

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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Local general

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PAINTINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

OPENS MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S 25th ANNIVERSARY YEAR CELEBRATION

Four hundred paintings from the world-famous collection of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, will go on exhibition in a grand review of the pictorial art of our time on Wednesday, October 20. PAINTINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION is the opening exhibition of the Museum's 25th Anniversary year-long celebration and is the most comprehensive showing thus far presented of this section of the Collection. Over a third of the pictures acquired by the Museum since it was founded are shown. Fifty paintings, recently added to the Collection, including several not seen in this country before, are included in the exhibition which has been installed in newly arranged galleries by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections, and Dorothy C. Miller, Curator. The exhibition will remain on view through the end of this year and will be closed in sections during January.

This is the first time in its history that so many of the Museum galleries have been devoted to pictures from its own Collection, which is generally considered the most comprehensive in the world. The Collection includes works of art from the United States and Canada, Europe, Asia and Latin America dating from 1875 to the present. In the current exhibition, paintings of the later 19th century masters and some of the pre-cubist painters who won fame in the early 20th century are hung on the first floor. Expressionist, realist and fantastic paintings since 1910 occupy the second floor, and cubist and abstract paintings, American and European from the same period, are shown on the third floor.

The most valuable of the Museum's fifty newly announced acquisitions is "L'Estaque," a landscape by Cézanne, bequeathed by Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn in memory of her husband who had been a Trustee and Vice-President of the Museum. Mrs. Lewisohn also bequeathed a seascape "After the Rain" by Maurice Sterne and a portrait "Maria Lani" by Soutine. Henri Rousseau's famous "The Dream," announced a month ago, will be shown in a special gallery together with the same artist's equally renowned "The Sleeping Gypsy."

Among other important newly-acquired European purchases are Delaunay's "Sun Disks" of 1913 and a unique pair of Kandinsky's brilliant compositions of 1914, both purchased through the Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund; Léger's "Still Life," Giacomo

more

201

Balla's "Street Light," an early Futurist work, and a large abstract composition of 1913 by Picabia, all acquired with the Hillman Publications Purchase Fund; and Nolde's "Russian Peasants" of 1915, bought with the Matthew T. Mellon Foundation Fund. Raoul Dufy's important early canvas, "Sailboat at Sainte-Adresse" has been given by Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. Rubel; Redon's brilliant "Vase of Flowers" by William S. Paley, Rouault's "Landscape with Figures" by Sam Salz.

Other European acquisitions by well-known artists include a painting by Massimo Campigli, gift of Eric Estorick; two gouaches by Rouault, gift of the late Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn; a large collage by Kurt Schwitters bought with the A. Atwater Kent, Jr. Fund; a van Dongen portrait, "Mlle Bordenave"; and a composition by Wyndham Lewis.

Works by Europeans of more recent fame include "Night" by Manessier, gift of Mrs. Alfred A. Knopf; "Venice" by Theodor Werner, gift of Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon; abstract paintings by two Italians, Giuseppe Capogrossi and Alberto Burri; and compositions by the young English painter Phillip Martin and the Portuguese Parisian, Vieira da Silva.

The Museum Collection, hitherto very weak in Canadian painting, is happy to receive Jean-Paul Riopelle's large "Forest Blizzard," gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin, and Paul-Émile Borduas' "Morning Candelabra," gift of the Passedoit Gallery.

Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil have presented the Museum with a striking composition by the Chilean surrealist Matta Echaurren entitled "The Spherical Roof around our Tribe". A painting by the Haitian "primitive", Philomé Obin, complete the new Latin-American accessions.

Works by Kenzo Kōda and Gakyu Osawa, both gifts, are the first Japanese paintings to enter the Collection.

