

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ANNOUNCES RECEIPT  
OF MAJOR GIFT FROM THE ESTATE OF  
JOHN HAY WHITNEY

The Painting and Sculpture Committee of The Museum of Modern Art gratefully accepted into the Museum Collection on Monday, February 14, a gift of eight oil paintings from the Estate of John Hay Whitney, it was announced today by Richard E. Oldenburg, Director of the Museum. Foremost among these pictures--which range from Neo-Impressionist works by Georges Seurat and Theo Van Rysselberghe to works by Maurice Utrillo and Rufino Tamayo--are two superb Picassos from the Gertrude Stein collection dating from the 18 months that followed completion of the Demoiselles d'Avignon, and one of the greatest of Balthus's canvases. "The Museum, its Trustees and Staff are deeply grateful for the gift of these wonderful paintings," said Mr. Oldenburg, "which represents yet another instance of the extraordinary generosity and thoughtfulness shown this institution by Mr. and Mrs. Whitney, their family and associates." Prior to this gift, Mr. Whitney had donated a number of works to the Collection in his own name, among them Henri Matisse's Goldfish and Sculpture and Edward Hopper's Night Windows.

The eight paintings are: The Living Room by Balthus; Still Life with Fruit and Glass and Head of a Sleeping Woman by Picasso; Le Port de Cette by Van Rysselberghe; The English Channel at Grandcamp by Seurat; Woman by Tamayo; La Rue des Abbesses by Utrillo; and Embroidering by the Window by Edouard Vuillard.

"No addition to the Museum Collection could be more appropriate than Picasso's brilliantly painted Head of a Sleeping Woman," stated William Rubin,

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Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, "a nude whose corruscating colors mark it as one of those postludes to Les Demoiselles d'Avignon that would ultimately lead to The Hermitage's famous Nude with Drapery."

In Still Life with Fruit and Glass, we see Picasso at a point on his way to the development of Analytic Cubism when the influence of Cezanne was tempered by that of Henri Rousseau. In Fruit and Glass the influence of Cezanne is felt in the high viewpoint and the common contour of the goblet and pear and that of Rousseau in the frontality and almost iconic quality of the still life elements. The painting has a strong sculptural presence that endows it with a weight amazing for its very small size.

Vuillard's almost six-foot-high canvas, Embroidering by the Window, 1895-96, is not only the largest but the most decorative of the artist's major period (the 1890s) to enter the Museum's Collection. There is a sense of Proustian intimacy about this scene of two women working quietly by the light of the living room window, which is enhanced by the extraordinary sensibility revealed by the nuanced relationships of the tapestry-like patterning of the composition.

Executed in 1910 or 1911, Rue des Abbesses is the first early Utrillo to enter the Museum's Collection and dates from a moment when the painter endowed his images of Montmartre with a freshness and an improvisational quality they would later lose to a feelingless and mechanical repetition.

"Although the Museum possesses four fine Balthus oils," commented Mr. Rubin, "not one of them is in the vein for which this painter has become best known--seemingly everyday bourgeois interiors, often with adolescent girls, within which the artist hints at troubling sexual undercurrents.

The Living Room, 1942, is a superb example of just such a picture, and therefore takes its place at the center of the Museum's Balthus holdings."

John Hay Whitney, a member of the Museum's Board of Trustees since 1930 and successively Vice President, Vice Chairman, President and Chairman of the Board, died on February 9, 1982. A generous and loyal friend and benefactor to the Museum through the first five decades of its history, Mr. Whitney was central to the pioneering efforts of the Museum to recognize and preserve the art of film and was an essential sponsor of the work of the Film Library for more than twenty years.

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