary.

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DUBUFFET, Jean. French, born 1901.

SNACK FOR TWO. 1944. Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 23 3/4".

Gift of Mrs. Saidie A. May

Dubuffet received some academic training as an artist at the age of 17. Until 1944 he worked privately in the time he could spare from his commercial work. Since then he has had 4 one-man exhibitions in Paris and 2 in New York. His art has been influenced by that of Miro, Klee, and children's drawings.

GATCH, Lee. American, born 1902.

BATTLE WAGON. 1946. Oil on canvas, 14 1/8 x 28 1/8".

Gift of Mrs. Charles Suydam Cutting

Gatch was born in Baltimore and studied painting in New York with John Sloan and in Paris. He has had many one-man shows in New York and Washington, and is represented in the Phillips Memorial Gallery Washington, the Pennsylvania Academy and the museums of Detroit and St. Louis. Gatch writes that the "conception of this picture took place in the fall of 1945 when the Pacific Fleet visited New York harbor....I was returning from a launch trip....It was deep dusk. I had just mounted the pier and caught a glimpse of the old battleship New York strongly silhouetted against the sunset....I made a rough sketch and painted the picture in the spring of 1946."

GUTTUSO, Renato. Italian, born 1912.

MELON EATERS. 1948. Oil on canvas, 35 x 45 5/8".

Purchase Fund (by exchange)

Guttuso, a Sicilian, moved to Rome at the age of 19 to become a painter. In 1939 he took part in the progressive Corrente movement of Milan. During the German occupation he was active in the Resistance, and in 1945 he published a book of bitterly anti-German drawings, Gott Mit Uns. Since 1947 he has been the leading painter of the New Front, a vanguard of mainly abstract painters and sculptors. He is the best-known Italian painter of his generation.

The Melon Eaters has been exchanged for the Maffia purchased from the artist over a year ago.

HOFER, Carl. German, born 1878.

MAN WITH A MELON. 1926. Oil on canvas, 42 1/4 x 28 7/8".

Purchase Fund

Hofer studied at the Karlsruhe Academy and in Paris where he worked for several years before 1914. He has lived in Berlin since 1919 where he was successful as a painter and teacher at the Berlin Academy. The Nazis dismissed him as an "art Bolshevik" in 1933, forbade him to exhibit, and threw his paintings out of more than 20 museums. He has resumed his teaching position since the end of the recent war.

Often classed as an expressionist, most of his work is in a calmer, more classical tradition influenced by Puvis de Chavannes, Cezanne and Derain.

KIRCHNER, Ernst Ludwig. German, 1880-1938.

DUNES AT FEHMARN. 1912. Oil on canvas, 33 3/4 x 37 1/2".

Purchase Fund

Kirchner studied architecture in Dresden, but turned to painting in 1905. With Schmidt-Rottluff and Heckel he formed the Bruecke group of which he was perhaps the most forceful and original member. As early as 1903 he worked in an expressionist style influenced by Hodler and Munch, then by Matisse and primitive art. Threatened by tuberculosis he moved to Davos in Switzerland in 1918 and died there in 1938.

The Museum owns another painting by Kirchner, The Street, 1913, formerly in the National Gallery, Berlin.

MACDONALD-WRIGHT, Stanton. American, born 1890.

SYNCHROMY. 1917. Oil, 31 x 24".

Given anonymously

Macdonald-Wright was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, and studied in Paris. Together with Morgan Russell he founded the Synchronist movement in 1913. They put on a Synchronist show in Munich in June 1913, and in Paris in November.

He returned to this country in 1916, exhibited at the gallery of Alfred Stieglitz in 1917, and has lived in California since 1918.

Synchronism, the first of the American abstract movements, was extolled by Willard Huntington Wright in his book, Modern Painting, Its Tendency and Meaning, New York, 1915.

This painting is the first Synchronist canvas to enter the Museum Collection. It is similar to the earliest Synchronist paintings but is more refined in color.

MOTHERWELL, Robert. American, born 1915.

THE HOMELY PROTESTANT. 1948. Oil on composition board, 48 1/8 x 24".

Purchase Fund (by exchange)

Motherwell was born in Aberdeen, Washington, and studied at Stanford, Harvard and Columbia. He had no academic training as an artist. He has had one-man shows in San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Paris, and is represented in the museums of Baltimore, San Francisco and West Palm Beach, the Fogg, Whitney and Smith College museums, and the Art of This Century Collection. The Museum acquired a collage, Pancho Villa, Dead and Alive, in 1944.

SHAHN, Ben. American, born Russia 1898.

WILLIS AVENUE BRIDGE. 1940. Tempera on paper over composition board, 23 x 31 3/8".

Gift of Lincoln Kirstein

Shahn came to this country from Russia at the age of 8 and grew up in Brooklyn where he worked as a lithographer's apprentice. He studied at the National Academy in 1922, and traveled in Europe in the late '20s where he was influenced by Rouault. He had his first one-man show in New York in 1930; Sacco-Vanzetti series exhibited 1932; Tom Mooney series, 1933; prohibition series, 1934; mural designs for Riker's Island penitentiary rejected by Municipal Art Commission in 1935. Murals: Roosevelt, New Jersey, 1938; Bronx Central Annex post office, 1939; Social Security Building, Washington, 1942; posters for O.W.I., 1943; one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art, 1947.

The theme of Willis Avenue Bridge was used again in a mural in the Social Security Building, Washington.

TAM, Reuben. American, born Hawaii, 1916.

MOON AND SHOALS. 1949. Oil on canvas, 30 x 34 7/8".

Gift of Sam A. Lewisohn

Tam was born in Hawaii and studied in Honolulu, San Francisco and New York. He was a Guggenheim Fellow, and now teaches in the Brooklyn Museum Art School.

Moon and Shoals was suggested by a view of the sea from Monhegan Island, Maine.