The older generation of American painters is represented among the new acquisitions by John Kane's "Scot's Lay at Kennywood," gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Lewin; two works by Max Ernst, gifts of Madame Helena Rubinstein and Samuel A. Berger; Man Ray's "The Rope Dancer," gift of G. David Thompson; and a landscape by Clara Williamson, gift of Albert Dorne. Among paintings by artists of the middle generation are Jack Tworkov's "The Wheel," gift of the Gramercy Park Foundation, Inc.; Karl Zerbe's "Harlem" and Lee Gatch's "Rainbow Rampage," both gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger. Carroll Cloar's minutely realistic "Autumn Conversion," gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward F. Kook, contrasts with Grace George Hartigan's "River Bathers," given anonymously. Among American purchases are Mark Tobey's much admired "Edge of August," Willem de Kooning's controversial "Woman I," Hans Hoffmann's "Ambush," Lyonel Feininger's "The Disparagers," Pavel Tchelitchew's "Natalie Paley," and a

large abstract composition by Clyfford Still.

Commenting on the exhibition, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Collections, says:

"The exhibition PAINTINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION will give the public the chance to see a far larger number of the Museum's paintings than ever before. Three times more works are now on view than space ordinarily permits; but 600 paintings are still in storage including some which may well be more significant than some of those shown.

"The Museum is of course aware that at any one moment in the history of art there are only a few really great living painters, maybe ten, maybe three, sometimes even none as seems to have been the case at the end of the 17th century. Looking back to the end of the 19th century we think we know who were the great painters and some of them figure brilliantly in the Museum Collection with such canvases as van Gogh's "Starry Night," Cézanne's "Still Life with Apples" and two great achievements of Rousseau, "The Sleeping Gypsy," recently cleaned, and "The Dream," the magnificent big picture just acquired.

"When we try to pick the champions of early 20th century painting we are a little less certain and when it comes to choosing the work of the younger painters of today, we can be sure of only one thing: in the inexorable light of the future most of our guesses will have been wrong. Yet for a time we can love and enjoy even our mistakes.

"The exhibition is arranged so that each of the painters whom we, at mid-century, like to think of as a master is given a gallery to himself, or at least a wall or two even though this involves omitting the work of some of the lesser artists. Paul Klee, for instance, is given a small room to himself, Léger, Chagall, Miro, three walls each and Modigliani, Hopper, Weber, de Chirico, Pollock, a single wall. Picasso is awarded three galleries for a score of his works, some of them very large. In this way the work of major and almost major painters of our period may be studied in a way not possible in the very limited gallery space usually available to the collection.

"The exhibition is a part of the Museum's 25th anniversary celebration. As it happens, the Collection was under way even before the Museum opened its doors in the fall of 1929. The Collection grew slowly at first during the Depression years but in the past fifteen years has been rapidly enriched by the generosity of the Museum's patrons.

more

203

"The Collection was undertaken with the intention of eventually passing on its best works to other museums with more retrospective programs. In 1952 this program changed fundamentally so that now it is the Museum's policy to keep its best works of art as a permanent nucleus to which will be added other works of major importance.* As time goes on, these should form a magnificent demonstration of art beginning with the late 19th century.

"With these facts in mind PAINTINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION takes on the character not only of a celebration, but, more seriously, of a question-raising report to the public, to the expert, and to the Museum's own Trustees and staff: Which of the exhibited works are worthy of permanent retention by the Museum? Which are still in limbo? Which should be marked for discard? What are the chief weaknesses of the Collection and what are its strong points?

"The Museum hopes that these questions may be examined by its friends with care and candor even as they join with the Museum in celebrating the beginning of its second quarter century of collecting."

* Described in Museum of Modern Art Bulletin; Vol. XX, Nos. 3-4. Summer, 1953.

Other works of art collected by the Museum of Modern Art, including films, industrial design objects, furniture, architectural models, original prints, sculpture, photographs and posters, are surveyed in the Museum's major 25th Anniversary Year publication, MASTERS OF MODERN ART, edited by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. This 240 - page book, in which all departments of the Museum Collection are represented, includes 415 reproductions, 76 in color. It will be published in November, 1955. 1954.

