

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 143  
FOR RELEASE:  
Wednesday, Dec. 6, 1961

PRESS PREVIEW:  
Tuesday, Dec. 5, 1961  
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

More than 255 paintings, drawings and prints by three 19th century masters of symbolism, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art from December 6 through February 4. Dominated by poetic fantasy at a time when the powerful trends were naturalism and impressionism, the breadth of imagination and freedom of expression of these artists point to present day surrealism, even to non-representational art and has resulted in a recent revival of interest in them.

The exhibition emphasizes work seldom or never shown in this country: Redon's imaginary subjects, and Moreau's almost unknown ventures into a type of abstraction far more radical than anything that was being done in his day. Bresdin, the teacher of Redon, who has been almost forgotten in the intervening years, is represented by a selection of his prints and drawings.

Redon, Moreau and Bresdin is part of the Museum's continuing program of exploring aspects of 19th century art which have a special relevance for our own time. The current exhibition follows one of work by the 20th century master, Matisse, and The Art of Assemblage, an investigation of a style increasingly practiced by young artists here and abroad since World War II. In turn, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin will be followed by a retrospective devoted to Dubuffet, leading postwar French artist, and later in the season by a large Picasso show. Throughout the year paintings from the Museum's own 20th century collection of more than 1500 works by artists of nearly 40 different nationalities remains on view, as well as sculptures, drawings and prints.

John Rewald, well-known art scholar and author of the newly issued History of Impressionism is director of the Redon, Moreau and Bresdin exhibition. He was assisted by Miss Dore Ashton, New York critic who assembled the Moreau section and Harold Joachim, Curator at the Chicago Art Institute who selected the Redon graphics and the Bresdin material. All have contributed to the text for the book published by the Museum in connection with the exhibition\*.

Redon (1840-1916) the most famous of the three artists, always insisted that his imagination had its roots in the observation of nature. "Thus was born that bizarre universe of improbable creatures vested with a life of their own," writes John Rewald. "There were eyes floating in the air similar to immense balloons, heads ascending into space, carried by their ears shaped like the wings of bats, flowers with  
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\*ODILON REDON--GUSTAVE MOREAU--RODOLPHE BRESLIN by John Rewald, Dore Ashton and Harold Joachim. 184 pages, 123 plates (31 in color). Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by Doubleday and Co., Inc. Cloth, \$7.50; paper, \$3.75.

melancholy faces emerging from the marshlands, gruesome polyps with forelorn grins, eggs resembling bald heads emptily staring from outsized cups, spiders that smiled and spiders that wept, skulls among ruins and skeletons with bare branches sprouting from their domes, deathly pale masks growing on trees, cactuses with human features, bristling with thorns, orbs engimatically shining among dark tree trunks, worms ending in one-eyed balls."

Born in Bordeaux, Redon spent his childhood at Peyrelebade, an isolated 16th century estate surrounded by an abandoned park to which he returned regularly in later life and where most of the charcoal drawings were made. In Bordeaux he studied under Bresdin whose dilapidated studio was opposite a cemetery where Goya was buried and later continued his apprenticeship in Paris.

Recognition came slowly. Not until he was 54 did he have a really important one-man show. But at the Armory show in 1913 he had the largest representation of any artist. One of the works shown there, Silence, was bought by Lillie P. Bliss and is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

Artists, poets, musicians and writers were Redon's associates and admirers. Mallarmé was an extremely close friend and Huysmans helped him and Moreau gain a wider audience. Calling him "painter of the fantastic," he wrote: "Here is the nightmare transported into art. If you intermingle, in gruesome surroundings, somnambulist figures...transfixed by terror, you may perhaps get an idea of the bizarre talent of this singular artist."

Redon is represented in the exhibition by 273 works dating from 1865 to 1914. The fifty-five drawings include many charcoals never shown before and some of the minute pencil drawings made from nature lent by the artist's son. A dozen late watercolors and many famous paintings and mural decorations are shown.

Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) better known now as the teacher of Matisse and Rouault, was widely admired during his lifetime as a painter of jewel-laden literary compositions on allegorical themes. He was a member of the Academy of Fine Arts and much sought after as a teacher. At his death he left his house and its contents, including his paintings carefully framed and mounted in intricate folding walls and cabinets, to the state. Successive developments in art obscured his fame, however, and his work was dismissed in the early 20th century as too literary, the decadent end of the romantic tradition.

The recent interest in Moreau results not only from a new generation looking again at work of the past, but more important, from the first sight of the vast secret oeuvre that Moreau never publically exhibited during his lifetime. As Miss Ashton points out in the catalog, although the Moreau museum has been in existence for 60

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years, its dusty interior has been only sporadically investigated by artists and critics. Kandinsky is reported to have visited it in 1906, André Breton to have gone there at the age of 16 (later claiming Moreau as a forerunner of Surrealism). The first large public display was last summer when the Louvre exhibited 137 paintings taken from the house.

In addition to the paintings known and shown in his lifetime, Moreau framed, mounted and kept more than 200 smaller watercolors and oils in which either no identifiable subject exists or exists so ambiguously that it verges on abstraction. Whether or not he thought of himself as a pioneer abstract painter, the fact remains, Miss Ashton says, that he instinctively used abstract means adumbrated in the 19th century and realized in the 20th:

It is in the watercolors, and a few of the oil sketches, that Moreau's intuition of the plastic use of abstraction is best revealed....In them he could relinquish his lexicon of assigned symbols in favor of floating cosmic visions so nearly like the visions of today's abstract painters. Detail surrenders to the generality; allegory to mystery; representation to suggestion....

Among the watercolors, Narcissus...is a prodigy of unorthodox technique. Who before Moreau had thought of squeezing impasto threads of color directly from the tube? Who had applied the whiplashes of greens, blues and scarlets in such intricate mazes? And who had used the rough tooth of the paper to break the flow of watercolor movement, to make the forms recede and charge forward beneath the dry-brush touches spread rhythmically throughout the painting?

And again, describing Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice, never publically exhibited during his life, she says:

It is largely through the paint itself that Moreau conjures the pervasive atmosphere of sadness. Moreau's contemporaries would have recoiled before the red-madder trees hemming in the foreground. Not until the Fauves were non-naturalistic colors used so daringly. These trees Moreau laid on with a hasty palette knife, turning and twisting his strokes to suggest the density of leafage, and painting the fringes in a lighter red to trap the last light of the sinking white sun. Above the trees, a turbid white-to-deep-blue sky suggests the coldness of dying day.

He is represented in the exhibition by 22 oils and 18 watercolors and drawings.

The little-known Rodolphe Bresdin (1825-1885) teacher of Redon, explored the limited world of black and white with the intensity of a visionary who was also an acute observer of reality. The son of a metal polisher, he lived in Paris, in the south, and in Bordeaux where Redon often visited him. His dream of coming to America where he could communicate with a savagely magnificent nature and gain freedom from economic bondage was realized in the 70s when he won a contest to design an American banknote and gained free passage. He returned to France in 1876 and spent his last years in solitude outside Paris. In January 1885 he was found dead in his cold garret room.

Bresdin is represented in the exhibition by 42 etchings, lithographs and drawings, the majority drawn from the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago where his work

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was first shown in this country in 1931. Describing these prints, Mr. Joachim writes:

Because of the extremely delicate and minute detail, Bresdin's work demands concentrated unhurried study and above all, a poetic sensibility and mind as attuned to the mysteries of nature as his own....Many of his drawings are done with a fine pen in India ink, and though they are generally of small size, their sureness and originality of line are such that they could stand--like the drawings of Callot--any degree of magnification without needing it.... the artist's favorite theme, The Flight into Egypt, ...runs through his entire work like a leitmotif. Ghostly gnarled trees and the intricate lattice work of naked, weirdly animated branches against a clouded sky set a somber mood which is relieved only by the busy flow of the little stream, a symbol of life and hope in the midst of desolation.

