

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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A special New York preview of The Eight, one of The Museum of Modern Art's circulating loan exhibitions will take place during the week of February 3-~~10~~<sup>8</sup> at the Museum's Guest House, 242 East 52nd Street. The showing will provide a rare view of one of the 50 traveling exhibitions which are prepared by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions for museums, art associations, colleges and other institutions throughout the country, but which are not usually exhibited in New York.

The preview will be open only to the Museum's 3,000 Contributing Members as a special privilege while the Museum's galleries are closed until mid-May for the rebuilding program. The exhibition of The Eight was selected by Alicia Legg, Assistant Exhibitions Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture/of The Museum of Modern Art.

The group of artists who were to become known as "The Eight" showed together only once in an exhibition at the Macbeth Gallery in New York in 1908. Led by Robert Henri (1865-1929), the group included Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928), William Glackens (1870-1938), Ernest Lawson (1873-1939), George Luks (1867-1933), Maurice Prendergast (1859-1929), Everett Shinn (1876-1953) and John Sloan (1871-1951). In its realist subject matter and spirit of independence, the exhibitions shocked both New York critics and public -- and showed that American art could stand on its own.

The exhibition was the predecessor to important milestones in the development of American art: The Exhibition of Independent Artists in 1910, organized by Henri and Sloan, and The Armory Show of 1913, for which Davies was responsible for the selection of the contemporary European artists, and Glackens for the Americans.

Though "The Eight" never succeeded in showing together again, they kept in close touch with one another and soon new and younger men attached themselves to the realist movement, which was later to be called the "Ashcan School."

The present exhibition emphasizes the work of "The Eight" done between 1900 and 1915 and includes three paintings from the original exhibition: A Double Realm by Davies, Woman with a Goose by Luks, and Gaieté Montparnasse by Shinn.

The Eight will open to the public on February 23 at the Quincy Art Center in Quincy, <sup>Illinois</sup> Massachusetts. During the coming year it will be seen at the Columbia Museum of Art in South Carolina. Mercer University in Macon, Georgia; the Tennessee Fine Arts Center in Nashville; in Sacramento, California; Seattle, Washington; and the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

The leader of the group, Robert Henri, first learned the realist principles of Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In 1885, he continued his studies in Paris, but soon tired of academic training and turned to the impressionists. The work of Manet became a lasting influence on his own painting and teaching.

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Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1891, Henri became the center of a group of young artists, among them Sloan, Glackens, Luks and Shinn, who were working as artist-reporters and illustrators. By the turn of the century Luks, Glackens and Shinn were working for New York newspapers and by 1901, Henri, too, had settled in New York, joining the staff of the New York School of Art. John Sloan, the last of the Philadelphia group, arrived in New York in 1904. Each of the artists, in his own way, followed Henri's lead in depicting the life of the city; they began to be known as the "New York Realists."

Sloan caught the spirit of Henri's teaching; he painted and etched street scenes and interiors frankly portraying the life of the lower classes. Glackens, less biting, with a lyrical style heightened by impressionist color, concentrated on the pleasant aspects of life: holiday outings, beach scenes, familial affection. Everett Shinn combined his love for the theater with a taste for fashionable society, depicting the two worlds with skill and charm. George Luks used dark tones that reflected his studies in Dusseldorf, but his crisp brushwork and sensitive characterization showed his deep admiration for Franz Hals. Around 1904, the group was joined by Ernest Lawson, a landscape painter, who was to capture the fast disappearing wildness of the rocky hillsides above the Harlem and Hudson Rivers.

At that time the exhibitions held by the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists were the only shows to which artists could submit their work. In 1906 the two organizations merged, with the conservative policies of the Academy dominant. When, because of those policies, Luks, Glackens and Shinn were rejected by the jury of the 1907 exhibition and some of Henri and Sloan's paintings were eliminated, the group withdrew. The realists, thus, had to find other exhibition space. Their efforts were unsuccessful until Arthur Davies persuaded William Macbeth to rent them his gallery for two weeks. Maurice Prendergast, a Boston painter who had known Henri and Glackens in Paris, was invited to join the show which opened on February 3, 1908. While supporting the spirit of independence, neither Prendergast nor Davies was concerned with regional subject matter as were the others.

The exhibition was an immediate sensation. The work of "The Eight" provoked violent abuse from most critics, but there were a few who welcomed its healthy vigor and respected the battle for independence.

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Photographs and additional information available from Lyn Traiger, Assistant Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.