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
25th Anniversary Exhibition
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Annotated Checklist of New Acquisitions

Note: Unless enclosed in parentheses dates appear on the works themselves.

The last two figures of the number indicate the date of accession.

Giacomo BALLA. Italian, born 1871.

Street Light. 1909. Oil on canvas, 68 3/4 x 45 1/4". Hillman Periodicals Purchase Fund. 7.54 (Third Floor)

Painted in the very year that the poet Marinetti proclaimed Futurism and the year before the Futurist painters were organized. The extraordinary technique owes something to French Neo-Impressionist "Divisionism" but instead of using dots of color, Balla expresses the radiation of light by means of brilliant chevrons and wedges of color.

In a recent letter he remarked that his picture "demonstrated how romantic moonlight had been surpassed by the light of the modern electric street light. This was the end of Romanticism in art. From my picture came the phrase (beloved by the Futurists): 'We shall kill the light of the moon.'"

Balla, now eighty-four, is the oldest of the five original Futurists and the teacher of both Severini and Boccioni.

Paul-Emile BORDUAS. Canadian, born 1905.

Morning Candelabra (Lampadaire du matin). 1948. Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 43". Gift of the Passadoit Gallery. 263.54 (Third Floor)

Borduas was born near Montreal in 1905 and is now generally considered the leading abstract painter of Canada.

Alberto BURRI. Italian, born 1915.

Composition 8. (1953.) Collage of burlap, sand, thread, etc., 33 7/8 x 39 5/8". Purchase Fund. (Acquired 1954) (Third Floor)

Burri, trained as a surgeon, spent a year or so in the early 1940s as an American prisoner of war in Texas. There, to pass the time, he began to make compositions of burlap, flour sacks and other materials such as he could pick up around the camp. He became so involved in this occupation that when he returned to Italy he decided to give up medicine for art. However, the sewing technique and the painted section of the Museum's picture seem reminiscent of surgery. Burri lives in Rome.

Massimo CAMPIGLI. Italian, born 1895.

Design for Mosaic of a Roman Theatre. Gouache and oil on paper, 32 1/4 x 33 1/8". Gift of Eric Estorick. 471.53 (Second Floor)

A characteristic work by the best-known Italian master of the middle generation. Campigli now works in Milan after having spent much of his life in Paris and New York.

Giuseppe CAPOGROSSI. Italian, born 1900.

Composition. (1953.) Gouache, 13 3/4 x 19 5/8". Mrs. Charles H. Russell Fund. 8.53 (Third Floor)

Capogrossi, now in middle age, has won international reputation only recently. He has developed one of the most individual styles among European abstract painters. He lives in Rome.

Paul CEZANNE. French, 1839-1906.

L'Estaque. (c.1884.) Oil on canvas, 23 7/8 x 27 3/4". Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn Request. (Acquired 1954) (First Floor)

The composition of deep space is characteristic of Cézanne's work of the mid-1880s in comparison with his Pissarro-like impressionism of the '70s and the flattened relief-like planes of his landscapes of the '90s (such as the Museum's Pines and Rocks). Recent cleaning has revealed the exceptional brilliance of this canvas.

Carroll CLOAR. American, born 1912.

Autumn Conversion. (1953.) Tempera on composition board, 20 1/8 x 26 1/8". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward F. Kook. 502.53 (Second Floor)

Cloar's home is in Earl, Arkansas, but Autumn Conversion was based on an incident in Memphis nearby across the Mississippi. His remarkable lithograph, The Artist's Mother, was bought by the Museum in 1948.

Robert DELAUNAY. French, 1885-1941.

Sun Disks (Composition simultanée: les disques soleils). (1912-13.) Oil on canvas, 52 7/8 x 53 1/4" diameter. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. 1.54 (First Floor) Reproduced in color in Masters of Modern Art.

