

# The Museum of Modern Art

50th Anniversary



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## FACT SHEET

EXHIBITION: THE SYMBOLIST AESTHETIC

DATES: The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
December 23, 1980 -- March 10, 1981

DIRECTOR: Magdalena Dabrowski, Assistant Curator of the  
Department of Drawings, The Museum of Modern Art

CONTENTS: THE SYMBOLIST AESTHETIC, an exhibition of some 90  
drawings, prints, paintings, sculptures and examples  
of decorative art drawn from the Museum's Collection,  
establishes the link between the Symbolist move-  
ment and modernism.

Symbolism, in its attempt to represent the inner states of emotion through composition and synthesized form, resulted in art which demanded the viewer's participation. It required the spectator to relive the emotions experienced by the artist. The purpose was to reach what Gauguin termed "the mysterious centers of thought." In order to infuse painting with meaning, Symbolists strove to rid it of its anecdotal quality. They aimed instead at the portrayal of various states of feeling. This mode of expression extended to the image itself as well as to the use of formal means: line and color. Themes common to the Symbolist expression included isolation, the artist's position in society, jealousy, destiny, death: themes of internal drama rather than external reality.

Artists to be represented in THE SYMBOLIST AESTHETIC include Delville, Denis, Ensor, Gauguin, Hodler, Khnopff, Klimt, Munch, Redon, Seurat and Vuillard.

PUBLIC OPENING: Tuesday, December 23, 1980

November 1980

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