

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
July 1993

PASTIMES IN PRINTS

July 24 - September 28, 1993

An exhibition exploring the depiction of leisure-time activities in printed art from the late nineteenth century through the 1950s opens at The Museum of Modern Art on July 24, 1993. Organized by Andrea Feldman, curatorial assistant, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, **PASTIMES IN PRINTS** comprises approximately seventy-five prints drawn from the Museum's collection, including a large number of works donated by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller in 1940. The exhibition, on view through September 28, is organized thematically, with sections devoted to games, sports, the circus, and nightlife.

PASTIMES IN PRINTS represents more than fifty European and American artists, and includes many works never before shown at the Museum. The exhibition also features rarely-exhibited prints by such established artists as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Pablo Picasso.

Among the prints depicting games are works by such late-nineteenth-century French artists as Jacques Villon, Félix Vallotton, and Édouard Vuillard, for whom intimate pastimes like cards, chess, or checkers were preferred subject matter. Villon's *The Game of Solitaire* (1904), for example, comments upon the complex interior life of its thoughtful subject. More rambunctious game-playing is the theme of prints such as Peggy Bacon's *Happy Holiday* (1930) and Sylvia Wald's *Tag, You're It* (1941).

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George Bellows, Thomas Hart Benton, Arnold Friedman, Charles Sheeler, and Max Weber favored vigorous sports such as boxing, horse racing, boating, and wrestling in their work. Bellows's dramatic, high-contrast prints of boxers, such as *Preliminaries to the Big Bout* (1916) and *Dempsey and Firpo* (1924), are classic images of the often brutal, male-dominated world of early twentieth-century competitive sports.

Other influential artists -- Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Mary Cassatt, for instance -- looked to the concert hall, the theater, and the cabaret for insights into the human condition. While Cassatt's *In the Opera Box* (No.2) (1880) presents an aristocratic view of evening entertainment, Kirchner's *Dancing Couple* (1931) and Toulouse-Lautrec's world-weary dance hall performers evidence a less genteel aspect of after-hours revelry and nightlife.

Many of these artistic interpretations of spare-time amusements are nonetheless images of hard work. Henri Gabriel Ibel's *Clown* (1893), Max Pechstein's *Cabaret* (1923), and Toulouse-Lautrec's *La Troupe de Mademoiselle Eglantine* (1896), for example, illustrate the complex relationship between working performer and leisurely spectator. This relationship is also inherent in a number of prints that focus on the hermetic microcosm of the circus world, such as Anne Ryan's *Acrobat* (c. 1946) and the images from Fernand Léger's 1950 illustrated book, *Cirque*.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact Rynn Williams, the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9755.