Never an orthodox cubist, Delaunay began to abandon cubism in 1912 to paint several brilliant, completely abstract compositions inspired by the physics of light as analyzed by Isaac Newton and his 19th-century followers. (The Parisian Czech, Frank Kupka, had painted completely abstract pictures inspired by the "discs of Newton" early in 1912. One is shown on Floor III.)

Delaunay's Sun Disks is the capital work of what Apollinaire promptly labeled "Orphism" (in which Kupka seems to have been the pioneer). "In pure painting," Delaunay explained, "it is color itself which forms the structure of the rhythmic development and not the collaboration of ancient means such as geometry. Color is form and subject."

Kees van DONGEN. Dutch, born 1877. Lives in Paris.

Miss Bordenave. (1925.) Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 19 3/4". Given anonymously. 244.54. (First Floor)

The artist writes that this canvas was not a commissioned portrait, but simply "a painting of a charming young lady." Originally one of the lesser but talented Fauve painters, van Dongen won and maintained the position of the leading portrait painter of the fashionable and high bohemian world of Paris.

Raoul DUFY. French, 1877-1953.

Sailboat at Sainte-Adresse. (1912.) Oil on canvas, 34 7/8 x 45 5/8". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. Rübhel. 476.53 (First Floor) Reproduced in color in Masters of Modern Art.

Structural strength is rarely found in Dufy's gay calligraphy. This and a few other canvases of about 1912 are exceptions. As in Dufy's book illustrations of the same period, the influence of the Gothic woodcut tradition is strong in the design, the vigorous hatching and probably in the color. The subject, the harbor of a small Norman fishing village and resort, Dufy painted very often both before and after 1912.

Max ERNST. American, born in Germany 1891.

Two Sisters. 1926. Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 28 3/4". Gift of Madame Helena Rubinstein. 411.53 (Second Floor)

Painted during the early years of the Surrealist movement in Paris, the technique is partly in oil, partly in a special technique invented by Max Ernst called frottage. In frottage, the artist places the canvas or paper over a rough surface such as a wooden plank and rubs it with charcoal or pencil, in this way involving accident as a technical device.

The subject, two sisters, seems reminiscent of the famous Two Children are Harassed by a Nightingale of 1924 in the Museum Collection.

Nature at Daybreak. 1938. Oil on canvas, 32 x 39 1/4". Gift of Samuel A. Berger. (Acquired 1954) (Second Floor)

An important work in a series of imaginary landscapes rich in fantastic flora and people, with hidden fauna and double images.

Lyonel FEININGER. American, born 1871. Worked in Germany 1887-1936. In U.S.A. since 1937.

The Disparagers. 1911. Watercolor, pen and ink, 8 x 10 1/2" (inked outline); 9 1/2 x 12 3/8" (sheet). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. 477.53 (Second Floor)

A work painted toward the end of Feininger's early period in which he peopled land- and town-scapes with elongated giants. A year later, influenced by Cubism, his style changed radically.

Lee GATCH. American, born 1902

Rainbow Rampage. (1950.) Oil on canvas, 28 x 40". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger. 7.51 (Second Floor)

Of Rainbow Rampage Gatch writes: "The entire conception was subjective the lamp burning through a night that should have ended but was extended through a black dawn. The sunlight is robbed of light by the prism of the rainbow which plunges through an open window its smooth arc and disintegrates in a geometric frenzy."

Grace George HARTIGAN. American, born 1922.

River Bathers. 1953. Oil on canvas, 69 3/8 x 88 3/4". Given anonymously. 11.54 (Third Floor)

Only a year or so before River Bathers was painted, the artist suddenly turned from abstract painting to a reconsideration of older traditions. She writes: "Before starting the painting I studied reproductions of Giorgione, Poussin, Manet, Cézanne and Matisse, especially the Matisse Bathers by a River...I have no early academic or classical training to revolt against. I was taught at the 'academy' of modern art -- the watering down of the School of Paris...The first painting I ever remember seeing was a Matisse at the Museum of Modern Art...About five years ago I felt the lack of disciplined training so strongly that I went to draw from casts, rendering them carefully in charcoal."