The Museum of Modern Art is open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sundays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Thursday evenings until 10 p.m.

Museum Auditorium Program8:30 P.M.

Jan. 11 - ODILON REDON: IDEALISM AND SYMBOLISM.

Speaker: Dr. Robert Goldwater,  
Professor at New York  
University.

Members

Non-members

\$ 1.50

\$ 2.00

Tickets include admission to Museum and Galleries

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Photographs and additional information are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N.Y. CI 5-8900.

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK 19

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CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

Odilon Redon's 1890 painting "Symbolic Head" loaned by the Cleveland collector, Peter Andrews Putnam, to the exhibition, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, through February 4. The exhibition, consisting of over 255 paintings, drawings and prints by the three 19th century masters of symbolism, will also be shown at The Art Institute of Chicago next spring.

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For further information contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City. Circle 5-8900

Cleveland Press  
Plain Dealer



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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK 19

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FOR RELEASE

Friday, December 8, 1961

The Yale University Art Gallery has loaned "Crucifixion," a charcoal drawing by Odilon Redon, to the Museum of Modern Art's current exhibition, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin. The exhibition, which will remain on view through February 4, includes over 255 paintings, drawings and prints by the three 19th century masters of symbolism.

The exhibition emphasizes work seldom or never shown in the United States: Redon's imaginary subjects, and Moreau's almost unknown ventures into a type of abstraction far more radical than anything that was being done in his day. Bresdin, the teacher of Redon, who has been almost forgotten in the intervening years, is represented by a selection of his prints and drawings.

Dominated by poetic fantasy at a time when the powerful trends were naturalism and impressionism, the breadth of imagination and freedom of expression of these artists point to present day surrealism, even to non-representational art and has resulted in a recent revival of interest in them.

John Rewald, well-known art scholar and author of the newly issued History of Impressionism directed the show. He was assisted by Miss Dore Ashton, New York critic who assembled the Moreau section and Harold Joachim, Curator at the Chicago Art Institute who selected the Redon graphics and the Bresdin material.

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Further information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York. CI 5-8900.

New Haven Register  
Journal-Courier

Bridgeport Post  
Herald

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## SPECIAL TO DETROIT PAPERS

Detroit art collectors, Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Levin, have loaned "The Virgin of Dawn," an 1890 painting by Odilon Redon to the Museum of Modern Art's current exhibition, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin, on view through February 4. Also included in the exhibition, which consists of 255 works by the three masters of 19th century symbolism, is "Butterflies," a Redon painting on loan from the Detroit Institute of Arts.

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Detroit News  
Free Press

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## SPECIAL TO MONTREAL PAPERS

Mr. and Mrs. Lazarus Phillips of Montreal have loaned Gothic Window, a 1900 painting by Odilon Redon, to the Museum of Modern Art's current exhibition, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin. The exhibition, which will remain on view through February 4, includes over 255 paintings, drawings and prints by the three 19th century masters of symbolism.

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Montreal Star  
Le Petit Journal  
Gazette



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Sixty-four works from the Art Institute of Chicago have been loaned to the Museum of Modern Art's current exhibition, Redon, Moreau and Bresdin, on view through February 4. Included are a painting and twenty-nine prints and drawings by Odilon Redon, the most famous of the three nineteenth century French symbolists, and 35 prints and drawings by Redon's teacher, Rodolphe Bresdin, whose work is little known.

Among the private collectors who have loaned works to the exhibition are Richard L. Feigen, Allan Frumkin, Mr. and Mrs. Harold X. Weinstein, all of Chicago, and Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf of Winnetka.

The exhibition, which will be shown next spring at the Art Institute of Chicago, was directed by John Rewald, well known art scholar and author of the newly issued History of Impressionism. He was assisted by Harold Joachim, Curator at the Art Institute, who selected the Redon graphics and the Bresdin material and by Dore Ashton who assembled the Moreau section. All have contributed to the text for the book published by the Museum in connection with the exhibition.

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Winnetka Talk  
Chicago Tribune  
Sun-Times  
Daily News  
Chicago's American