

local general

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 14, 1952

520206-8

ODILON REDON'S DRAWINGS AND LITHOGRAPHS

TO BE SHOWN IN LARGE EXHIBITION

Twenty-two drawings and 108 lithographs by Odilon Redon (1840-1916), 19th-century pioneer of 20th-century art, will be on view in the first floor galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from February 14 through April 20. The exhibition of work by this pre-surrealist artist will feature important loans from the Art Institute of Chicago as well as from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum and several private collections. It has been organized by William S. Lieberman, Associate Curator in charge of prints, who has also written the illustrated booklet to accompany the exhibition.

Monsters and apparitions people the world of Odilon Redon. While his contemporaries the Impressionists analyzed visual experiences of the world about them, Redon explored his own dreams and imagination. Mystery and fantasy characterize his art, and today he must be counted as one of the most important precursors of surrealism.

Deeply impressed by the American author Edgar A. Poe with whom he has so often been compared, Redon was associated with the French symbolist poets, in particular Mallarmé. His greatest literary inspiration, however, was the elaborate prose drama of Gustave Flaubert, The Temptation of St. Anthony, for which he made three series of lithographs, his most important graphic work.

In nature Redon felt "an invisible world moving and palpitating around us, folding us within under pressures still obscure and unexplained." He saw human heads in flowers, pagan gods in rocks and trees, strange and unfamiliar creatures floating in the sky and sea.

Born in Bordeaux in 1840, Redon led a quiet and contemplative life. After serving as a soldier in the Franco-Prussian war, he settled in Paris. His first album of lithographs, titled significantly In the Dreams, was done in 1879 with the idea of increasing the distribution of his work. He spent the next 20 years producing

lithographs and drawings in black and white. Not until he was 60, in 1900, did he begin the more familiar and brilliantly colored series of pastels and paintings that, among younger French painters, perhaps most influenced Matisse.

In 1913, at the Armory Show, Redon's work was introduced to the American public, just three years before his death. Redon and Picasso are the two most frequently requested artists in the Museum's Print Room.

Of black, the color of mystery and night, the poetic artist

Redon wrote:

"Black is the most essential color. Its exalted life comes - shall I confess - from the discreet and profound source of health: good living and rest. Or, better, let us say that on the fullness of physical energy depends the heavy and vital ardor of charcoal. It conveys the very vitality of a being, his energy, his mind, something of his soul, the reflection of his sensitivity....

"One must respect black. Nothing prostitutes it. It does not please the eye and it awakens no sensuality. It is the agent of the mind far more than the most beautiful color of the palette or prism....

"Lithography stimulates and makes the unexpected appear. These strange lithographs, often sombre and abtruse and, let us say whose aspect does not entice, appeal on the contrary to minds that are silent and retain the rare resources of natural ingenuousness. Sainly and silent material which resurrects and is a medium of refuge, I owe you gentle calm!"