

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

No. 63

FOR RELEASE:

Saturday, June 17, 1967

The Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Janis Collection, consisting of 100 paintings and sculpture by three generations of 20th century artists, has been given to The Museum of Modern Art by Mr. Janis on terms that the Museum describes as extraordinarily generous and farsighted.

After the initial showing of the collection at the Museum, scheduled for January 1968, the works will travel to other museums for two years. Thereafter, the Museum is free to determine when and which works it will exhibit. Ten years after the donor's death, the Museum has the right to dispose of any of the works to acquire others providing that the new acquisitions are consistent with the spirit of the Janis Collection including the future current vanguard.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections, said:

In its size, breadth of taste, carefully considered balance, and immediate accessibility, the Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Janis Collection of painting and sculpture is unequalled among the great gifts of works of art received by The Museum of Modern Art.

There are, I believe, two great paintings in the Janis Collection. Bought by the collector in the early 1930's, Picasso's magnificent Artist and His Studio of 1928 is remarkable for its intensity and complex invention. Perhaps of greater historic importance is Boccioni's Dynamism of a Football Player of 1913. Gigantic in scale, furious in energy, it is the culminating painting by the leader of the Italian Futurists.

The importance to the Museum of these capital paintings is obvious. Of great interest, too, are lesser works of exceptional quality, for instance a remarkable 1914 Mondrian, subtle in color and surface and radically different from the five later paintings in the Janis Collection; two Cubist Picassos of 1913 and 1914; Klee's Actor's Mask; and a small Dali.

(more)

of 1929, a work of his best vintage.

Many other paintings have a special value because they fill gaps in the Museum's Collection. Previously, for example, there was no canvas by the excellent abstract French painter Herbin, and none by the American pop artist Rosenquist. By good luck, none of four Légers duplicates the sixteen Légers in the Museum's Collection. The Cubist Delaunay was badly needed and so were Rauschenberg's Marilyn Monroe, the Dubuffet from the Corps de Dame series, Arp's marble Pre-Adamic Doll, and van Doesburg's late masterpiece, a painting which complements the Museum's two early works by the leader of the Dutch Stijl group.

There are a number of other works of exceptional and varied value to the Museum, but such is the overall quality and relevance of the Janis Collection that what may seem superfluous at first thought will be very valuable in supplying material for study in depth, freshening the Museum's galleries with unfamiliar works by familiar artists, and making possible loans to other institutions and to traveling exhibitions -- especially those touring abroad -- which are now starved for material in the field of recent American painting, so richly represented in the Janis Collection.

The value to the Museum rests not only in the collection itself, but in the generous conditions made by the donor. Although he will partially own the collection for years to come, Mr. Janis is willing to let the Museum have the use of the paintings for exhibition in New York and elsewhere in this country and abroad, whenever the Museum wishes. Furthermore, with concern for posterity, Mr. Janis has handsomely agreed that ten years after his death, the Museum, following careful consideration, may sell or exchange works in the collection so that new paintings and sculptures may be acquired in the name and spirit of the donors. The Museum of Modern Art appreciates the generous way in which Mr. Janis

(more)

has given his collection as much as it does the collection itself.

In making the gifts, Sidney Janis said: "That the Janis Collection should find a home at a great museum has long been my hope and happily the museum of my first love, The Museum of Modern Art, has graciously accepted it.

"Late in the '20s when my wife and I began to collect, we had an idea to acquire significant examples by the more challenging 20th century artists. As the Collection grew and new artists came into view, the work of the most promising (frequently the most difficult) of these younger artists was added. With the rise of still another generation this activity was to continue, and so today the Collection includes works by recognized artists, with notable exceptions, from Cubism onward, including the naifs, through Abstract Expressionism to Pop and Op."

The Collection is being given to the Museum in fractional installments over a 20-year period.

Sidney Janis, who is now 72, and his wife, Harriet, who died in 1963, began to collect 20th century art in the late '20s. In 1934 their collection was shown at the Walker Art Center and then toured other museums including the Chicago Arts Club.

During the '30s and early '40s, Mr. Janis was primarily active as a collector, lecturer and writer. In 1939 he retired from the business he owned, M'Lord Shirt Company, to devote all his time to art. He was a member of the Advisory Committee of The Museum of Modern Art from 1933 until the early '40s. In 1939 he was instrumental in bringing Picasso's Guernica to this country as a benefit exhibition for the Spanish War Refugees. Subsequently the mural went to The Museum of Modern Art where it remains today on extended loan from the artist. Three years later he helped organize an International Surrealist exhibition for the benefit of the French War Relief. His first book was published in 1942, "They Taught Themselves," biographical accounts and analysis of contemporary primitive painting. His second book "Abstract and Surrealist Art in America." was published in 1944, and in 1946, with his wife, he wrote "Picasso: The Recent Years," dealing with the artist's life and art during the German Occupation. Mrs. Janis also co-authored with Rudi Blesh, a history of
(more)

early jazz, called "They All Played Ragtime," a monograph on Willem de Kooning and "Collage: Personalities, Concepts, Techniques."

In 1948 Janis opened his now famous art gallery on East 57 Street. His own collection, however, did not become part of the stock but remained intact, with additions during the '50s and '60s.

Mr. Janis had previously given the Museum Collection a Matisse bronze from the Jeannette series.

Something of the richness of the Collection may be suggested by briefly classifying its contents: There are ten paintings by three of the original Cubists: Picasso (5), Léger (4), Delaunay (1); one by the Italian Futurist, Boccioni, and six by other early 20th century artists, Klee (2), Jawlensky, MacDonald-Wright, Torres-Garcia; ten paintings by the earlier masters of geometric abstract painting--Albers, van Doesburg, Herbin, Lissitsky, Kandinsky, and works by Mondrian (6)--as well as the younger painters Vasarely, and Kelly; nineteen works by the Surrealists and related artists, de Chirico, Duchamp, Arp (4), Ernst, Brauner, Bellmer, Schwitters (5), Magritte, Dali (2), Matta, and the younger painters, Fahlstrom, Rauschenberg, Johns, and Yves Klein; and eight works by Giacometti (3) and Dubuffet (5). Of the New York School of Abstract Expressionists there are eleven works by Gorky (2), de Kooning (3), Rothko, Still, Pollock and Kline; nine works by pop and related artists including Lichtenstein, Marisol, Oldenburg (2), Rosenquist, Segal, Warhol (2), Wesselmann; a group of thirteen modern primitive or naive paintings which have greatly interested Mr. Janis, including Eilshemius (3), Kane, Vivin, and Hirshfield (6).

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 245-3200.