Hans HOFMANN. American, born in Germany 1880.

Ambush. 1944. Oil on paper, 24 x 19". Purchase Fund. 51.52 (Third Floor)

Painted during the period when the artist was rapidly becoming the most influential teacher of painting in New York.

Wassily KANDINSKY. Russian, 1866-1944. Worked in Germany and France.

Composition III. 1914. Oil on canvas, 64 x 36 1/4". Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. 2.54 (Third Floor) Reproduced in color in Masters of Modern Art.

Composition IV. 1914. Oil on canvas, 64 x 31 1/2". Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. 3.54 (Third Floor) Reproduced in color in Masters of Modern Art.

Because of the Museum's earlier policy of passing on pictures to other institutions as they became "classic" and because of the magnificent group of Kandinskys in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection, little effort had been made to add important works by this master to the Museum Collection. Since the Museum's change of policy, announced in 1953 (Museum of Modern Art Bulletin: Vol. XX, Nos. 3-4), it has seemed more desirable to add representative work of Kandinsky's early abstract period which has had such influence upon recent Abstract Expressionism.

These two canvases were purchased from an antique dealer who had bought them at a country auction in New England. Research reveals that they were originally in the collection of the New York business man, Edwin R. Campbell, who had acquired them along with two other canvases shortly after they were painted. All four panels, it appears, had been commissioned as a decorative ensemble. Two of the panels have disappeared. The Museum's pair are the same height, but different in width. They are works of excellent quality, painted at the height of Kandinsky's most significant period.

John KANE. American, 1860-1934.

Scotch Day at Kennywood. 1933. Oil on canvas, 19 7/8 x 27 1/2". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Lewin. 504.53 (Second Floor)

Of Kennywood near Pittsburgh Kane once wrote: "Scotch Day will come again and I am getting ready to hike out to Kennywood where I can see the beautiful colors of the Scotch tartan on the braw wee lassies, a sight for any artist to behold."

Willem de KOONING. American, born Netherlands 1904.

Woman I. (1950-52.) Oil with charcoal on canvas, 75 7/8 x 58". Purchase Fund. 478.53 (Third Floor) Reproduced in color in Masters of Modern Art.

This is the capital painting in the series of studies of women which aroused such controversy when first exhibited last year.

Fernand LEGER. French, born 1881.

Still Life. 1924. Oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 23 5/8". Hillman Periodicals Purchase Fund. 246.54 (Third Floor)

A post-cubist, "return to the object" composition typical in its clear structure of horizontals and verticals.

Wyndham LEWIS. British, born 1884.

Roman Actors. (1934.) Watercolor, gouache and ink, 15 1/8 x 21 1/4".
Francis E. Brennan Fund. 14.54 (Second Floor)

A small but characteristic work by the British painter, novelist, critic and arch-controversialist.

Alfred MANESSIER. French, born 1911.

Night (Mouvements Nocturnes). 1948. Oil on canvas, 31 3/4 x 39 1/2".
Gift of Mrs. Alfred A. Knopf. 479.53 (Third Floor)

Phillip MARTIN. British, born 1927. Works in Italy.

Painting, Positano. 1953. Oil on paper mounted on canvas over composition board, 59 x 39". Given anonymously. 247.54 (Third Floor)

Martin is a young Englishman who paints chiefly in Mediterranean countries.

MATTA (Sebastian Antonio Matta Echaurren). Chilean, born 1912. Works in Italy.

The Spherical Roof Around our Tribe. (c.1952.) Tempera on canvas, 78 5/8 x 115 7/8". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil. 16.54 (Second Floor)

Matta came under the influence of the Paris Surrealists in the late thirties, worked in New York for a decade and now lives in Rome. In recent years his subject matter has suggested "science fiction" of a peculiarly alarming character.

Emil NOLDE. German, born 1867.

