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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOTE: The Museum will be closed all day on Christmas

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OPENS LARGE EXHIBITION OF 20th CENTURY PORTRAITS

The exhibition of Twentieth Century Portraits, which opens Wednesday, December 9, at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, is the first great comprehensive exhibition of contemporary portraiture ever to be held. It is international in scope and by its survey of modern art in terms of portraiture from 1900 until today disproves any theory that there has been a decline and neglect of that form of art in our time.

The exhibition is unique in two respects:

- (1) Except for two or three European pictures every portrait is identified, not merely as Mme. X, Man in a Blue Hat, or Woman with Letter, but by the name of the subject; vague figure paintings and generalized subjects have been excluded, but many of the well known pictures and sculptures shown are now identified as portraits for the first time in any public exhibition.
- (2) The exhibition consists largely of contrasts and comparisons between professional portraits and the more intimate and imaginative likenesses by masters of the new school. The differences of approach imposed by various media are contrasted in the 270 portraits in oil, gouache, tempera, and watercolor, and sculpture in marble, metal and wood; drawing, and the several techniques of graphic art, and photography.

The exhibition, which will remain on view through January 24, has been directed by Monroe Wheeler, the Museum's Director of Exhibitions and Publications. Mr. Wheeler has also written the foreword of the 148-page catalog which the Museum will publish simultaneously with the opening of the exhibition. In addition to the foreword, the catalog contains 4 color plates, 155 halftones, and bibliography; it will sell for \$2.75.

The exhibition is particularly characterized by important groups of portraits of the American painters Albert Pinkham Ryder, Alfred H. Maurer and Vincent Canadé; of Colonel T. E. Lawrence, Albert Einstein, John Dewey, Mrs. Chester Dale, Lincoln Kirstein and others, portrayed at different times of their lives by more than one artist in various media.

Also on exhibition will be the famous conversation piece by John Sloan, showing John Butler Yeats, Alan Seegar, Van Wyck Brooks

and others at Petitpas' restaurant, and many other famous likenesses of celebrated men and women, such as James Joyce, Sigmund Freud, Charles Chaplin, John Masefield, D. H. Lawrence, George Gershwin, Katharine Cornell, and a portrait of W. Somerset Maugham just completed by Joseph Hirsch. One of the most unusual portraits shown in the exhibition is Marguerite Zorach's needlework tapestry of the family of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. at their summer home.

The exhibition includes many acknowledged masterpieces of modern art of various schools, such as the great Thurneyssen portraits and that of Mme. Tilla Durieux by Renoir, Boldini's Miss Edith Blair, Theodore Duret portrayed by both Whistler and Vuillard, two portraits by the legendary Marcel Duchamp, whose work is rarely shown, Augustus John's renowned portrait of the Marchesa Casati, John Kane's self-portrait, Henri Rousseau's portrait of Joseph Brummer, and Ivan LeLorraine Albright's portrait of George Washington Stafford.

In his foreword to the catalog Mr. Wheeler writes in part as follows:

"Portrait painting is a reasonable and natural consequence of affection," said Dr. Johnson, and although one may smile at so simple and downright an affirmation, it is amazing to find how true it is in our century. For it does seem that, for the most part, good artists portray only their own families and close friends. Even the specialists in portraiture have often done their best work when there happened to be some intimacy between them and the sitter, or at least some mutual enthusiasm. And many artists now refuse to undertake any prearranged painting of strangers at all.

"What people look like, and what can be made of their looks in the various techniques of drawing, painting and sculpture, is the problem, and there is no limit to the solutions or approaches.... Our first concern, however, is with the artist's notion of the appearance of the sitter, not the sitter's notion. Resemblance is the point of portraiture, to be sure, but it may be remoteness of resemblance, as well as closeness. The artist who departs the farthest from the mirror viewpoint, in extravagance or stylization of his art, sometimes is most keenly concerned with the individual appearance. His very keenness and enthusiasm may prompt a harsh image, unreal color and powerful, unflattering form. This is a realm of art in which the subject must somehow engage in the act of imagination along with the artist and run the risks of creation, too. And he may well consider it an exciting privilege thus to partake in the development of the art of his time.

"The purpose of this brief survey is simply to distinguish and illustrate the feeling of the chief artists of the twentieth century about this one sub-division of art, to review the story of art in our time in terms of portraiture, and to suggest a certain broadening of the meaning of the word 'portrait' to include works of a freer imagination, so that the painter and sculptor need no longer shrink from it or neglect it and so that the potential sitter will cease to expect what there is no likelihood of his getting from a good artist.

"It is unfortunately true that the portrayal of the great of the world by the great in art is very rare today, and it is hoped that some clarification of the nature of

portraiture in our time may lead to an increase of it.... The fact is that the very best portraiture cannot be simply commissioned. Mere money is not enough. The spirit of the artist has to be met halfway. If you want a really good portrait, the wisest course is to make friends with the artist."

When the exhibition of Twentieth Century Portraits closes at the Museum of Modern Art it will be sent on a tour throughout the country by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions. It is at present scheduled to be shown as follows:

- Baltimore Museum of Art: Feb. 12 - March 7, 1943
- Worcester Art Museum, Worcester Mass.: Mar. 21 - Apr. 18
- Arts Club of Chicago: May 1 - May 31
- California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco: June 14 - July 12.

Lenders to the exhibition include the following:

NEW YORK CITY: Dr. and Mrs. Harry Bakwin, Miss M. Thérèse Bonney, Miss Mabel Choate, Stephen C. Clark, Erich Cohn, Frank Crowninshield, Chester Dale Collection, Max Ernst, Mrs. Willard Burdette Force, Dr. and Mrs. Alfred M. Frankfurter, Mrs. Rose Gershwin, Mrs. William J. Glackens, A. Conger Goodyear, Miss Adelaide M. de Groot, Hiram J. Halle, Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Henschel, Sidney Janis, Lincoln Kirstein, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Lamont, The Lewisohn Collection, Edgar A. Levy, Miss Joella Lloyd, Mrs. G. McCullough Miller, George L. K. Morris, Collection of Gordon Onslow-Ford, courtesy of André Breton, Miss Violet Organ, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Laurance S. Rockefeller, Mr. and Mrs. John Rogers, Jr., Miss Antoinette Schulte, E. Felix Shaskan, James Thrall Soby, Donald Windham, Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney, and Mr. and Mrs. Hudson D. Walker.

BUFFALO, NEW YORK: Mrs. Theodore G. Kenefick, Mr. and Mrs. Seymour H. Knox.

DEVON, PENNSYLVANIA: Mr. and Mrs. R. Meyer de Schauensee.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA: Thomas Raeburn White, Lieut. Henry P. McIlhenny, U.S.N.R., Carl Zigrosser.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS: Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey McCormick, Mrs. Charles B. Goodspeed, Charles H. Worcester.

PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY: Mr. and Mrs. William F. Laporte.

CLINTON, NEW JERSEY: Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Bruce Wescott.

GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT: Miss Ann Resor.

GEORGETOWN, CONNECTICUT: Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Titzell.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA: Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Arensberg.

SOUTH LAGUNA, CALIFORNIA: Edward James.

WASHINGTON, D. C.: Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden.

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA: Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Rogers Resor.

GLENCOE, ILLINOIS: William N. Eisendrath, Jr.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND: Miss Etta Cone.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS: Mrs. Warren Lothrop.

NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS: Jere Abbott.

AUSABLE FORKS, NEW YORK: Rockwell Kent.

POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK: Miss Agnes Rindge.

MARSEILLE, FRANCE: Miss Edith Blair.