

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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LOCAL ORANGE

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

EXHIBITION OF LIFE WORK OF MODIGLIANI, ITALIAN PAINTER AND SCULPTOR, TO GO ON VIEW

Fifty-two oils, 7 sculptures and 45 drawings, watercolors and pastels by the well-known Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) will occupy the third floor galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from April 11 through June 10. Organized in collaboration with The Cleveland Museum of Art, where it has just concluded its showing, the exhibition has been brought together from collections in Paris and Milan, England and Brazil, and many parts of this country. Among the foreign loans is a large group of early works never exhibited before outside of France. The exhibition was organized by the Department of Painting and Sculpture and installed by Margaret Miller, Associate Curator of the Department. The catalog contains an appreciative essay on the artist by James Thrall Soby, the well-known art writer and expert on modern Italian art; 42 plates, 2 in color; a check-list and bibliography.

Biographical Notes:

Modigliani was born in Leghorn, Italy, on July 12, 1884, the youngest of 4 children of a banker of Jewish origin. He died in Paris at the age of only 35. Following a sickly childhood and an interrupted schooling, he developed tuberculosis at the age of 16 and was taken by his mother to an art school in Rome. In 1906 he went to Paris, where his work was at first influenced by the style of the 1890s.

He was soon to come under the spell of Picasso and Cézanne. The 'Cello Player, in which the Cézanne influence is still strong, won Modigliani his first recognition when it was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1910. In the following years he exhibited in various such salons and finally had a one-man gallery show in 1917, but this was closed by the police because of the nudes. During this period he worked for awhile for a picture merchant turning out canvases in the cellar for which he received 40 francs and a bottle of Cognac per picture.

Always penniless, doomed by tuberculosis, and perfectly aware of it, Modigliani drove himself with restless energy to produce. Despite drink, drugs and many love affairs, he managed to paint and draw constantly, his highly taut nerves a part of his talent's high price.

In 1918 he was obliged by his health to go to the south of France, a trip which was made possible by his great friend and admirer, the Polish poet Zborowski, who managed to sell 15 of Modigliani's canvases for 500 francs to finance part of the sojourn. But after his return he was taken to a Paris hospital in 1919, seriously ill. He died in January 1920. A few hours after his death his mistress leapt to her death from a 5th floor window. Within 4 years after his death, Modigliani's works were bringing prodigious prices at public auction.

Modigliani arrived at maturity as a painter at a time when fauvism and cubism were current movements, but he nevertheless maintained a masterful draftsmanship akin to the Renaissance painters of Italy.

It was the human face and figure that interested Modigliani in contrast to the still lifes of the cubists and the imaginary architecture of his countryman de Chirico. His subjects were nearly always shown singly, with an intensity of individual characterization. Far from being simply a realist, he solved repeatedly one of modern portraiture's most difficult problems; how to express objective truth in terms of the artist's private compulsion. He preferred rusted colors, elongation of tubular necks and oval heads, his own characteristic dislocations that express so much of varying character and mood. Taken as a whole the portraits constitute the cast of Modigliani's drama and a record of many artistic personalities of his era. The exhibition contains portraits of 6 sculptors (Brancusi, Laurens, Lipchitz, Idenbaum, Moricand, Miestchaninoff) 4 poets (Cendrars, Cocteau, Zborowski, Beatrice Hastings) 4 painters (Soutine; Kisling; the American, Frank Burty Haviland, and the artist himself) the art dealer, Paul Guillaume, as well as the dancer Nijinsky and the artist and scene designer Leon Bakst.

Probably through encouragement from Brancusi, whom he painted in 1908, Modigliani became interested in sculpture. For a time he devoted himself to it exclusively, working always in stone. African Negro work was a major influence on his style. An early drawing in the exhibition shows the artist applying the conventions of Ivory Coast masks to his own features. The use of sculpture in an organic

relation to architecture appears to have been a persistent concern. The stone heads, finished flat in the back, seem intended as corbelled architectural elements, and the caryatid figure was the subject of innumerable studies resulting in 2 almost life size figures, both of which are shown in the exhibition. The crouching figure, built into one of the gallery walls, was designed for a Paris house, construction of which was prevented by building restrictions of World War I. His interest in sculpture lasted from 1909-14. At the outbreak of the war he contemplated taking part but was stopped by his health and his socialist opinions.

His most ambitious and probably best known paintings are his nudes, frank and erotic, undisguised by allegory though dignified by conviction of style. Aside from his achievement as painter, draftsman and sculptor, Modigliani is remarkable among important 20th-century artists for his interest in portraiture and the nude.

The Trustees of
The Museum of Modern Art
request the honor
of your presence
at the private opening
of an exhibition
of paintings, sculpture
and drawings by

MODIGLIANI



on Tuesday evening, April 10, 1951

from 8 to 11

11 West 53 Street, New York

This invitation admits two

The Modigliani drawing reproduced here
is a portrait of Leopold Zborowski, lent to the exhibition
by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., St. Louis

MODIGLIANI

Paintings

Sculpture

Drawings