Russian Peasants. (1915.) Oil on canvas, 28 5/8 x 34 1/2". Matthew T. Mellon Foundation Purchase Fund. 19.54 (First Floor)

Late in the summer of 1913 Nolde traveled slowly through Russia at the beginning of a long journey into Asia and the South Seas. He returned to Germany only after the outbreak of World War I. In the winter of 1914-15 he painted several canvases of Russian peasants of which the Museum's, though not the largest, is the most interesting because of the relationship between the two shaggy heads, one prominent, the other recessive and shadowy. The sober color is quite exceptional in the artist's work. This is the first oil by Nolde to enter the collection.

Philomé OBIN. Haitian, born 1892.

Inspection of the Streets. 1948. Oil on composition board, 24 x 24".
Inter-American Fund. 268.48 (Second Floor)

Kenzo OKADA. Japanese, born 1902. Works in New York.

Number 3. 1953. Oil on canvas, 65 1/8 x 57 7/8". Given anonymously.
248.54 (Third Floor)

Kenzo Okada studied at the Tokyo Academy of Fine Arts 1924-27 and has had several one-man shows in Tokyo. He came to New York in 1950 and has had an exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery, 1953.

Gakyu OSAWA. Japanese.

The Deep Pool. Ink, 27 x 54 1/2". 273.54 (Third Floor)

Now resident in Japan, Osawa is one of the leaders of the school of the Chinese tradition of calligraphy which some of the young Japanese are pushing toward complete abstraction.

Francis PICABIA. French, 1878-1953.

I see again in memory my dear Udnie (Je revois en souvenir ma chère Udnie).
(1913.) Oil on canvas, 98 1/2 x 78 1/4". Hillman Periodicals Purchase Fund.
4.54 (Second Floor)

Of the half dozen large canvases painted by Picabia in 1912-13, the Museum's is one of the latest and most original. In it the artist has almost completely shaken off cubist devices for a freely invented abstraction with cryptic associations and a title which anticipate Dada and Surrealism.

Man RAY. American, born 1890. Works in Paris.

The Rope Dancer Accompanies Herself with Her Shadows. 1916. Oil on canvas,
52 x 73 3/8". Gift of G. David Thompson. 33.54 (Second Floor)

Begun in New York in 1915 and finished the following year, a period when Man Ray was closely associated with Marcel Duchamp and Picabia in what was to become known as the New York Dada group. Man Ray says the title is "almost literal."

Odilon REDON. French, 1840-1916.

Vase of Flowers. (1916?) Pastel, 28 3/4 x 21 1/8". Gift of William S. Paley. 250.54. (First Floor)

Done toward the end of his life, this is one of Redon's most celebrated pastel flower pieces.

Jean-Paul RIOPELLE. Canadian, born 1923.

Forest Blizzard. 1953. Oil on composition board, 67 1/8 x 100 1/4".
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin. 26.54 (Third Floor)

Riopelle was born in Montreal and worked first in Canada where he is said to have been influenced by Borduas and then, since 1950, in Paris.

Georges ROUAULT. French, born 1871.

The Cook. 1914. Gouache, 11 7/8 x 7 3/4". Gift of Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn.
57.52. (First Floor)

The Lovely Madame X. 1915. Gouache, 12 x 7 3/4". Gift of Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn. 56.52 (First Floor)

Between 1913 and 1917 Rouault painted a series of small figures in watercolor which are exceptional in his dour art for their humor. Among them are these two gifts of Mrs. Lewisohn, made shortly before her death. Two others of the series, The Man with Spectacles and The Lion Tamer, are also in the Museum's Collection. Apropos of these gouaches, James Thrall Soby quotes Ernest Hello, the passionate Catholic mystic and moralist who greatly influenced Rouault: "Ferocity knows how to laugh."

Landscape with Figures. (c.1937.) Oil on canvas, 21 3/8 x 27 1/2". Gift of Sam Salz. 427.53 (First Floor)

Characteristic of Rouault's late palette in its green-gold harmonies.

Henri ROUSSEAU. French, 1844-1910.

