

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

## MODERN CLASSICS AND CONTROVERSIAL AMERICAN PAINTINGS

### RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY MUSEUM TO BE EXHIBITED

Early 20th-century masterpieces and highly controversial works by younger American abstract painters are included among newly acquired paintings to be exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, starting on March 29. The exhibition will remain on view on the first floor of the Museum through May 7. In addition, a large Brancusi "Bird in Space," just arrived from the artist's Paris studio, and Mondrian's "Trafalgar Square," both loaned by John L. Senior, Jr., will be shown in the third floor hall during the same period.

Among the earlier 20th-century classics is Modigliani's large "Reclining Nude," painted about 1918, and generally considered the best figure by this modern master of the nude. The picture was purchased through the Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. A de Chirico acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest - the "Sacred Fish" - is an outstanding expression of the uncanny poetry characteristic of the Metaphysical School. "Sacred Fish," painted about 1917, was greatly admired by the leaders of surrealism.

Picasso's "Seated Bather" of 1929 is a striking canvas of the artist's "bone" period during which he invented fantastic skeletons and placed them ironically against serene blue seas and skies. This is a particularly valuable acquisition since there is no other picture like it in the Collection, and it is probably the most important example in the U.S. of this period of the artist's work.

Works by younger American abstract expressionists are striking additions to the Museum Collection. The late Arshile Gorky's "Agony," one of his last and perhaps his best painting, expresses pain abstractly through smoldering reds accented by sharp barbs of blue and scarlet. It was doubtless inspired by his own sufferings from cancer. Robert Motherwell's "Western Air," reminiscent of the artist's youth, is expressive of the dry pure color and the shadowless clarity of the desert at high noon. At the same time the title is a pun suggestion that the picture is to be enjoyed as music.

Jackson Pollock's huge, vehement canvas is painted largely with aluminum paints and heavy blacks that suggest macadam running off

the sides of a newly tarred road. Smudgy hand-prints and a maze of eye-scratching lines create a frenzied surface with emotional overtones. In Balcomb Greene's "Execution: First Version" a half-formed figure emerges from the background of veiled greys and olives marking this painter's recent trend away from pure abstraction.

A new name to most people in this country is Roger van Rogger, a young Belgian who has recently been living in Brazil where he painted "Descent from the Cross," a rich, carefully constructed canvas of mural dimensions.

André Masson's "Meditation on an Oak Leaf" is a brilliant study of autumn made shortly after the French painter came to this country early in the war and was impressed by fall foliage in Connecticut. The lobed shape of the oak leaf surrounds the composition and then recurs in many sizes and colors throughout the picture as a theme with variations.

Contrasting sharply with these abstract paintings, Ben Shahn's "Pacific Beach," gift of Philip L. Goodwin, demonstrates how the loneliness of death can be dramatized by almost unbearably repetitious realistic detail.

Other acquisitions include a recent Venetian scene by Leonid; a small early oil by Georges Rouault of one of his favorite subjects, the clown, given to the Museum by Vladimir Horowitz, and a modest but subtle composition of bottles and jugs by Giorgio Morandi, one of the greatest living Italian painters.

The two important works of art on extended loan to the Museum from John L. Senior, Jr., are the largest and probably the final version of Brancusi's famous "Bird in Space," and "Trafalgar Square" begun by Mondrian in London in 1939 and completed in New York in 1943 not long before his death.

Two major sculptures, Brancusi's large "Fish" and Roszak's "Spectre of Kitty Hawk" will be held over during this showing from a previous recent acquisitions exhibition.

A complete check list of new acquisitions and extended loans follows:

New Acquisitions:

de CHIRICO, Giorgio. Italian, born Greece 1888.  
SACRED FISH. 1917? Oil on canvas. Acquired through the  
Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

GORKY, Arshile. American, born Russia 1904; died 1948.  
AGONY. 1947. Oil on canvas. Purchase Fund

GREENE, Balcomb. American, born 1904.

EXECUTION: FIRST VERSION. 1948. Oil on canvas. Purchase Fund.

LEONID. Russian, born 1896.

MALAMOCCO. 1948. Oil on canvas. Purchase Fund.

Note: Painted from studies made in Venice in 1948.

MASSON, André. French, born 1896.

MEDITATION ON AN OAK LEAF. 1942. Tempera, pastel and sand on canvas. Given anonymously.

MODIGLIANI, Amedeo. Italian, 1884-1920.

RECLINING NUDE. 1918? Oil on canvas. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

MORANDI, Giorgio. Italian, born 1890.

STILL LIFE. 1938. Oil on canvas. Purchase Fund.

MOTHERWELL, Robert. American, born 1915.

WESTERN AIR. 1946-47. Oil on canvas. Purchase Fund (by exchange)

Note: Acquired in exchange for "The Homely Protestant" exhibited in 1949.

PICASSO, Pablo. Spanish, born 1881.

SEATED BATHER. 1929. Oil on canvas. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

POLLOCK, Jackson. American, born 1912.

NO. 1. 1948. Oil on canvas. Purchase Fund.

van ROGGER, Roger. Belgian, born 1914.

DESCENT FROM THE CROSS. 1946-48. Oil on canvas. Given anonymously

ROUAULT, Georges. French, born 1871.

CLOWN. c. 1907. Oil on canvas. Gift of Vladimir Horowitz.

SHAHN, Ben. American, born Russia 1898.

PACIFIC LANDSCAPE. 1945. Tempera on composition board. Gift of Philip L. Goodwin.

#### Extended Loans:

BRANCUSI, Constantin. Rumanian, born 1876.

BIRD IN SPACE, ~~1943. Bronze~~ Extended loan from John L. Senior, Jr.

MONDRIAN, Piet. Dutch, 1872-1944.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE. 1939-43. Oil on canvas. Extended loan from John L. Senior, Jr.