The Dream. 1910. Oil on canvas, 80 1/2 x 117 1/2". Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller. 252.54 (First Floor) Reproduced in color in Masters of Modern Art.

The Dream, one of the greatest works of art to enter the Museum Collection, is the culminating achievement of Rousseau's career.

Rousseau completed The Dream in time to send it to the Paris Salon des Indépendants of March 1910. Attached to the painting were the following verses written by the artist (who it was said had once loved a lady named Yadwigha):

Yadwigha in a lovely dream,
Having most sweetly gone to sloop,
Heard the snake-charmer blow his flute,
Breathing his meditation deep.
While on the streams and verdant trees
Gleam the reflections of the moon,
And savage serpents lend their ears
To the gay measures of the tune.

(Translated by Bertha Ten Eyck James)

Rousseau and his paintings had for years been the butt of so much laughter that before the Salon opened he wrote the critic Guillaume Apollinaire: "I have sent my large picture.....I think you will deploy your literary talents and will avenge me for all insults and affronts received. I know, through Picasso, that it is in L'Intransigeant that you do art criticism."

However, as before, the public and most of the critics who went to mock remained to mock.

Rousseau himself answered questions about The Dream with dignity and precision: When a critic asked him why he had put the couch in the jungle he replied: "This woman asleep on the couch dreams that she has been transported into the forest, listening to the sounds from the instrument of the enchanter. This is the reason the couch is in the picture....."

But his friend, the poet André Salmon, reports that Rousseau confided to him: "The sofa is there only because of its glowing red color."

Ambroise Vollard, the great picture dealer, bought The Dream out of the Salon:

"Tell me, M. Rousseau, how did you make so much air circulate among the trees and the moonlight look so real?" asked Vollard.

"By studying nature, M. Vollard," replied the painter.

Rousseau's words are the words of a simple man but his paintings are the work of a great artist. It is true, as his sketches attest, that he studied nature; and possibly, in his youth, he had actually seen tropical jungles. But his greatness depends upon his intuitive mastery of form and the magnificent boldness of his imagination. In The Dream he evokes a vision with the power and beauty of a myth.

Henri Rousseau was born in Laval, France, in 1844. He was said to have served as an army musician in Maximilian's ill-fated Mexican expedition. At 40 he retired from his job as a minor customs official to devote his life to painting. Though he was generally ridiculed, a few of the best artists and connoisseurs praised his art: during the 1890s, Degas, Lautrec, Gauguin, Redon, de Gourmont, Natanson; and, later, Picasso, Delaunay, Joseph Brummer and the Americans, Max Weber and Gertrude Stein.

The Dream was Rousseau's last great painting. Not long after he finished it, he fell ill and died in poverty in a Paris hospital, September, 1910. Two months later a memorial exhibition was held in New York at Alfred Stieglitz' gallery. Comprising several drawings and small oils lent by Max Weber, it was Rousseau's first one-man show.

Attilio SALEME. American, born 1911.

Antechamber to Inner Sanctum. 1950. Oil on canvas, 28 x 40". Gift of Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon. 191.52 (Third Floor)

Kurt SCHWITTERS. German, 1887-1948.

Cherry Picture. 1921. Gouache and collage of fabric, paper on cardboard, over wood, pipe attached, 36 1/8 x 27 3/4 x 3 1/8". Mr. and Mrs. A. Atwater Kent, Jr. Fund. 27.54 (Second Floor)

"Because the medium is unimportant, I take any material whatsoever if the picture demands it. In addition to playing color against color, form against form, I play material against material, for example, wood against sackcloth. I call the general attitude from which this mode of artistic creation arose 'Merz'.

"Merz stands for freedom from all fetters...Freedom is not lack of restraint, but the product of strict artistic discipline."

Schwitters considered this one of his most important compositions.

Chaim SOUTINE. Lithuanian, 1894-1943. Worked in France.

Portrait of Maria Lani. 1929. Oil on canvas, 28 7/8 x 23 1/2". Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn Bequest. 275.54 (First Floor)

Maria Lani sat for a score or so of painters towards the end of the 1920s. The resulting portraits were then assembled in an exhibition which was shown in Paris, New York and elsewhere.

Maurice STERNE. American, born Latvia 1877.

After the Rain. 1948. Oil on canvas, 26 1/2 x 34". Mrs. Sam A. Lewisohn Bequest. 276.54 (Second Floor)

Maurice Sterne's chief reputation has rested upon his paintings, sculpture and drawings composed in the spirit of the old masters. After the war, however, he began to paint with a much more spontaneous response to nature, particularly in land- and seascapes. After the Rain was painted in Provincetown.

Clyfford STILL. American, born 1904.

Painting. 1951. Oil on canvas, 10' x 7' 10". Purchase Fund. 277.54 (Third Floor)

"From the most ancient times the artist has been expected to perpetuate the values of his contemporaries. The record is mainly one of frustration, sadism, superstition, and the will to power. What greatness of life crept into the story came from sources not yet fully understood, and the temples of art which burden the landscape of nearly every city are a tribute to the attempt to seize this elusive quality and stamp it out."

"We are now committed to an unqualified act, not illustrating outworn myths or contemporary alibis. One must accept total responsibility for what he executes. And the measure of his greatness will be in the depth of his insight and his courage in realizing his own vision."

-- paragraphs

from a letter of the artist published in Fifteen Americans, pages 21-22; Museum of Modern Art, 1952.

Pavel TCHELITCHEW. American, born Russia 1898. Works in Paris.

Nathalie Paley. 1931. Oil on canvas, 32 x 21 1/4". Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. 253.54 (Second Floor)

Mark TOBEY. American, born 1890.

Edge of August. 1953. Casein on masonite, 48 x 28". Purchase Fund. 5.54 (Third Floor)

Of this painting Tobey has written: "Nature in her magnificent and mysterious ways creates changes through which we live and can gather wisdom for correspondences in our own lives...In attempting to express such conditions in nature, one can follow the brush strokes, as nothing is blurred, to get the effect I wanted. It derives from the calligraphic impulse I acquired studying in Japan and China but no Oriental model has been used."

Jack TWORKOV. American, born Poland 1900.

The Wheel. 1953. Oil on canvas, 54 x 50". Gift of the Gramercy Park Foundation, Inc. 31.54 (Third Floor)

Maria Helena VIEIRA DA SILVA. Born Portugal 1908. Lives in Paris.

Ballet. 1938. Oil and wax on canvas, 19 1/2 x 59 1/4". Mrs. Charles H. Russell Fund. 29.54 (Third Floor)

Painted in the late thirties and bought for a New York collector fifteen years before the artist's recent recognition.

Theodor WERNER. German, born 1886.

Venice. 1952. Oil and tempera on canvas, 32 x 39 3/8". Gift of Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon. 282.54 (Third Floor)

Theodor Werner, generally acknowledged to be one of the two leading abstract painters of post-war Germany, held his first one-man show in 1911 and has since then exhibited frequently in Germany where he is represented in nine museums. He writes: "My program as an artist is to paint abstract compositions with the idea of recapturing metaphysical values for painting."

Clara McDonald WILLIAMSON. American, born 1875.

The Day the Bosque Froze Over. 1953. Oil on composition board, 20 x 28". Gift of Albert Dorne. 32.54 (Second Floor)

Now almost eighty, Clara Williamson began to paint in 1943, attending classes at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. Her style and attitude is essentially that of an amateur or "modern primitive."

Her picture is based on recollections of an especially cold winter about 1899. "I have long desired," she writes, "to try to record my memories of this occasion because this scene was so thrillingly beautiful, especially the sunset: and, I knew personally most of the members of the group."

Karl ZERBE. American, born Germany 1903.

Harlem. 1952. Polymer tempera on canvas over masonite, 44 1/2 x 24". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger. 483.53 (Third Floor)